Arguments and Counterarguments in Ann Daly

(read directions before beginning readings and video viewings)

As you read the Ann Daly articles, many of the arguments she makes will sound familiar as they have come up in previous class readings and discussions. As we move from basic arguments towards more complex thinking (e.g. balancing multiple conflicting arguments and coming to conclusions about their relative merits), I would like you to become conversant in all of the major arguments that people frequently make about gender and ballet.

Something Daly does frequently in the writings you are considering this week is point out both arguments AND the counterarguments used to contradict them. Sometimes she presents two ideas that are in tension with one another and leaves the reader to puzzle over the tension; other times she evaluates the two arguments and draws a conclusion as to which one carries more weight. Often the two ideas are not mutually exclusive, but exist at once within a single dancing body. In some cases, there are even more than two ideas at play in interpreting a given moment of dance.

Your assignment for the Daly articles is to list as many pairs of arguments/ideas that are in tension with one another as you can. For example, on p.280 one argument says that a man’s controlling of the actions of a woman in a pas de deux is misogynistic, while another says that the man's support allows the woman to be more powerful, open, and beautiful than she could be on her own.

For this exercise, you do not need to decide which arguments you think are strongest, however do think about what questions you could ask to help you look at the implications of the conflicting ideas. Bring in at least one such question along with your list from the reading.

As you watch, "Dancing for Mr. B", make a list of ideas from the film (including your own observations), looking through the lens of gender. Then take a few minutes to see how your notes from the film and your notes from the reading connect or are in tension with one another. Highlight the strongest points of connection and tension.

Bring in both lists and your question for class discussion and to be handed in.