

## Blanche Evan's *Film Studies of the Dance*: The "Technique Problem" and the Creation of New Forms in 1930s Revolutionary Dance

Andrea Harris

In 1935, dancer Blanche Evan, in collaboration with filmmaker Lionel Berman and poet/screenwriter David Wolff, produced a dance film.<sup>1,2</sup> Titled *Film Studies of the Dance*, the work was an early effort to combine film and dance; in fact, the collaborators believed it was one of the first attempts to record dance in an artistic way. This film, housed with Evan's archival materials at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, has received no scholarly attention or analysis, to the best of my knowledge. However, as an unexamined artifact of left-wing dance and media history, *Film Studies of the Dance* brings to light the tensions between form and content that were pressing for leftist artists of this period generally, but especially so for those who wanted to embrace the nonrepresentational, movement-based aspects of their mediums. This collaborative venture also provides a fresh glimpse at the generative side of 1930s left culture, which saw the creation of new theories and new forms that reimagined the relationship between art and society.

Michael Denning describes the dynamic outpouring of artistic works, practices, and discourses during the 1930s as the cultural front, the artistic wing of the Popular Front. The cultural front put art on the vanguard of the fight against fascism and for social democracy, and created an alliance of left-leaning artists and intellectuals committed to sociopolitical consciousness and action (Denning 2010; Hemingway 2002).<sup>3</sup> For Denning, the artistic production of the cultural front represents the rise of a new "social modernism" that aimed to "transcend and rebuild" previous modernist traditions to recognize and intervene in the social and political crises of the period (2010, 122). *Film Studies of the Dance* showcases precisely such an attempt to form a new social modernism to better suit the goals of the cultural front. The film introduces a new technique for modern dance: Evan's Functional Technique. Created as an alternative to existing modern dance techniques, Functional Technique intervened in one of the most critical issues that the revolutionary dance community, in which Evan was a member, confronted: how to create a new form that would further a socially conscious approach to dance. The left's search for new forms was the backdrop for *Film Studies of the Dance*.

---

**Andrea Harris** ([Andrea.harris@wisc.edu](mailto:Andrea.harris@wisc.edu)) is the author of *Making Ballet American: Modernism Before and Beyond Balanchine* (Oxford University Press, 2017), named a 2018 CHOICE Outstanding Academic Title. She is also the editor of *Before, Between, Beyond: Three Decades of Dance Writing*, the most recent collection of the writings of dance historian Sally Banes. Andrea's article "Sur la Pointe on the Prairie: Giuseppina Morlacchi and the Urban Problem in the Frontier Melodrama" (*Journal of American Drama and Theatre*, 2016) received the Honorable Mention for the Gertrude Lippincott Award, given by the Society of Dance History Scholars. Her current book explores the history of therapeutic modern dance and the evolution of dance/movement therapy in the early twentieth century. She is an associate professor and chair of the Dance Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The likely reason that both *Film Studies of the Dance* and Functional Technique have been overlooked until now is their afterlife in the field of dance therapy, which remains largely separate from dance studies.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Evan herself is remembered primarily as a pioneer of dance therapy, not as a dancer who was an active participant and theorist in the 1930s left.<sup>5</sup> As the cultural front disintegrated at the end of the 1930s, Evan left the revolutionary dance world and immersed herself in her work teaching creative dance for children, in which her Functional Technique principles were central. In the 1940s, her creative dance pedagogy evolved into her seminal work in dance therapy. As Functional Technique became an integral part of Evan's dance therapy method, *Film Studies of the Dance* has been shown and discussed by her students in the context of dance therapy training but neglected by historians as an artifact of the 1930s leftist dance world.

Further, once *Film Studies of the Dance* moved into dance therapy, Evan did not address its former political ties. It was not uncommon for members of the revolutionary dance community to suppress their politics to evade anticommunist activity even during the 1930s, and the McCarthy period made it even more unsafe to hold such views (Geduld 2008, 51). I have not found any evidence that Evan deliberately made such a choice; however, she did not speak of the roots of the film in the revolutionary dance movement after the 1930s. Nonetheless, it is clear that, as Evan moved from the 1930s revolutionary dance movement to, first, dance for children, and then to dance therapy, the mission of the leftist dancers, which she helped theorize, stayed continuous—to create, in the words of one of her colleagues, “a new dance that serves life” (Redfield 1935, 25). As such, *Film Studies of the Dance* opens a new window onto the way in which the cultural front must be seen: not merely as a historically specific movement, but rather as “a political and cultural charter for a generation” that resonated well beyond the 1930s (Denning 2010, 26). It points us toward alternative histories of modern dance not yet studied, including in fields not yet embraced as part of its legacy and its politics.

The first eight scenes of *Film Studies of the Dance* demonstrate Functional Technique, described as a “basic technique” for dance (Evan, Berman, and Wolff 1935). Functional Technique takes a scientific approach to dance through anatomic and kinesiological principles—a method inspired by the work of Evan's former teacher Bird Larson, who died prematurely in 1927 (Evan [1939b] 1991, 36–37; Johnson 1950, 3). The last scene, “Fragment of an Experimental Film-Dance,” presents an innovative reconception of an excerpt of Evan's choreography for the screen through creative camera work and editing by Berman and Wolff.<sup>6</sup> In both of these aspects, *Film Studies of the Dance* is an untapped historical gem—it is an archive for better understanding Larson's work, much of which has been lost to dance history, and it is an early example of an interdisciplinary artwork that today we would call screendance.<sup>7</sup> What I want to focus on in this article, however, is the way in which this collaborative film put forth new modern forms that spoke to the goals and concerns of the revolutionary dance and film movements.

Although Evan had been teaching Functional Technique to students in her school since 1934, *Film Studies of the Dance* premiered the method to the larger New York dance world as a novel set of “Technical Studies for Use in Teaching” (Evan, Berman, and Wolff 1935). The exercises in the film present a sampling of Evan's system, exploring patterns of tension and release; extension and flexion; and isolations of the spine, feet, hips, shoulders, upper back, and hands. Evan demonstrates the movement of body parts in detail, made possible by the film's use of close-up and slow motion, and then shows how those principles are integrated into whole-body motions like swinging, falling, or jumping. Evan saw Functional Technique as a “neutral form” that moved away from predetermined technical vocabularies, and she saw dance training as a deep study of the functional laws common to all human movement (Bernstein 2020). This scientific and exploratory approach would retrain the dancer's “awareness of the unity of the body necessary for full dance expression,” ultimately providing the foundation from which one could discover and “express feelings and ideas without the limitation of learned stylized dance forms” (Bernstein 2020). In this intervention, Evan's Functional Technique offered a solution to what one of the revolutionary dancers described

as their “technique problem”—how to free themselves from the stigma of bourgeois culture, which clung to modern dance, and create a new technique united with socially conscious meaning (Freedman 1934, 17).

## Revolutionary Dance and the “Technique Problem”

At the time of *Film Studies of the Dance*, Evan was an active participant in the revolutionary dance movement in New York. This movement traced its roots back to the Workers Cultural Federation (WCF), formed in 1931 to create a nationwide union of workers’ arts groups, based on the Soviet model. Declaring “The Art is a Weapon!” the WCF strove to build a “great mass proletarian culture [that would] vitalize the lives of the workers and aid them in their struggles” (“Art Is a Weapon” 1931, 13). A few months later, dancer Edna Ocko and students from the New York Wigman School also pledged “Dance is a Weapon” and started the New Dance Group to bring modern dance to the masses (Garafola 2002, 54). Ocko and others formed the Workers Dance League (WDL) in 1932, an umbrella organization for twelve proletarian dance groups, including the New Dance Group, under the auspices of the WCF (Geduld 2008, 50). In 1933, the WDL joined with the American League of Workers Theatre, which was the US branch of the International Union of Revolutionary Theatre (IURT), a Communist International (hereafter “Comintern”) agency based in Moscow (Mally 2007, 73). Their organ was *Workers Theatre*, which, in its April 1933 issue, officially welcomed the WDL into the magazine (“Workers Theatre and Dance” 1933, 1).

For US leftist artists of the 1930s, Soviet culture offered a model for how their own artistic practice could be reconfigured to be socially engaged and useful in the struggles of real life. As Victoria Phillips Geduld (2008) and Lynn Mally (2007) have shown, the artistic practices and policies of the Soviet Union were very influential for the workers’ theater groups in the United States. Not long after the WDL’s formation, new artistic policy emerged from the Soviet Union that moved away from the previously narrow focus on agitprop art and the working class (Mally 2007, 73). In April 1932, the Soviet Union abolished proletarian artistic organizations and called for the broader integration of artists who supported the project of “Socialist construction” into one unit (Bowlit 1988, 290). Comintern cultural agencies quickly registered this shift—the International Workers’ Theatrical Union dropped “Workers” from its name to become instead the IURT, “an organization uniting all sections of the Left artistic intelligentsia working in theatrical circles and using the theater as a powerful weapon for the class struggle and for revolutionary propaganda” (“We Are Building” 1933, 43). It took until the following year for the change to be felt in the United States—in April 1933, *Workers Theatre* changed its masthead to reflect the new name of the IURT, and that July, the magazine announced that it would now become *New Theatre* (Mally 2007, 75). The “new” in this conception referenced the effort to align left-leaning theater workers across the country in the development of socially conscious theater. This greater inclusivity anticipated the coming Popular Front, which was officially announced by the Comintern in the summer of 1935 (Mally 2007, 78, 80–81). *New Theatre* would no longer speak merely for the interests of the proletariat but would now “broaden the Magazine . . . to make it a mouthpiece also of these ‘new theatres,’ in order that by mutual discussion and criticism we may arrive at a clearer conception of the function of the present day theatre as a force towards the better theatre and better world” (“Workers Theatre to Become New Theatre” 1933, 2).

Following suit, in February 1935, the League of Workers Theatres changed its name to the New Theatre League, and the WDL proclaimed itself the New Dance League (NDL) in April of that year. Moving away from its focus on the worker, the NDL now described itself as an organization for “all members of dance groups, dance teachers, and professionals who are willing to support the basic program: *for a mass development of the American dance to its highest artistic and social level; for a dance movement that is against war, fascism, and censorship*” (Anyon 1935, 28; emphasis in original). The wider embrace of the revolutionary dance movement was an invitation for professional

artists who were not members of the Communist Party, but nevertheless “politically sympathetic” to its ideals, as Evan identified herself (Evan 1934, 20).

Evan’s earliest performances with the NDL that I have found took place in April 1935. At this time, John Martin listed Evan as one of the “members of the New Dance League” along with Fe Alf, Jane Dudley, Ernestine Henoch, Eleanor King, Marie Marchowsky, and William Matons (Martin 1935a). Evan also became a leader in the Dance Guild, a dance advocacy organization formed in affiliation with the NDL, in which she collaborated on forums, lecture-demonstrations, and recitals with long-time revolutionary dance leaders, including Miriam Blecher, Sophie Delza, and Edna Ocko (Martin 1935b).<sup>8</sup> At the NDL recital on June 9, 1935, Blanche Evan’s Amateur Group won first prize for nonprofessional group choreography for their performance of *Unite against War and Fascism* (“The Dance Festival” 1935, 33).<sup>9</sup> When the NDL made its first tour outside of New York in April 1936, Evan joined Dudley, Matons, Sophie Maslow, and Anna Sokolow on the program (Martin 1936a). In other words, at the time *Film Studies of the Dance* was underway, Evan was recognized as part of the revolutionary dance community, and her work was received by that group as engaged with its key concerns.

The mandate of the left theatrical movement—that theater be a conduit for social progress—demanded new understandings of the artist’s role in society and more robust theories of theatrical forms and their impact on audiences.<sup>10</sup> The left’s effort to create and articulate these understandings is visible in *New Theatre* in numerous articles that parsed how to configure artistic form for the greatest aesthetic and social efficacy. With the changes in Comintern policy after 1933, *New Theatre* began urging its readers to learn from professional and traditional theatrical forms to create higher quality works that would broadly engage audiences (Mally 2007, 75–77). However, the problem of how—or whether—methods from the “bourgeois” artistic heritage could be integrated with revolutionary content was always contentious. This debate formed the backdrop for dance’s entry into the pages of *Workers Theatre* (soon to be renamed *New Theatre*) in May 1933.

Once dance became a regular feature in *New Theatre*, the question of which dance form was best suited for progressive purposes was engaged in almost every issue of the magazine going forward. Leftist dancers and critics clashed over whether the bourgeois modern dance techniques of Martha Graham, Mary Wigman, or Doris Humphrey—techniques in which most of the leftist dancers were trained—could be rehabilitated for their use or must be abandoned all together. At issue were the class origins of these techniques; their embrace of metaphysical, impressionistic, and nonrealistic themes; and, perhaps most problematically for the revolutionary dancers, their abstract forms and focus on movement invention for its own sake.

Indeed, from the moment the WDL joined *New Theatre*, the dancers faced constant criticism that their reliance on bourgeois modern dance techniques undermined their revolutionary potential. “All mysticism, all mood for mood’s sake must be done away with,” argued A. Prentiss in his 1933 review of the first anniversary recital of the New Dance Group. He continued:

Besides, the bourgeois dance has little to offer—what do the Duncans with their flowing lines have to offer in a world of sharp class conflict; what can be learned from the grotesques of the Labans or the mystical wanderings of the Wigmans? Granted that the straight lines of the Wigman school is necessary for the revolutionary dance, their content must be absolutely discarded. Add to this that the straight lines must be regrouped for mass patterns, then what is left? Clearly the New Dance Group, basing themselves on their revolutionary content, must learn to design their patterns and dances along purely functional lines and try to free themselves from the heritage of the bourgeois dancers as soon as possible. That they haven’t done so is evident from their [works]. (Prentiss 1933, 11)

In response, New Dance Group member Grace Wylie charged that Prentiss was only focusing on technique in his criticism of the dancers and overlooking their social purpose: “to inspire others to participate in [the class] struggle.” “The New Dance Group has nothing in common with the intent of modern bourgeois dancers who are involved in mysticism, escapism, who dance of witches, vague wanderings into the cosmic spaces,” Wylie insisted, “but do we completely discard their technique and suddenly build our own? We derive whatever it is of value to us from the dance as it stands and reject the rest” (Wylie 1933, 22).

Nevertheless, the pressure on the revolutionary dancers to reject bourgeois modern dance was relentless, particularly from left-wing theater critics. Reviewing the WDL’s second annual festival in September 1934, for example, Harry Elion complained that the movements were too abstract, derived from “preconceived styles” and not from the content of class struggle. “It would probably be necessary to equip every member of the audience with a dictionary, defining the meaning of every movement in order to make the dance understood,” he wrote (Elion 1934, 18). Elion concluded that progress in the revolutionary dance would only be made when the dancers could finally “free themselves from the idea that all that has to be done is to give the bourgeois dance working class content” (Elion 1934, 19). In another instance, Emmanuel Eisenberg decreed that “in a remarkably short period it has become a convention of rebuke against the revolutionary dance that it suffers from obvious enslavement to the forms and patterns of bourgeois technique” (Eisenberg 1935, 10). Although the dancers themselves remained “earnestly convinced” that a revolutionary technique was evolving and that their work was contributing to the movement, for Eisenberg, their continued use of “bourgeois technique” was “harmfully and preposterously irrelevant as the basis of a revolutionary approach to the dance” (Eisenberg 1935, 10). The leftist dancers were in what Mark Franko has described as a “double bind”—on the one hand, pressed to make dances that would clearly communicate social meanings without being too abstract, while, on the other hand, challenged to create new dance forms that would be “revolutionary” in and of themselves (Franko 1995, 32). Because their modern dance training was seen as indelibly bourgeois, their participation in the revolutionary movement was always already suspect.

Writing in May 1934, New Dance Group member Ezra Freedman summarized the “technique problem” that confronted the revolutionary dance community. The “frequent and prolonged discussion” of which technique to use divided its members into three main groups: (1) “the advocates of one or another of the bourgeois schools”; (2) “those who think we must develop a purely revolutionary technique”; and (3) “the eclectics, who believe in choosing what is best for our purpose from what all the bourgeois schools have to offer and rejecting whatever is not useful to us” (Freedman 1934, 17). Freedman urged the group to find some sort of unity for the sake of progress: “No one can deny the desirability for a characteristic revolutionary dance technique, but it hasn’t arrived yet and we cannot knock away the old props until we have built new ones under us,” she argued (1934, 17). As a solution, Freedman proposed ongoing experimentation and modification of modern dance forms. “We must first enrich and vary the ideological content of our dances by drawing from the most fertile soil and environment of the class struggle,” she stated. Then, “while applying the techniques we know, we must be ever on the alert and keep questioning: Is this technique the best for this particular passage? If we alter it somewhat, will it be more suitable? Can we perhaps invent something that will bring out our meaning more clearly than anything hitherto known? By this means the new technique will grow naturally out of our work” (Freedman 1934, 18). At the heart of the “technique problem” was the question of how to invent a new form that would not only free the leftist dancers from the bourgeois heritage of modern dance, but also advance new ways of unifying movement and meaning to help build “the dance as a social force in America” (“June Festival of the New Dance League” 1935, 30).

The “technique problem” was at the heart of all of Evan’s contributions to *New Theatre* and other leftist publications in the mid-1930s. From her first entry into the revolutionary dance movement in 1934, Evan pressed the question of how the medium of dance itself could be put to better use for

the movement's goals. This was the basis for her two-part 1936 series in *New Theatre*, "From a Dancer's Notebook," published in the form of journal entries written while she was a student at the New York Wigman School and the Martha Graham School in the summers of 1934 and 1935, respectively. Evan's intention with these articles was to show how a technique that could "satisfy the demands of a young, discriminating, social-minded modern dancer" was still very much lacking. She hoped her comparative study of the two schools would help identify what was still needed in modern dance to build a system "more adaptable to our needs," meaning those of the left-wing dancer (Evan 1936a, 16).

The first article focused on the Wigman School, where Evan took a workshop with Louise Klopper and Hanya Holm in the summer of 1934. Evan recorded many positive, thrilling feelings, but by the end of the workshop, she had concluded that the Wigman technique emphasized free, improvisatory expression to the detriment of technical skill or strength. "The bright love I developed for the freshness of the school turns into a brownish sediment," she recounted (Evan 1936a, 29). "'The body as instrument' was merely a phrase unsubstantiated by the rigorous practise [*sic*] an instrument requires" (Evan 1936a, 29). This was more than a problem of technique or craft for Evan—it was one of communication. "Improvisation remained an indefinite activity divorced from the definite content," she wrote. "How to find clear movement images for a dance remains an unsolved mystery. How to become skillful, and expressive, and *explicit*—that is still the problem" (Evan 1936a, 29; emphasis added). Ultimately, what the Wigman system failed to answer for Evan was how to deliver a message through dance composition and performance. "What is the relation between the modern dance and specific content, between movement that says something clearly and communicatively to an audience—between that and the abstract medium of movement?" (Evan 1936a, 29). Several of the shortcomings that Evan found in Wigman's courses were perceived by the left as some of the worst transgressions of bourgeois modern dance—the segregation of form from content, inaccessible meaning, and, perhaps most egregiously, the absence of a rigorous exploration of dance technique that would open onto a new form with social relevance.

Moreover, Evan worried that the Wigman method of improvisation sought transcendence at the expense of the materiality of one's experience. "I no longer know where I am. I no longer know where *dance* has its roots—where power begins and where 'ecstasy' ends," she described (Evan 1936a, 28; emphasis in original). By the end of the workshop, Evan questioned the politics of such a self-immersive approach:

All the primitive mysticism which I formerly mildly objected to now strikes me with deeper implications. Real life, real dance, real modern dance is past the stage when it can or should be nourished with mystic primitivism. Heretofore, when I entered the studio, I completely forgot the existence of the outside world. Today, the isolation of our studio work from this world brought me down with a thud—a real thud—to earth... I regard this period as the "adolescence" of my training during which time personal barriers have been broken down between *me* and *myself*, but at the sacrifice of rearing a new barrier between me and reality. (Evan 1936a, 28–29; emphasis in original)

Here, Evan's characterization of Wigman's "mystic primitivism" echoed the left's growing criticism of Wigman for her alliance with the Nazi Party. Evan rejected Wigman's methods for their flight from real life, and further, as Susan Manning states, she "implicitly [asked] how the 'mysticism' of Wigman might have contributed to her affiliation with fascism" (Manning 1993, 275).

But if the Wigman method emphasized losing oneself in free expression and lacked a scientific approach to the body and movement exploration, the work at the Graham School was marked by exactly the opposite problem, Evan argued in her second installment of "From a Dancer's Notebook." There, Evan encountered an atmosphere of strict discipline; she described the "hush

in the studio” as “girls quietly seat themselves on the floor,” waiting for class to begin. “I don’t dare fling a ‘hello’ to a classmate across the room,” Evan described (1936b, 31). Graham entered in “a beautifully designed costume of white silk wearing white fur slippers to match” and wrapped her “three studio dachshunds” into a blanket with her on the “divan” as class began (Evan 1936b, 31). Evan learned the codified progression of the Graham class, noting “not the slightest deviation from these patterns is permitted.” When she asked another dancer why, the answer came: “There is no reason. This *is* the way to leap. Martha says so” (Evan 1936b, 31; emphasis in original). Evan found Graham’s exercises to be solidified into a rote academic vocabulary no different from that of ballet, in which technique was an end in itself without regard for process, problem-solving, or meaning. “Already I have seen Martha and her students both, take these exercises and put them *in toto* into dances to express anything or nothing,” she complained, adding, “She has created a dance scene wherein only slaves to professional discipline can hope to survive” (Evan 1936b, 44). Most of what Graham had to offer had to be discarded by the socially conscious dancer, too. Although Graham had successfully dealt “purely and scientifically with the dancer’s instrument,” this emphasis on form was the endpoint in her work, rather than the foundation for social content. Graham had created “an approach to the dance which many of us have been fighting,” Evan concluded (Evan 1936b, 44).

Evan charged that Wigman’s mysticism was “self-expression for its own sake,” whereas Graham’s formalism was “movement form for its own sake” (Evan 1936b, 45). Therefore, neither of these modern dance schools were able to satisfy the left’s desire for a dance able to “express significant ideas” and forge “a new kind of realism that will carry it out of the curtained seclusion of the select concert, out to people, out to reality” (Evan 1936b, 45). Evan concluded:

What is the relation between the modern dance and specific content, between movement that says something clear and communicatively to an audience—between that and the abstract medium of movement? . . . These are the most important problems that face the modern dancers of today. Where shall we find the answers? We cannot travel forever back and forth among systems that can no longer satisfy our specific needs, technically and creatively. We must clarify these needs, and, in relation to them, take of these systems what can benefit us. We must objectively discard the rest. We must open new paths of source material to the dance. It is for us to begin to build an edifice that will more completely meet the demands of the young, experimental, social-minded dancers of today. (Evan 1936b, 45)

If the “technique problem” questioned whether the existing modern dance systems were viable for the social and political needs of the present moment, Evan’s answer was no, they were not. Her call here to “open new paths of source material for the dance” that could better unify form and content was precisely what her Functional Technique aimed to do. Functional Technique was the solution to the “technique problem” that beset the revolutionary dance movement. As we shall see, the collaboration between film and dance in *Film Studies of the Dance* presented an opportunity for each of the artists to retheorize questions of form and content in their respective fields.

### ***Film Studies of the Dance* and Evan’s Functional Technique**

Evan’s Functional Technique proposed a new solution to the limitations of modern dance by creating a foundation for technical training and creative expression that was not rooted in any individual aesthetic, but instead grounded in science. As its title suggested, Functional Technique presented the body as a system of working principles that could be isolated, studied, and mastered. In the first screening of *Film Studies of the Dance* that I have found evidence of, on June 14, 1935, Evan billed Functional Technique as a method of dance teaching, and film as a useful vehicle for movement analysis (*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 1935, 8). In lectures given about the film, Evan described its ability to frame “the body dancing as an impersonal instrument” and make possible

“detailed technical analysis” (Evan [1937] 1991, 24).<sup>11</sup> Evan’s stress on the “impersonal” approach of Functional Technique aligned with contemporaneous leftist dance discourses that argued for stripping away the individualistic elements of modern dance to build a new technique. Such descriptions of technique as “impersonal” countered attacks on the leftist dancers for their “self-expression”—which their critics saw as one of the “befuddling and exacerbating hangovers of symbolic bourgeois idealism” in their works (Eisenberg 1935, 10).

In contrast to the navel-gazing improvisation or the rigidly stylized codification of which she had accused the Wigman and Graham techniques, *Film Studies of the Dance* frames the dancing body as a laboratory for experimentation and discovery. The exercises demonstrate movement in close detail, made possible by the camera work, to emphasize anatomical and kinesiological principles. In the film’s first exercise, titled “Contrasting Useless Tension and Resiliency,” Evan rounds her upper body forward to the waist and performs a series of bound, pulsing actions with her upper torso. Her shoulders are hunched, upper trapezius muscles are visibly flexed, neck is rigidly held, and chin is jutting forward. This is the “useless tension” in the exercise’s title—a build-up of tightness and strain that restricts movement from flowing fluidly through the spine. To contrast this inefficient tension, Evan lets her torso drop forward from the waist, arms and head now released and hanging freely. This pattern of tension-release is then repeated into back space. The next scene, “Basic Body Arcs—Opposing Directions in Body Masses Yield Maximum Extension,” explores how the release of tension that the student has just discovered facilitates fluidity in whole-body movement. Facing and lightly holding a ballet barre, Evan presses her pelvis forward, as her upper body responds in the opposite direction, chest and head arcing up and back. Variations of this movement are repeated in different directions: first with the pelvis moving backward and the upper body curving forward; then on one leg with the other leg extended behind and rising to elevation on the toe; then in a wide parallel second position; and finally, to the side. The “body arcs,” “a staple in Functional Technique,” work to establish a “unified connection” of the lower body, from the ankles to the hips (Bernstein 2021).

Like several of the exercises in *Film Studies of the Dance*, the body arcs speak to the influence of Bird Larson. In the film’s credits, Evan placed Functional Technique in Larson’s lineage, and *Film Studies of the Dance* might represent the closest to documentation of Larson’s pedagogy that exists today.<sup>12</sup> Although it had been more than ten years since she had studied with Larson, who died in 1927, the fact that Evan was still thinking deeply about her former teacher’s system is evidenced in a posthumous tribute she wrote for *Dance Magazine* in 1939. Evan notes that Larson’s technique was built on “the crystallization of general technical bases” rather than “the perfection of set technical forms” (Evan [1939b] 1991, 37). Of importance among these bases was “the use of controlled leverage of the knees” (Evan [1939b] 1991, 37). Franziska Boas recounts that Larson taught exercises that emphasized stability and connection, working “on the half toe, and on one foot on the half toe, and being able to change levels, being able to be free in the pelvic region or the chest region and still keep your balance on the half toe”—a movement that seems to be an inspiration for Evan’s body arcs (Boas interview 1969, reel 1). Lloyd Johnson describes that Larson worked with controlled leverage action as “an important means of control in order to give the body greater support when it advanced to more complex techniques [as] in falls and recoveries” or when “the dynamics of the movement demand sudden leverage displacement” (Johnson 1950, 7). This principle is on full display in the next scene, “Applying BODY ARC Principles—Back Bend without Strain,” as Evan demonstrates how the body arcs might develop into a deep back hinge, the knees leveraging forward to support the planar backbend of the torso. Dance/movement therapist and Evan’s longtime mentee, Bonnie Bernstein, notes that, in its more advanced form, the body arcs evolve into a rhythmic swing initiated by the pelvis and achieve “full extension from the toes all the way through the head” (Bernstein 2020).

Interestingly, the fact that the body arcs are meant to evolve into a swing, as Bernstein notes, departs from Larson, whose movement tended to be “very slow . . . very controlled” (Boas interview 1969,



reel 2). Boas describes that, after Larson's death, she went to Hanya Holm's studio because "it fit in very well with what I had gotten from Larson," with the important exception that she had to find the freedom of swing: "instead of directing each moment of the movement, being able to throw it into a direction and then let it come back into its place where it was supposed to be" (Boas interview 1969, reel 2). Although Evan eschewed the Wigman School for its "mysticism," some of the movements presented in *Film Studies of the Dance* echoes techniques that were taught at the New York Wigman School, including bouncing, swinging, and collapsing the body, such as in the "Tension and Resiliency" sequence, described above.<sup>13</sup> The overlapping imprint of Larson and Wigman in Functional Technique is not surprising, given Evan's personal experience studying with Holm and Kloepper in the summer of 1934, and the fact that many of the professional dancers in the New Dance Group with whom she worked also studied at the New York Wigman School (Ocko, quoted in Garafola 2002, 57). Larson was also interested in Wigman and, after traveling to Germany to see her in about 1924, began using drums and rattles in her classes (Boas interview 1969, reel 2).

Larson's influence is also observable in the film's next scene, "Continuity, Strength, and Flow in a Vertical Spiral." This exercise is a rippling motion of alternating extension and flexion of the spine, which Evan demonstrates on her knees, in a lunge and in a standing position. As in the body arcs, the movement is initiated at the lower spine, then travels successively through the vertebrae to first lift the chest and head, and then repeats to curve the upper spine forward. Seemingly contrary to its title, this exercise moves solely in the sagittal plane rather than spiraling in three-dimensional space—an idiosyncrasy that both Evan and Boas note in their experience with Larson. Evan described it as "the 'spiral' [in quotation marks] or controlled flow of movement through every successive vertebra of the spine" (Evan [1939b] 1991, 37). Boas compared it to Doris Humphrey's *Water Study* (which was created much later), recalling, "We called it the wave, or the spiral. . . . It isn't really a spiral, it's simply starting with the lowest vertebra and traveling up with each, and she used to come around and touch each one of those vertebrae and tell us which one we were skipping" (Boas interview 1969, reel 1). In the next scene, "Elevation in Slow Motion," Evan shows how spinal articulation supports more advanced movements like turns, leaps, and falls. Here too, Larson's method appears to have been inspirational: Johnson states that Larson developed a "series of back and side falls, leaps and turns that utilized a more coordinate use of the body than ballet techniques," and Evan recalls Larson's emphasis of "the co-ordinate use of the trunk while turning in space" (Johnson 1950, 9; Evan [1939b] 1991, 37).

Evan's costuming in the film—in several of the demonstrations she wears either only trunks and a flesh-colored covering that appears taped onto her breasts, and in others, she is nude—also echoes Larson's classes, in which the traditional attire was similarly "bikinis—the shorter the better" or "just a brassiere and a short pair of pants" (Boas interview 1969). The filmic use of nudity also points to another body culture pioneer whose work Evan knew and cited elsewhere: Bess Mensendieck (Evan [1949b] 1991, 65). In Mensendieck's publications, the exercises were photographed in the nude, and the reader was encouraged to practice without clothing in front of a mirror. As Robin Veder notes in her study of Mensendieck, seeing how the body worked was an essential part of retraining it—an "instructional" approach that was shared by turn-of-the-century body culture practitioners as well as the motion capture methods of Étienne-Jules Marey and Eadweard Muybridge (Veder 2011, 1342). This instructional approach also underscores *Film Studies of the Dance*, in which nudity allows for an unobstructed view of anatomical structure and functioning.

Like the body culture pioneers on whose work it draws, Evan's Functional Technique proposes a method of bodily retraining through a careful, embodied investigation of physiological laws. The filmic techniques in *Film Studies of the Dance* are critical for this pedagogical approach, as they reveal the mechanical workings of movement at a level impossible to see otherwise. In the "vertical spiral," for instance, as Evan kneels with her torso bent over her upper legs (a "child's pose"

position in yoga), the composition of the shot is restricted to her nude lumbar and thoracic spine, and the use of slow motion emphasizes the controlled articulation of each vertebra. As Evan shows the development of the vertical spiral into elevation, slow motion again focuses the viewer's attention to the whole-body unity of the action through the trunk. In "Foot Mechanics of Elevation," the camera tightly frames Evan's feet to reveal the successive pattering of movement through the ankle, foot, and toes that takes place in actions like pointing and prancing. This scene also includes a segment titled "In Contrast, a Student's Inadequate Use of Feet," in which the shot remains focused on the feet and lower legs to illustrate the wrong way to perform this action—lifting the foot as a whole entity, without working successively through its separate parts. Johnson notes that Larson created her tread base "to develop a fuller action of the feet [and to] establish the propulsive force of the dancer," which is the focus of the next scene, "Tension and Spring in Feet" (Johnson 1950, 7). As Evan demonstrates jumping and leaping in several positions, sometimes in outdoor locations, slow-motion filming highlights how the detailed attention paid to kinesiological mechanics through the work shown in previous scenes builds a "technique for jumping [that] engages every muscle and joint [and is] powered by momentum and coordinated into a unified action," in Bernstein's words, while the nature setting reinforces the sense of physical liberation (and further echoes Wigman and body culture) (Bernstein 2021). In the last two scenes of the film, "Isolation of Movement Units" and "Hand Improvisations," the camera zooms in on Evan's demonstration of movement in isolated body parts and joints: the hips, shoulder girdle, lower back, spine, and hands. The camera work allows one to scrutinize skeletal-muscular function and the kinetic chain of initiation and follow-through in actions like jumping, elevating and spreading the scapula, and extending and flexing the spine.

Indeed, in presenting *Film Studies of the Dance* to the New York dance community, Evan argued that film provided an important tool for movement analysis, allowing the dancer to study their performance from an external vantage point. As she described in a lecture on the film in 1937:

Close-ups of isolated parts of the body in action revealed many unsuspected muscular mysteries: for instance, that though the rib cage could move side to side independently from the hips, the reverse was not true. Aside from the knowledge gained, what kinetic excitement there was to see the spine in action, to watch every vertebra perform its task in a spiral back-bend. (Evan [1937] 1991, 24)

Unlike Wigman's technique, in which training meant losing the self in transcendence, or Graham's, in which training meant losing the self in strict adherence to predetermined forms, Functional Technique presented dance training as a research-based process that placed value on the mover's observation, discovery, and experimentation with scientific principles. This approach was what Evan found significant about Larson's work: expression was not realized from any "rigid vocabulary of movement" ([1939b] 1991, 37) but instead arose from "mechanical physical mastery" ([1939b] 1991, 36), informed by the laws of the "physiological, anatomical body itself" ([1939b] 1991, 37). Evan credited Larson with having redefined dance technique beyond "the perfection of set technical forms" or "technique for its own sake." Instead, it was purely the discovery of "the body's capacity for movement" (Evan [1939b] 1991, 37). This philosophy also undergirded Functional Technique: through analysis and practice, one could gain proficiency with the fundamental principles that governed all human movement, including dance. Boas contrasted Larson's technique to "most of the modern dancing which lacks unity of form, being built solely upon the emotional appeal of movement, rather than on a sound knowledge of line, form and composition" (Boas n.d., 3). Evan argued, too, that Larson's scientific approach—"clear, unmystic, impersonal, and constructional"—offered an alternative to the bourgeois modern dance schools. Larson's method signaled "the eventual creation of as impersonal a technique for the new dance as the ballet encompassed in its own sphere," Evan wrote, adding, "Until the modern dance achieves this the chance for its survival as a new *technical* form is slim" (Evan [1939b] 1991, 38, emphasis in original).

With Functional Technique, Evan, like other members of the revolutionary dance community, endeavored to rebuild the modernist forms of the past into a new technique for modern dance. In the same year as the premiere of *Film Studies of the Dance*, Evan published an article, “Road to the Dance,” that put forth a revisionist history of modern dance. Here, each successive generation, from Isadora Duncan through Martha Graham, integrated and extended the developments made by past generations, a process that cumulated in “the next step of synthesis.” In this stage of development, on which the article’s titular “road” to the future was based, all dance forms, despite aesthetic, technical, or even cultural differences, would find an inner relation to one another—a “levelling down of the dance to its most general aspects” (Evan [1935] 1991, 11). The basis for this synthesis would be the “universal and immutable laws of physics and anatomy” underlying all human movement (Evan [1935] 1991, 12). Evan summed up what this development would bring to the future dancer:

A basic training of *body-mechanics* will replace the prejudiced techniques of today; and coinciding with that we will reach a point where *movement-mechanics* will be scientifically analyzed and formulated into general laws. The future dancer’s body will no longer be a slave to a “system of technique” or an individual “theory” of movement mechanics. The scientific developments of the dance of the past will be incorporated with the principles discovered today, and those with the research of the future. The scientific contributions of the ballet, such as its laws governing body action in “turns”; the main movement principle of the Wigman method, “swing”; the “tension and release” principle of Martha Graham—all these theories of movement-mechanics will be boiled down in the melting-pot of the *science* of dance movement. (Evan [1935] 1991, 12; emphasis in original)

Notable here is how Evan’s account contrasted the one being put forth by leftist theater critics—that the roots of modern dance in bourgeois society definitively consigned it to the status quo, with no future for the left. Evan’s counternarrative framed modern dance history as an ongoing process of experimentation and evolution, in which past breakthroughs were built on and furthered by the next generation of artist-researchers, building toward a new “synthesis” that would be based in the science of human movement—an idea that was embodied in Functional Technique, which Evan was contemporaneously documenting in *Film Studies of the Dance*.

Moreover, Evan’s construction of “synthesis” as the future of the dance aligned with a Marxist account of artistic progress that was prevalent in 1930s cultural discourse. In her study of 1930s leftist literature, Constance Coiner highlights a controversy over modernist forms that mirrored the “technique problem” in revolutionary dance. One group of leftist critics, largely configured around *New Masses*, argued that bourgeois modern art must be rejected to clear the way for a new proletarian art to arise. The other group, influenced by Leon Trotsky’s *Literature and Revolution*, argued that modern art could be usefully adapted for revolutionary purposes (Coiner 1995, 16–17). Trotsky argued that revolutionary art would arise through a “dialectics of successive styles” in which “each new literary school . . . is the result of a preceding development, of the craftsmanship of word and color already in existence, and only pulls away from the shores of what has been attained in order to conquer the elements anew” (Trotsky 1971, 194, 233). This was the Marxist dialectics of art historical progress, in which styles and theories developed through an integrative process of accumulation from one generation to the next. For leftist literary critic Joshua Kunitz, this process was at the very heart of revolution, which “does not mean indiscriminate negation and wholesale rejection . . . on the contrary, it means, in its creative phases, affirmation, cultural acceleration, a new synthesis” (Neets 1930, 23).

Revolutionary dancers took footing in this second, Trotsky-inspired camp. They deployed the dialectical concept of synthesis to justify their use of modern dance techniques in the face of the often-hostile criticism waged against them by leftist theater critics. New Dance Group member Grace Wylie, for example, responded to Prentiss’s reprobation, discussed above, with such an argument.

“We derive whatever is of value to us from the dance as it stands and reject the rest,” she stated, reminding Prentiss, “Historically this is the process by which all the arts develop. This is the meaning of dialectics in the arts” (Wylie 1933, 22). Nathaniel Buchwald, a theater worker sympathetic to the leftist dancers, argued it was “a matter of common sense (not to speak of the Marxist view on the cultural heritage of the past . . .) [that] revolutionary art must and should borrow from the accumulated experience of the past, even if stored up by the bourgeoisie” (Buchwald 1935, 24). In a similar vein, Gene Martel called for leftist dancers to take from the main schools of modern dance: “Wigman, Graham, Humphrey-Weidman, [who] have given the younger dancers the materials with which to work . . . it is our job to use these materials in our own way, eliminating the personal characteristics of those who handed them down” (Martel 1935, 18). Ultimately, Martel argued, in language that mirrored Evan’s, what must emerge was “a dance which has an impersonal technique based on the general principles we all understand, and adapted to our own needs” (Martel 1935, 18).

Evan’s argument that modern dance was a process that was “not static” but on an upward path of continual “integration” was part of this discourse taking shape in *New Theatre* (Evan [1935] 1991, 11). Modern dance was advancing to a higher level of development, in which it would be purged of its mysticism, its formalism, and its individual personalities, and instead be based in the “impersonal,” “inclusive,” and “broad” shared laws of human physiology and kinesiology. “Finally,” Evan concluded, “the dance will emerge as an impersonal art, built on a scientific structure, and so better to unite its technique with its creative activity” (Evan [1935] 1991, 12). *Film Studies of the Dance* presents Functional Technique as this very “science of dance movement.” Building on the progress of past innovators, Functional Technique was the new form needed by the revolutionary dance movement to unify form and content. In the film’s concluding scene, “Fragment of an Experimental Film-Dance,” Evan and her collaborators put this argument into creative form.

### “Fragment of an Experimental Film-Dance”

Evan’s appeal to a dialectical history of artistic progress was “in the air” of the 1930s cultural left. Another likely source for these ideas was her collaboration with leftist filmmakers, including Lionel Berman, a member of *New Theatre’s* editorial board and a leader in the US Communist Party’s Cultural Committee. Evan and Berman married in 1936.<sup>14</sup>

Berman and Wolff were part of a left-wing group of filmmakers who split from the New York Film and Photo League in 1934 out of dissatisfaction with the shortcomings of documentary style, which dominated the league at that time. Calling themselves Nykino, the group also included Leo Hurwitz, Irving Lerner, Sidney Meyers, and Ralph Steiner (Alexander 1975, 17).<sup>15</sup> Besides Berman and Evan, there were other personal connections between the Nykino filmmakers and the leftist dance community—Hurwitz was the husband of Jane Dudley and the brother of Sophie Delza, and Meyers was married to Edna Ocko. Also noteworthy in this list is Jay Leyda, an influential advisor to Nykino, whose wife, the Soviet modern dancer Si-Lan Chen, became associated with the leftist dancers upon arriving in New York in about 1936 (Leyda 1984, 238–240).<sup>16</sup> The Nykino filmmakers were interested in Soviet film methods of shot construction, editing, and montage (Alexander 1975, 16). They studied the techniques of Pudovkin and Kuleshov, and had lessons sent to them from Eisenstein’s Moscow Film School (Steiner and Hurwitz 1935, 22, 23). In about late 1936, after the New York premiere of Soviet director Alexander Dovzhenko’s *Frontier*, they renamed their group Frontier Films in homage (Alexander 1975, 20). The Nykino filmmakers’ interest in the Soviet avant-garde is evident in the camera work and editing throughout *Film Studies of the Dance*, and especially in the closing “Fragment of an Experimental Film-Dance.”

In 1935, the Nykino filmmakers were at a crossroads, shifting away from the journalistic strictures of documentary film to seek what they saw as the missing factor in revolutionary film: “the

emotional involvement of the audience” (Steiner and Hurwitz 1935, 22). This would require not only skillful editing, Nykino realized, but also a “theatrical means of affecting an audience—suspense, build, dramatic line, etc.,” created through the visual images of the film (Steiner and Hurwitz 1935, 23). In their attempt to gain an understanding of this, and in the absence of film schools in the United States like those in the Soviet Union, the filmmakers took a course in theater direction with Lee Strasberg of the Group Theatre in the winter of 1934–1935 (Steiner and Hurwitz 1935, 22). What they learned there was “that the film as a dramatic medium cannot merely concern itself with external happenings even though they be revolutionary happenings, but must embody the conflict of underlying forces, causes” (Steiner and Hurwitz 1935, 23). The filmmakers were seeking to create “an experience in itself which would move people or stir them to action” through the medium of film itself (Hurwitz 1975, 12). “If the film is eventually to be a powerful weapon in the class struggle,” wrote Steiner, “film groups must learn to speak effectively through the medium of the film rather than with words” (Steiner 1934, 22). At the same time, like other leftist artists of the period, the Nykino artists were also attempting to gain professional-level skills, attract a larger audience, deepen their effects upon the viewer, and become accomplished artists themselves (Alexander 1975, 17). “Film makers must keep in mind that the statement ‘there is no art without propaganda’ is also true in the reverse: *there can be no effective propaganda without good art*,” Steiner insisted (1934, 23, emphasis in original).

Not long after his work on *Film Studies of the Dance*, Wolff published an article in *New Theatre* in which he considered how to achieve greater “intensity” through the form of the film itself (Wolff 1936, 23). Wolff argued that even successful left-wing films in the United States still lacked “the close emotion, the extreme passionate lucidity that we find in certain forms of the other major arts” (was he thinking of the leftist dancers, or even of Evan’s performance in the recent *Film Studies of the Dance*?) and urged that “a new form of cinema must be conceived”—here, called the “cine-poem” (Wolff 1936, 23). The cine-poem would take poetry as inspiration to find “the pitch of excitement, the consistent depth and intensity” in cinema, using cutting and rhythmic montage to present “the complex patterns of our lives with a sharp, concise, and shattering emphasis” (Wolff 1936, 23). This new cinematic form would free the filmmaker from “fixed temporal continuity” and open a new door to “metaphor” and “individualized and intense expression” (Wolff 1936, 23, 24). “One sees, hears so much that known forms of art cannot explain,” he wrote. “Perhaps in the method of the cine-poem we have a medium which can encompass modern events, their violent compressions and simultaneities” (Wolff 1936, 36).

The Nykino artists’ quest to release film from journalistic conventions and create a new form with affective properties mirrored that of the revolutionary dance community in many ways, as we have seen. The question of how dance itself could convey meaning particularly preoccupied Evan. From her first foray into the discourse of the revolutionary dance movement in 1934, she challenged dancers to differentiate between what was an “intellectual concept” and what could be “projected through body movement” (Evan 1934, 21). Whereas the former would be “more effective in literary, pantomimic, or spoken form,” discovering the latter would establish revolutionary dance as “a form of propaganda that uses *the dance as its medium*” (Evan 1934, 20; emphasis in original). Thus, at the time of *Film Studies of the Dance*, Evan, Berman, and Wolff were part of a larger community of leftist filmmakers and dancers who were concerned with creating new techniques that embraced the intrinsic, movement-based aspects of their respective mediums. The “Fragment of an Experimental Film-Dance” that closes *Film Studies of the Dance* takes on all these problems: how to elevate film as an art form, in the example of the Soviet avant-garde; how to embody conflict, excitement, and intensity; how to affect an audience through the kinetic dynamism of the form, rather than literary or representational methods. Pudovkin, Nykino’s inspiration, said, “Film is the greatest teacher because it teaches not only through the brain but through the whole body” (quoted in Barker 2009, 1). With their collaborative “film-dance,” the artists attempted to do just that—impact the spectator not only visually or intellectually, but through the body.



Photo 1. Blanche Evan performing her choreography, *Into Action*, about 1935. Courtesy of the Blanche Evan Dance Foundation and Archive Group.

“Fragment of an Experimental Film-Dance” features an excerpt of Evan’s *Into Action*, which was part of a larger suite of dances that she performed with the NDL the following year.<sup>17</sup> The dance is first presented in its “original” form, filmed in a single long take. Here, the camera is set up to record the dance from the front in a long shot, and it remains stationary, not following Evan as she moves across the space, or panning to keep her whole body in the frame. The complete lack of camera work here makes a striking contrast to the film-dance of the excerpt of *Into Action* in the next scene. The film-dance begins with a close-up shot of Evan from her shoulders up, her arm waving from high over her head to down and across her face, and then raising overhead again. Her elbow is bent at a right angle, fist clenched, in the Popular Front symbol of international workers solidarity and antifascism. The angle changes to focus on the dancer’s back performing this movement: first a shot of the back of her head, then a medium shot from the waist up, and then a longer shot from the shins up. In this last shot, we see for the first time that Evan is in a wide stance, her legs moving in strong, rhythmic weight shifts that support the propulsive waving of her fist. A quick succession of cuts between tightly framed shots begins: first Evan’s head, then just one foot, then back to the head, then the foot in a turn, then the whole body turning, then a bent knee, and

then a whole-bodied turn again. The montage of abrupt cuts, from body part to body part, and from an isolated piece of the action to the whole, conveys a sense of simultaneity and multiple perspectives: this is what the foot is doing while the head is doing that; this is what is happening from the back; etc. A shot of the foot slapping flat to the floor is held for a noticeably long moment, breaking the fast, metrical rhythm of this sequence.

Throughout the “Fragment of an Experimental Film-Dance,” the camera takes an objective point of view on the dancing, as opposed to a subjective one from the dancer herself. In other words, the camera work does not theorize the dancing as self-expressive, but rather puts the emphasis entirely on the kinetic and qualitative aspects of the movement, both filmic and danced. The close-ups and multiple perspectives on the movement draw attention to the full-bodied dynamism of the dancing. As Evan performs a series of sharp, machinelike twists of her torso, the camera switches to a low angle, aiming upward from the level of her navel in a deep focus shot that foregrounds her upper torso against an expansive sky, creating depth in the camera space and inviting recognition of the individual’s place in a much larger environment. The perspective cuts again to a frontal close-up of her feet in a repetitive, vibratory movement, and then a long frontal shot that recalls the static camera placement in the preceding scene of the “original” dance. But now, the shadow cast by Evan’s body becomes the focus: a long, stark dancing figure that grows and shrinks at her feet and precedes her into the camera space as she travels horizontally across the camera space. Briefly, the shadow of the camera operator, presumably Berman, joins the shot, stretching in from the lower left corner toward Evan.

The sign of the filmmaker’s unseen presence briefly shifts attention to the human and mechanical bodies enabling the film. Such reflexivity departs from the documentary style, which the Nykino group realized was a constructed image that “did not ‘document’ reality at all” (Hurwitz 1975, 12). Hurwitz described, “It was clear that the question of *truth or lie* lay not in the stuff you were using but in the thoughts, responsibility, empathy of the filmmaker and his capacity to shape a form which could tell . . . how much of the truth?” (1975, 12, emphasis in original). Berman’s bringing himself into the *mise-en-scène* invites an awareness of the perception of the filmmaker and, by extension, the viewer in shaping this cinematic world. There is an intimacy in this encounter with the filmmaker, the dancer, and the film all at once, a sense of mutual participation.

All of the rapid editing and shifting of perspective in the film-dance heightens its tempo and physicality. It also creates a dynamic mobility for the spectator that approaches that of the dancing. Through the cutting and changes of viewpoints, the film “dances” with the dancer and brings the viewer into the movement as well. This mobility strongly departs from the static positioning of the spectator in the “original” shot of the dance. Instead of being asked to look *at* the dance as a representational object, the film-dance invites the spectator to look *into* it as a “dynamic layering” of moving parts (Wall-Romana 2013, 20). As the camera embodies a kinesthetic experience for the spectator, it reframes the dance as a vibrant construction of multiple energetic and qualitative aspects—a complexity hidden beneath the surface of the dance that the “original” filming could never capture. According to Hurwitz, the Nykino filmmakers felt they were breaking through the dominant attitudes toward film, chief among them the “well-nurtured passivity of the audience—hypnotized, narcotized, tickled, massaged, siren-serenaded” (1975, 7). In contrast to this passive mode of spectatorship, Berman, Wolff, and Evan’s “Fragment of an Experimental Film-Dance” offers an example of what film theorist Tom Gunning describes as a “dynamic model of film viewing” (Gunning 2018, 22). The film-dance engages an embodied spectator with an expansive array of inherent potentialities in the dance that can be perceived, experienced, and interrelated in new ways.

This idea of the film-dance as a bodily and sensory encounter for the spectator is further advanced by the filmic techniques employed at the ending. First, the camera remains static as Evan moves toward and away from the lens, so that her image grows and shrinks in size. A series of edits

next cut to the back of her body, then her fast-moving feet, and then a still statue-like pose that momentarily breaks the rhythmic montage. The camera switches back to a frontal shot of Evan traveling side-to-side, entering and leaving the frame. This buildup of front-to-back and side-to-side flows of motion imparts a sense of three-dimensional spatial depth in the film space. As the film ends, Evan advances toward the camera, getting closer and closer until all that can be seen is her lower leg, then her pointed foot, and then an extreme close-up of her big toe, which fills up the camera space until it seems to overtake it. This technique resembles the zoom, but here, the body itself does the work of the camera.<sup>18</sup>

The zoom effect that concludes the “Fragment of an Experimental Film-Dance” bears similarity to a more famous one in cinema history: the ending of the 1901 *The Big Swallow*, in which a man moves closer and closer to the camera until his open mouth “swallows” the cinematographer and his equipment, who tumble into it. Film theorists argue that this “figure of *swallowing*, more than simply observing visually or understanding cognitively, may serve as a particularly powerful image for our relation to the cinema as viewers (and the cinema’s relation to us)” (Gunning 2018, 18, emphasis in original). Jennifer Barker maintains that this image “suggests the corporeal, reversible contact between film and spectator, who inspire one another—in both directions—and yet do not disappear into one another entirely” (2009, 159). For Tom Gunning, it exemplifies the “interchange between the inside and the outside,” fundamental to the cinematic experience (2018, 23). Gunning continues:

I want to stress that the technology of the cinema makes us rethink the boundaries of the human body, rather than simply miming it. The cinema provides a means of both swallowing the world and regurgitating it. But this process exceeds the mechanical process of filming and projection. It is . . . also a process of digestion in which things become transformed and oddly juxtaposed within. Nor does this process remain outside the viewer, simply on the screen; its images also enter her, while they simultaneously transport her beyond herself. (2018, 23).

If this extreme type of zoom effect, in which the film subject overcomes the camera, indeed embodies the film’s capacity to enter, inspire, and transform the spectator, then its use in the final scene of Berman, Wolff, and Evan’s film-dance is especially significant. As Evan advances until she engulfs the camera, the bodies in the film space—the one of the dancer, the one of the film, and the one of the viewer—coalesce.<sup>19</sup> The “Fragment of an Experimental Film-Dance” thus ends by putting forth new affective relations between viewers and artworks, and new ways of perceiving and experiencing the body and the world.

An early foray into what is today called screendance, the “Fragment of an Experimental Film-Dance” allowed both dance and film to advocate for new techniques for leftist practice. The dynamic intensity and perceptual variation created by their collaboration evoked the bodily engagement of the viewer that Evan and the Nykino filmmakers argued was a needed and missing component in revolutionary film and dance. “One sees, hears so much that known forms of art cannot explain,” insisted Wolff. The “Fragment of an Experimental Film-Dance” punctuates the overall message of *Film Studies of the Dance*—to argue for both dance and film as intrinsically kinetic forms whose transformative potential lies in the affective power of movement.

## Conclusion

Three years after *Film Studies of the Dance*, Evan, writing in *New Masses*, claimed that modern dance had failed its promise to become a mass form that was relevant to people’s lives. Modern dancers had remained “content” with “an abstract vocabulary of technical movement which they have evolved within the last fifteen years” (Evan 1938, 17). Having abandoned “the discovery of a new technique for the expression of ideas and emotions,” they remained stuck in “a hangover of



art for art's sake" and mired in "rigid technical vocabularies and psychic imagery" (Evan 1938, 17–19). This described not only the predicament of the bourgeois modern dance choreographers but also the younger, left-wing ones "who, it seems, have not yet divorced themselves from the creative thinking of their parent schools" (Evan 1938, 18). Unlike modern dance's leftist compatriots in theater and painting, who had attuned their work to the masses and the present moment—Evan singled out Marc Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock* as an especially favorable example—modern dance remained estranged from the problems and needs of the real world (Evan 1938, 18). For Evan, leftist dance had, in the end, never solved the "technique problem" that kept it beholden to the problems of the bourgeois schools and limited its capacity as a socially conscious form.

By the time of Evan's 1938 *New Masses* article, *New Theatre* had ceased publication, the NDL had ended, and the cultural front was disintegrating under the pressure of anticommunism and war. Nevertheless, Evan's stated concern in this article—her last writing on leftist modern dance—remained the one she had espoused throughout the 1930s: "How to transmute reality into dance movement (not into pantomime)" (Evan 1938, 19; emphasis in original). In the 1940s, Evan began documenting her work teaching creative dance for children. Functional Technique stayed central to her method, now focused on how the exploration of movement fundamentals provided an expressive outlet for the child (Evan [1939a] 1991, 31–34). She remained committed to the integration of technical form and content, drawn in her pedagogy from the child's real-life experiences. Although she would not use the term "therapy" until she completed training at the Adler Institute of Individual Psychology in 1959, through the 1940s and after, Evan argued that the bodily strength, alignment, and kinesiological patterns established through Functional Technique provided the physical foundation necessary for psychological development and change, or what she termed "psycho-physical unity" in 1949 (Evan [1949a] 1991, 54). Functional Technique stayed integral to Evan's system of dance therapy—so much so that, much later, she embedded clips of *Film Studies of the Dance* into a film documenting her therapy with the neurotic adult.<sup>20</sup>

But even as Evan left the revolutionary dance community, their ideals continued to inform her work in children's dance pedagogy and then dance therapy. These were the values that she helped theorize in *New Theatre* and elsewhere in the 1930s—that dance practice should serve life, that it should be socially useful. Also, the principle we saw in *Film Studies of the Dance*—the affective and transformative potential of bodily movement—bridged her work across the 1930s left and dance therapy. It is worth noting that Evan's path from the 1930s New York left-wing dance community was not unique—her NDL colleagues Franziska Boas and Mary Starks (Whitehouse) also moved into pioneering work in dance therapy in the following years. Nykino founder Hurwitz, reflecting on his decision to pursue an artistic rather than a medical career, noted the therapeutic impulse of revolutionary filmmaking during the social and political turmoil of the Great Depression, describing the "emotional connection between the idea of 'healer' in the drive to be a doctor and the idea of 'healer' in the new commitment to becoming a film maker . . . subtle and deep-lying . . . understandable to me now but not then" (Hurwitz 1975, 3). Numerous factors in this history remain to be unpacked, including institutional ones—the arts projects of the Works Progress Administration, for instance, played a major role in the earliest research in arts therapy at institutions like Bellevue Hospital, where Boas did seminal work in dance therapy beginning in 1939 (Lindgren 2006). However, as Hurwitz gestures toward, the social modernism of the left arts movements, in which art was charged with confronting the harms of the modern world, contained the philosophical underpinnings for a therapeutic approach to art as something that "heals." *Film Studies of the Dance* thus points us toward new understandings of leftist efforts to make art that was dedicated to and useful for contemporary life that persisted long after the "end" of the 1930s cultural front.

## Notes

1. Blanche Evan was a solo dancer, choreographer, teacher, and pioneer in the field of dance/movement therapy. Her dance performance career spanned 1927–1947. She taught creative dance

to children and adults at her studio in New York City from 1934 until 1958. In 1958, after completing a certificate program at the Adler Institute of Individual Psychology, she began calling her methods “dance therapy.” She continued to develop her dance therapy for the neurotic client until her death in 1982.

2. David Wolff (spelled “Wolf” in *Film Studies of the Dance*) was the pseudonym used by the poet and screenwriter Ben Maddow.

3. The Popular Front was a left social movement rooted in the politics of the Communist Party and increasingly allied with Roosevelt’s New Deal. Formed in response to the expansionist aims of fascism and its hostility toward communism, the Popular Front created a broad left-wing alliance—progressives, liberals, socialists, and communists—around the shared goals of antifascism, social democracy, and civil rights. My understanding of the Popular Front is indebted to Denning (2010), Hemingway (2002), and Mally (2007).

4. Historiography in US dance studies on the field of dance therapy is slim. The only two studies of which I am aware are Lindgren (2006) and Kew (2019). There is more work on this history in the international field of body psychotherapy; as an example, see Oberem (2016).

5. As an example, see Evan’s 1982 *New York Times* obituary: “Blanche Evan, 73, a Pioneer in Dance Therapy Techniques.”

6. The opening credits of the film state, “Produced by Lionel Berman and David Wolf, 1935.” However, Bonnie Bernstein, co-director of the Blanche Evan Dance Foundation and Archive Group, told me that, according to Evan, she and Berman created *Film Studies of the Dance*, and Wolff was only marginally involved. As a member of the left-wing film collective Nykino with Berman, Wolff wrote scripts, commentary, and narration for the films. According to film historian William Alexander, Wolff was passionate about the combination of word and image, in film as well as in poetry, as a way of intensifying the meaning and emotional impact of the work (Alexander 1981, 83, 162, 260, 288–289). For these reasons, my feeling is that Wolff’s main contributions to *Film Studies of the Dance* likely took place in the editing room, where he may have advised on the poetics of the montage, and that it was indeed Berman who made the film, in collaboration with Evan. For this reason, I will consider Berman to have been the camera operator in my analysis.

7. I am drawing here on Douglas Rosenberg’s account of screendance as an artwork in which “neither the dance nor the method of rendering are in service to each other but are instead partners or collaborators in the creation of a hybrid form.” See Rosenberg (2012, 9). I will be using the term “film-dance,” following the terminology used in *Film Studies of the Dance*.

8. The Dance Guild was an organization formed by a group of dancers under the auspices of the Workers Dance League in 1935 to advocate for emerging dance artists, advance dance as an art form, and help organize the dance field. In May 1935, three months after their founding, the Dance Guild formally affiliated as an independent body with the New Dance League (the new name of the Workers Dance League). The Dance Guild held recitals and forums on dance and dance-related topics. In 1937, the Dance Guild was merged with the NDL and the Dancers’ Emergency Association to form the American Dance Association. On the Dance Guild (initially formed as a “club”), see “The Dance Front” (1935, 26). For additional examples of Dance Guild activities, see Martin (1936a; 1936c).

9. The group is called the Blanche Evan Amateur Group in the *New York Times* article on this New Dance League festival; see Martin (1935c, 14). Advertising for the festival in *New Theatre* also placed Evan’s troupe in the “Non Professional Groups” category; see “New Dance League, All Day Festival” (1935, 31).

10. I am influenced here by Evgeny Dobrenko’s idea that the central mandate of Soviet revolutionary literature—that the writer become the conduit for party ideas to the masses—necessitated that the artist take a new stance of authority in society. See Dobrenko (2005, 90–91).

11. Evan’s March 1937 article about *Film Studies of the Dance*, titled “. . . As Others See You,” was likely the lecture she gave when the film was shown the previous January at a showing of dance films sponsored by the Dance Guild (Martin 1937, 160). The film was also shown as part of a lecture-demonstration in March 1936 (“Blanche Evan in a Lecture-Demonstration with Dance Films” 1936). These are the three showings of the film in the 1930s that I have been able to uncover.

12. The opening caption of *Film Studies of the Dance* reads, “There was no one to replace my teacher Bird Larson, who died prematurely. Alone I pursued the further development of a basic technique. I named my system FUNCTIONAL TECHNIQUE” (Evan, Berman, and Wolff 1935).

13. On the use of tension and release at the New York Wigman School, see Randall (2008, 176–177). The rhythmic bounces of the bent-forward torso in Evan’s “Tension and Resiliency” exercise also recalls the “pulses” in Martha Graham’s technique. Echoes of Wigman’s work also appear in Evan’s circular isolations of the shoulders and hands in later scenes of *Film Studies of the Dance*.

14. Berman was named by John Lautner in a House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) hearing as the organizational secretary of the cultural division of the New York Communist Party. See *Hearings before the Committee on Un-American Activities, House of Representatives, Eighty-Fifth Congress, Second Session*, March 18, 1958: 2510.

15. For a comprehensive history of Nykino and Frontier Films, see Alexander (1981). Berman, Hurwitz, Maddow, and Myers remained members of the collective until it ended in 1941 (Alexander 1975, 17).

16. William Alexander notes that Leyda, who worked with Eisenstein in Moscow, was influential on some of Nykino’s films and close to some of its members, but was not one of the core members of the group. See Alexander (1981, 215 n.f.).

17. *Into Action* was part of a suite of dances titled *Resentment, Awareness, Into Action*. Evan performed this suite on the March 22, 1936, recital of the Dance Guild, an organization affiliated with the New Dance League. Also featured on the program were Mary Radin, Miriam Blecher, Jane Dudley, and Eleanor King. Evan’s suite was reviewed in *New Theatre* as “strong and challenging [with] an objectivity of approach which, for the young dancers, has always been one of the most difficult things to maintain” (Ruskay 1936, 31). The following month, Evan traveled to Boston to perform under the auspices of the New Dance Group with Jane Dudley, Sophie Maslow, Anna Sokolow, and Bill Matons; although not cited, given the positive reception of *Resentment, Awareness, Into Action*, I feel it is safe to presume she performed the work in full or part at that concert as well. See Martin (1936a).

18. I thank Vlad Dima for pointing this out, and for his assistance with film terminology and theory in this section.

19. I thank Vlad Dima for this insight.

20. This film is *A Retrospective Outline* (1976), housed at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

## Works Cited

- Alexander, William. 1975. “Frontier Films, 1936–1941: The Aesthetics of Impact.” *Cinema Journal* 15 (1): 16–28.
- . 1981. *Film on the Left: American Documentary Film from 1931–1942*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Anyon, Nell. 1935. “The New Dance League.” *New Theatre*, April, 28.
- “Art Is a Weapon.” 1931. *New Masses*, August, 11–13.
- Barker, Jennifer M. 2009. *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bernstein, Bonnie. 2020. Interviewed by the author via Zoom. August 31.
- . 2021. Interviewed by the author via Zoom. October 25.
- “Blanche Evan in a Lecture-Demonstration with Dance Films.” 1936. Advertisement. *New Theatre*, March, 37.
- Boas, Franziska. 1969. Interview by Marian Horosko [tape recording, 2 reels]. \*MGZT 7-113. The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, New York, NY.

- . n.d. “With the Death of Bird Larson . . .” ML31.B63. Box 7, folder 12. Franziska Boas Collection. Music Division, Library of Congress.
- Bowlit, John E., ed. 1988. “Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks): Decree on the Reconstruction of Literary and Artistic Organizations, 1932.” In *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism, 1902–1934*, 288–290. New York: Thames and Hudson.
- The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. 1935. “Blanche Evan Will Give a Lecture-Demonstration.” June 4, 8.
- Buchwald, Nathaniel. 1935. “A Revolutionary Gentleman.” *New Theatre*, March, 24.
- Coiner, Constance. 1995. *Better Red: The Writing and Resistance of Tillie Olsen and Meridel Le Sueur*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- “The Dance Festival.” 1935. *New Theatre*, July, 33.
- “The Dance Front.” 1935. *New Theatre*, February, 26.
- Denning, Michael. 2010. *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Verso.
- Dobrenko, Evgeny. 2005. *Aesthetics of Alienation: Reassessment of Early Soviet Cultural Theories*. Translated by Jesse M. Savage. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Eisenberg, Emmanuel. 1935. “Ladies of the Revolutionary Dance.” *New Theatre*, February, 10–11.
- Elion, Harry. 1934. “Perspectives of the Dance.” *New Theatre*, September, 18–19.
- Evan, Blanche. 1934. “An Open Letter to Workers’ Dance Groups.” *New Theatre*, April, 20–21.
- . (1935) 1991. “Road to the Dance.” In *Collected Works by and about Blanche Evan*, compiled by Ruth Gordon Benov, 8–12. San Francisco: Blanche Evan Dance Foundation.
- . 1936a. “From a Dancer’s Notebook.” *New Theatre*, March, 16–17, 28–29.
- . 1936b. “From a Dancer’s Notebook.” *New Theatre*, April, 31, 44–45.
- . (1937) 1991. “. . . As Others See You.” In *Collected Works by and about Blanche Evan*, compiled by Ruth Gordon Benov, 23–25. San Francisco: Blanche Evan Dance Foundation.
- . 1938. “Her Chosen Theme: A Modern Dancer’s Credo.” *New Masses*, July 26, 17–19.
- . (1939a) 1991. “Dancing Children.” In *Collected Works by and about Blanche Evan*, compiled by Ruth Gordon Benov, 31–34. San Francisco: Blanche Evan Dance Foundation.
- . (1939b) 1991. “Tribute to Bird Larson.” In *Collected Works by and about Blanche Evan*, compiled by Ruth Gordon Benov, 35–38. San Francisco: Blanche Evan Dance Foundation.
- . (1949a) 1991. “The Child’s World: Its Relation to Dance Pedagogy: Article II: The Child’s Need.” In *Collected Works by and about Blanche Evan*, compiled by Ruth Gordon Benov, 52–56. San Francisco: Blanche Evan Dance Foundation.
- . (1949b) 1991. “The Child’s World: Its Relation to Dance Pedagogy: Article IV.” In *Collected Works by and about Blanche Evan*, compiled by Ruth Gordon Benov, 61–65. San Francisco: Blanche Evan Dance Foundation.
- . 1991. *Collected Works by and about Blanche Evan*. Compiled by Ruth Gordon Benov. San Francisco: Blanche Evan Dance Foundation.
- Evan, Blanche (performer), Lionel Berman (producer), and David Wolff [spelled “Wolf”] (producer). 1935. *Film Studies of the Dance* (motion picture). \*MGZHB 8-1710. New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, New York, NY.
- Evan, Blanche (performer, writer), and Paul Clagnaz (photographer). 1976. *A Retrospective Outline, 1958–76* (motion picture). \*MGZHB 8-1710. New York Public Library of the Performing Arts, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, New York, NY.
- Evan, Blanche (performer, writer), and A. D. Marks (producer). 1966. *Life is Movement* (motion picture). \*MGZIVDVD 5-4286. New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, New York, NY.
- Franko, Mark. 1995. *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Freedman, Ezra. 1934. “The Dance: Which Technique?” *New Theatre*, May, 17–18.
- Garafola, Lynn. 2002. “Writing on the Left: The Remarkable Career of Edna Ocko.” *Dance Research Journal* 34 (1): 53–61.
- Geduld, Victoria Phillips. 2008. “Performing Communism in the American Dance: Culture, Politics and the New Dance Group.” *American Communist History* 7 (1): 39–65.

- Graff, Ellen. 1999. *Stepping Left: Dance and Politics in New York City, 1928–1942*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Gunning, Tom. 2018. “The Impossible Body of Early Film.” In *Corporeality in Early Cinema: Viscera, Skin, and Physical Form*, edited by Valentine Robert, Jan Olsson, Doron Galili, and Marina Dahlquist, 13–24. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Hemingway, Andrew. 2002. *Artists on the Left: American Artists and the Communist Movement, 1926–1956*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Hurwitz, Leo. 1975. “One Man’s Voyage: Ideas and Films in the 1930’s.” *Cinema Journal* 15 (1): 1–15.
- Johnson, Loyce M. 1950. “Bird Larson, First Technician of American Dance.” Master’s thesis, New York University: New York.
- “The June Festival of the New Dance League.” 1935. *New Theatre*, June, 30.
- Kew, Carole. 2019. “Shamanism in Weimar Dance: The Pathway to Mary Wigman and the Beginning of Dance as Therapy.” *Dance Research* 37 (2): 165–180.
- Leyda, Si-lan Chen. 1984. *Footnote to History*. Edited by Sally Banes. New York: Dance Horizons.
- Lindgren, Allana. 2006. “The Pioneering Work of Franziska Boas at Bellevue Hospital in New York, 1939–1943.” *American Journal of Dance Therapy* 28 (2): 59–86.
- Mally, Lynn. 2007. “Inside a Communist Front: A Post-Cold War Analysis of the New Theatre League.” *American Communist History* 6 (1): 73–81.
- Manning, Susan. 1993. *Ecstasy and the Demon: Feminism and Nationalism in the Dances of Mary Wigman*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Martel, Gene. 1935. “Men Must Dance.” *New Theatre*, June, 18.
- Martin, John. 1935a. “The Dance: Men’s Season.” *New York Times*, April 21, X4.
- . 1935b. “The Dance: On Relief.” *New York Times*, April 14, X9.
- . 1935c. “New Dance League Holds 3D Festival.” *New York Times*, June 10, 14.
- . 1936a. “The Dance: Miscellaneous Matters.” *New York Times*, April 5, X8.
- . 1936b. “The Dance: To Symphony.” *New York Times*, November 1, X8.
- . 1936c. “The Dance: WPA Theatre.” *New York Times*, March 15, X7.
- . 1937. “The Dance: Spring Plans.” *New York Times*, January 17, 160.
- Neets, J. Q. [Joshua Kunitz]. 1930. “Let Us Master Our Art!” *New Masses*, July, 23. “New Dance League, All Day Festival.” 1935. Advertisement. *New Theatre*, June, 31.
- “New Theatre.” 1934. *New Theatre*, September, 1–5.
- New York Times. 1982. “Blanche Evan, 73, a Pioneer in Dance Therapy Techniques.” December 28, D14.
- Oberem, Maria Luise. 2016. “Breathing, Sensing and Expressing Emotions: The Influence of Elsa Gindler and Mary Wigman on Body Psychotherapy and Dance/Movement Therapy.” *Body, Movement and Dance in Psychotherapy* 11 (2-3): 114–128.
- Ocko, Edna. 1936. “Dancers Take a Bow.” *New Theatre*, February, 24–25.
- Prentiss, A. 1933. “Towards the Revolutionary Dance.” *New Theatre*, May–June, 11, 17.
- Randall, Tresa. 2008. “Hanya Holm in America, 1931–1936: Dance, Culture and Community.” PhD diss., Temple University: Philadelphia.
- Redfield, Louise. 1935. “New Dance Season.” *New Theatre*, October, 25.
- Rosenberg, Douglas. 2012. *Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ruskay, Elizabeth. 1936. “The Dance Guild Recital.” *New Theatre*, May, 31.
- Steiner, Ralph. 1934. “Revolutionary Movie Production.” *New Theatre*, September, 22–23.
- Steiner, Ralph, and Leo T. Hurwitz. 1935. “A New Approach to Film Making.” *New Theatre*, September, 22–23.
- Trotsky, Leon. 1971. *Literature and Revolution*. 4th ed. Translated by Rose Strunsky. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Veder, Robin. 2011. “Seeing Your Way to Health: The Visual Pedagogy of Bess Mensendieck’s Physical Culture System.” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28 (8-9): 1336–1352.

- Wall-Romana, Christophe. 2013. *Cinepoetry: Imaginary Cinemas in French Poetry*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- "We Are Building a Theatrical Revolutionary Front." 1933. *International Theatre* 3:43.
- Wolff, David. 1936. "Film into Poem." *New Theatre*, November, 23, 36.
- "Workers Theatre and Dance." 1933. *New Theatre*, April, 1.
- "Workers Theatre to Become New Theatre." 1933. *Workers Theatre*, July-August, 2.
- Wylie, Grace. 1933. "A Reply from the New Dance Group." *New Theatre*, September-October, 22.