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Comparative Studies on Literature and Dance: An Interdisciplinary and Cross-cultural Approach

Comparative studies on literature and art have not been categorized in the disciplinary history of comparative literature until Henry H. H. Remak's declaration in "Comparative Literature: Its Definition and Function". Within this scope, relationships between literature and music, painting, sculpture, and even architecture are most often tackled with, while the relationship between literature and dance remains a minority concern. Reasons for such a lacuna lie in, from an ontological point of view, dance's immediacy and ephemerality. A further and root reason can be traced to the mind/body dualism culminating in Descartes' philosophy that is inscribed in Western cultural tradition which has been dominated by the privileging of the rational thinking mind and the negation of the body since the enlightenment. In addition, dance is also neglected because of the presumed 'femininity' of the art. Since scant attention has been paid to the relationship between literature and dance in comparative literature, the author of this paper tries to forge dialogue between the two fields by proposing four approaches focusing on the interaction/interplay between them from an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural perspective. These four approaches include, first, "dance of the text," mainly alludes to analysis of dance adaptations of literary works. Then, "text of the dance," indicates analysis of text about dance writing, which may encompass autobiographies of dancers or choreographers teeming with their dance philosophy that is influenced by literary figures and their works. While "dance and the text" chiefly analyze how the social ethos which is featured by specific dance boom influenced literary creation and aesthetics, lastly, "dance in the text," is about analysis of dance encoded in literary texts, such as dance's manifold metaphors and functions in literary narrative and their broader social and cultural references.