

A State of Transcendence in Dance An Autoethnographic Analysis

A Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own original work and has not been submitted for any previous examination.

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Abstract

This thesis maps and analyses a dancer's journey and as that dancer is myself the research investigates the limits and possibilities of self-observation as a methodology. I have taken a term commonly used in dance – transcendence – and used it as a gateway to explore the invisible experience that is the dancer's personal process, configuring its key characteristic as a creative tension between restriction and infinite possibility, further explored as the dialogue between embodied technique and the sense of freedom in dance.

I explore how my body and experience in dance can be theorised, and what methodological tools are useful in the attempt to better understand the embodied work and invisible inner experience of the dancer. I place myself as the subject of the research and argue for the significance of my lived experience as a cross-cultural journey in the development of my own body's intelligence.

The research addresses specifically a dancer's body as a site for the interweaving of two different forms of dance, namely Korean dance and Western ballet, and explores the impact of this on the dancer in question. The aesthetic and technical implications of this inter-cultural practice are analysed alongside a study of the culturally inscribed body that in this research draws specifically on a Korean woman's upbringing in Korea.

Included with the written thesis are accompanying creative material in the form of a spoken address and films of original choreography danced by the researcher. An appendix is attached for those interested in knowing more of the choreographic process involved in the dance works.

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Lists of DVDs

1. Emptiness
2. Towards Embodied Knowledge: the Dancer's Journey
3. Mirror of Water, Still Sky
4. Traditional Korean Dance
5. I Speak

Appendix

DVD 1. The Creative Making Process: Mirror of Water, Still Sky

Preamble

This research sets out the design of the submission, of which the thesis represents main body of work, supported by dance film – *Emptiness, Towards Embodied Knowledge: the Dancer's Journey, Mirror of Water, Still Sky* , The Creative Making Process: *Mirror of Water, Still Sky*, and accompanied by film of a Traditional Korean Dance (to give an idea of Korean dance for the reader) – and a short film with my own spoken voice I speak – in order to record, document and analyse a dancer's feeling of transcendence, which lies beyond the realm of conventional logic.

Introduction

The air, the low sound of my feet touching the floor, the noise of the wind in my ear, and the sound of my breathing accompanying movements cause an internal transformation in myself and I feel my body and mind melt to become one. My dance is not merely achieving or showing a high level of physical skill but rather it concerns an inner process of emotional development.

I argue for the primacy of what I will define as ‘transcendence’ through my own performance experience, an experience which derives critically from my bodily knowledge. The movements I engage in dance are self-directed; even though most dancers learn technically, they still have to understand how movement is executed through their own body and their own individual understanding of technique. My thesis argues from this that dance is a potential source of self-knowledge, and using a research method based on auto-ethnography, I attempt to explore this premise via my own subjective bodily experience.

As bodily knowledge is not only a question of physical learning, the reader can see the development of my body’s intelligence from the past to the potential future. Through dance, I can represent what I have been in the past because the movement is the fruition of what I have been striving for – I am here in this

place, engaged in this particular activity with respect to my physical environment and what I am capable of reaching now and in the future.

My own lived experience is the essential element to explore in this research. Throughout these chapters and the discussion of my particular process of transcendence, the reader may well be able to identify several paradoxical moments of the coexistence of feelings of calm and turbulence in my inner self, indicative of the tough process by which I reach a certain level of dance and the feeling of freedom which is finally gained through physical awareness and suffering. All these are combined in the intimate connection felt between myself and the audience and how the audience can affect the dancer's feeling. These paradoxical experiences arise at the critical moment where my body reaches a certain state or feeling – what I define here as a state of transcendence. A key aim has been to develop an appropriate strategy to support and inform the documentation of this ephemeral state of being.

Underpinning any such documentary strategy is a heightened state of awareness by which I listen to, feel and observe my body while I am dancing. This enables me to explore and find out where I am, what I am doing and how I feel, and then try to reflect on those matters and transform them into the writing. As a research tool to explore these issues, I draw on a range of ideas from auto-ethnography blended with two contrasting performance practices – a Korean dancer's understanding of what I might call a flow of energy using breath technique, and the bodily training involved in ballet technique. To allow my thoughts to unfold

and evolve, I emphasise, through the auto-ethnographical method, the individual's experiences of dancing. However, to give a wider context, my analysis includes other dancers' experiences of performing where relevant and illuminating to the central thesis (such as Claid (2006), Hahn (2007)), as well as writers who attempt to convey and define these experiences (Beardsley, 1982; Zarrilli, 1990; Gil, 2006).

The activation of a sense of self in the world, guided by one's own values and experience, permits each individual to discover and express subjective meaning. As Melrose (2002) argues, we need reflective judgement, and I place an emphasis throughout this research on the contribution to knowledge of what I might call reflective feeling or experience. I place my own performance work in the context of this activation of the subjective sense of self through three research contexts:

- (a) I will examine the blurred relationship between what is personal and what is cultural through confessional autoethnography. This is an approach where the dancer is simultaneously object and subject and includes elements of my upbringing, training and personal background.
- (b) I will analyse the stages in dance – depersonalisation in relation to training, habituation, tradition and stylised movements back through to the personal stamp of the dancer.
- (c) I will analyse my own embodied experience in cross cultural dancing, as it arises specifically from my individual practice, and through this explore the

relationship between my dancing practice and the hybridised dance culture that I experience as a Korean artist working in the Western environment.

(d) I will explore the relationship between dancing and consciousness, and enquire into energy and presence in dance through my own experience.

(e) I will explore what I really know with my body when I am dancing, discovering my sense of self and focusing on my feeling as a final stage of my transcendence, with which comes emptiness.

These are addressed through self-study focusing on my own practice, but this thesis will contribute to knowledge rather than being merely autobiographical because I will consider how far the findings distilled from this research into my own practice could relate to the wider context of dancing and dancers in general.

This research is a journey of my processes outlined in the structure of the following chapter. In Chapter 1 I outline my methodology. In Chapter 2 I discuss the term transcendence and its various uses and meaning in different contexts and relate that to my own use of the term. Chapter 3 describes my study of ballet followed by my study of Korean dance, until the time I became a professional ballet dancer. Chapters 4 and 5 will be analyses of the practical works I have created and performed during this research. These works are created on the grounding of my whole life as a dancer. Finally, the last chapter contains my conclusions. The discussion of my practical work draws on several other researchers, writers, dancers and choreographers, especially Fraleigh and Barba while in relation to the science and philosophy of consciousness I also draw on

the work of Antonio Damasio. This thesis examines how cultural structures together with ballet training guide and control dance and impact on the development of a Korean dancer's body.

Chapter 1 contains an argument for the methodology I have used (including the reason I need to explore this research), the scope of my research questions and a general explanation of my use of auto-ethnography.

In Chapter 2, Transcendence, I discuss the range of different contexts in which the term transcendence is used – in mystical practices and in dance. I address transcendence in dance from the point of view of different choreographers and dancers to give a general background.

In Chapter 3 entitled Embodiment, I analyse embodied knowledge where I follow Norris' (2002; 2005) notion of embodiment as an experience of bodily knowledge within dance. Norris speaks of bodily experience whereby "knowledge is gained through the body" (Norris, 2002). The process of embodiment plays an important role in my understanding of bodily experience not only physically but also emotionally.

It will be apparent that embodiment is one of the most important concepts underpinning my research, as it is about the self-embodied knowledge of the dancer. Just as the self is the most important element in auto-ethnographic research, the self is also essential to the practices and process which lead to

transcendence in my dance. I focus my exploration on how I as a dancer embody the dance movement, and what happens when I embody a dance physically and emotionally. I document my body experience through my life as a dancer, as Coffey puts it, to “connect emotionally with the field, [to connect with] the physical self to the place and representation of field work” (Coffey, 1999, p 131).

I propose that dancing is constructed through the relationships and blurred distinctions between the personal and the cultural. Chapter 3 describes my discovery of a personal sense of self, already constructed in culture, with twenty years of dance experience and its accrued degree of embodied knowledge. Through the use of auto-ethnographic text, what is disclosed is not only my personal emotion and feeling but also the cultural contexts in which these are embedded and articulated. In this chapter, to explain the embodiment of the experience through my story as a dancer, “depersonalisation” and “objectification” are discussed borrowing notions from Fraleigh and Barba, in that the process of a Korean dancer is depersonalised and objectified in dance through her own body and language. I assume that a dancer, who goes through this depersonalisation through continuous practice, can embody the movement and be presented as the first stage of my terms of transcendence, the unification of the self with the intended movement. Subsequently, the dance and dancer can be evaluated by others.

Chapter 4 describes subjectivity, the stage following that of embodiment for the dancer. In this chapter, I borrow Fraleigh’s argument to explain how the term

“subjective” is appropriate for my work and how the dancer can experience “transcendence” through the process of a piece of work. In Chapter 4, I argue that dance involves more than just knowing how to make movements; it involves, most importantly for me, the individual intentionality of the dancer’s unique qualities as a personal signature with embodied knowledge. Dance can be imbued with subjectivity and this is explained through the development of the first work *Mirror of Water, Still Sky* (Go, 2005). In this chapter, my emotion, my feeling, and cultural influence are the most essential elements. To explore this, I use the previously stated auto-ethnographical method of “felt-sensing” (Spry, 2006) and “self-reflexive” (Etherington, 2004) text, showing the interplay between subject and object.

McFee (1992) explains the term “subjective” as necessarily involving human feelings, and I adapt Damasio’s notion of feeling to the life of the dancer in this chapter. Moreover, in this chapter, I explore the dancer’s energy and the notion of the dancer’s subjectivity, showing my emotive response when I try to find the energy which is a fundamental element for a dancer. I try to combine a Korean dancer’s energy, which can be enhanced with specific breath technique, and a ballet dancer’s energy. How I find this energy, as well as my feeling and emotion during the rehearsal and through the process of the work, will be examined in this chapter.

Chapter 5 is an account of my concluding exploration of transcendence in which I borrow heavily from the Korean philosopher Bujung’s notion of non-

possession. In this chapter, I concentrate on my bodily attempts during the dance to know “the feeling of what happens” (Damasio, 2000). I try to get a sense of myself through the dance, focusing on my various senses in ways in which I have not tried to feel before, in a studio alone so as not to be distracted by anything or anyone. In this sensory sensitive environment I then explore in detail how it may be that a dancer gains knowledge of and through her body and its senses. I attempt to pay attention to different senses and I strive to illuminate interior feeling through my body movement. From the first practical work, in a natural environment, I can feel my own space and own movement – kinesphere. The second work *Emptiness* (Go, 2008), which is performed on 3rd August 2008, develops this, transgressing the boundaries of the visual. In this work I explore my own bodily “proximate sense” (Yi-Fu, 1993, p 35), where my sensate body meets the social, cultural and historical; in other words, the world in which I live. With this third practical work called *Emptiness*, I attempt to make a specific exploration of this sensation of transcendence, using my dancing to direct my attention towards and to interrogate my total sensory response.

To support this exploration, I emphasise how practice is important for a dancer and address how the dancer attains the bodily knowledge to be a dancer borrowing Polanyi’s notion of focal and tacit knowledge associated with my own experience. When I learn ballet, I learn new movement by shifting from one to the other and back again as illustrated by Polanyi’s (1958) notion. Once I can perceive focally, and get a sense of the whole of my body so that it becomes embodied, I can intend, in various ways. Learning to perceive precedes learning

to intend even though these are both active processes. With the former, I am able to recognise the capability of my body and with the latter I can finally give the movement as I intended. Through the third practical work, I try to explore what I really understand as a self-knowledge and what the intention of the movement is. This movement leads me to find myself and these steps all help me to obtain transcendence.

Fraleigh states: “Dancing may be conceived in light of our ability to listen to ourselves in movement, sensing what feels good, what feels right” (2004, p 117). In this chapter, I suggest that transcendence frees me from any need to transcend and that there is no need for anything, as with Bujung’s empty hand, a metaphor for the sense in which non-attainment is the best attainment. With this exploration of feeling – sense, I am able to see myself in a different way in dance and these movements are aspects of myself that are ready to become visible in their own way with the notion of emptiness. In other words, through this final piece of dance, I describe how I was able to find myself in the movement and to find the sense of which I might call transcendence as a final stage of my experience.

This research begins with the question of how a dancer who performs with objectively formed movement can imbue her invisible subjectivity in her dance. Therefore, objectivity and subjectivity are discussed in the context of my embodied experience. Throughout this thesis, the reader can see my concept of transcendence as a process involving embodiment, subjectivity and emptiness. I

couple my experience of learning and dancing ballet and traditional Korean dance in order to explore the cross-fertilisation of these styles and potentialities with the combined energy of these two dances. For me, my emotional and spiritual core is intimately connected to my body, which I desire to express through my relation to the medium of dance, and to words I have created. Additionally, my emphasis on dance, instead of another art form, reflects my own experience. My subjectivity as a dancer deeply touches my life. On the other hand, we represent what is subjectively felt with words, but those very words objectify the experience. Moreover, as representation will convey more than it intends (Phelan, 1992, p 2), in this thesis I attempt to explore the hidden behind the seen through my experience.

Chapter 1

Overview and methodology

Beautifully curved arms, strutted walking with pointed legs and feet, serene face with flowing movement, suddenly the picture changes as the dancer leaps, which leads her buoyantly and strongly into the air. How did she get there? How did she feel at the moment of dancing? If that “she” is I, I can say that I am conscious of an invisible trove of experience. In my best performance, there is a moment where my body, personality and skill as a performer go beyond the object text of the performance. It is this moment that marks the threshold of transcendence.

Definitions of transcendence and arguments around this issue have centred on an understanding of experience (Pearce, 1990 and Chapter 2 in this thesis). For me, transcendence is an indescribable and undefined feeling of the special moment that only I can know when I am dancing. So, if it is something that cannot be delivered in language, how can it be documented? In this research, I have used my own experience to explore what possibilities there are to record, document and analyse the moment that I call transcendence.

As part of this exploratory process I use the story of my life as a structuring narrative to relate my underlying values, my philosophies on life, my views of reality and my beliefs to my own practice as a Korean dancer. In doing this I construct a notion of hybridised identity constructed through a Korean upbringing embedded in Confucianism, a training in Western ballet in Korea, the embodied practice of traditional Korean dance, and my engagement with the Western/English academic process of auto-ethnographic writing.

As a result my work explores how a cultural inscription in the dancer's body can work through individual experience and memory to create a kinaesthetic sense of individual presence. To explore how my body has been inscribed by my cultural upbringing I use the concept of the pre-reflexive or pre-expressive state to reflect on my body state before it gained the experience of a dancer's training, tracing how in this pre-dance state I thought, moved, behaved and lived.

Dance is a stylised schema of peoples' overall physical culture – “Dance is the metaphysics of culture” (Polhemus, 1998, p 174). Desmond (1998) sets out how dance intimately connects with its culture and society:

If dance styles and performance practices are both symptomatic and constitutive of social relations, then tracing the history of dance styles and their spread from one group or area to another, along with the changes that occur in this transmission, can help uncover shifting ideologies attached to bodily discourse (Desmond, 1998, p 158).

Moreover, dance reveals the important part bodily discourse plays in the continuing social construction and negotiation of race, gender, class and nationality (Desmond, 1998). For example, Kathak, which is a popular classical dance in North and East India, is not only a complete artistic product but also a cultural process whereby a woman's identity becomes embodied through the rigours of physical training (Chakravorty, 2010).

Cultural identity in movement is not limited to traditional dance, but it is also a factor in contemporary dance. At the Judson Dance Theatre, which gave its first performance in 1962 with founding members including Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton, David Gordon and Trisha Brown, several choreographers and dancers sourced their dance movements from everyday action rather than from technically trained movement. For example, Yvonne Rainer tried to eliminate hierarchical relations between dancers and non-dancers and between dance movement and everyday life. Paxton, similarly, incorporated everyday actions into his choreography, proposing that dance technique can give dancers an enabled and empowered form of their culture. As in Rainer's works, in his dance piece *Satisfyin' Lover* in 1967, dancers are simply walking across the floor. Paxton, similarly, incorporated everyday actions into his choreography, proposing that dance technique can give dancers an enabled and empowered form of their culture.

It is a proposition of this research that a creative practice can challenge, even subvert, cultural inscription. I use my own practice as a dancer to interrogate this

proposition, in particular claiming that I am able, through dance to experience “transcendence”.

This implies that the dancer can experience this sense of infinite possibility through her own somatic experience. I draw on the work of Sondra Fraleigh, who describes dance as “surpassing of self” (Fraleigh, 2004, p 59) in that when she is dancing she can extend her nature and her culture through dance, and become a dancer who is required to go beyond the confines of self (Fraleigh, 1987).

Transcendence is not used here as a mystical term, nor is it necessarily used to mean an ecstatic level of consciousness and disembodied emotion. On the contrary, my understanding of transcendence proposes a state experienced by and in the body. In other words, it is a state of the body, a kinaesthetic sense. As Merleau-Ponty states: “the actual existence of my body is indispensable to that of my ‘consciousness’” (1962, p 384). In addition, the Korean philosophy of “body-mind-universe” (an important point of reference throughout this thesis), argues that the individual and the universe are one when the distinction between mind and body disappears.

An example of this state occurs when I danced in the sea in my dance piece *Mirror of Water, Still Sky* (Go, 2005) (DVD 3). In a literal description of this state I would say that my body sensed a lightness and that I became unconscious of my body movement, in other words my movement was could not be

understood solely in terms of rational intention. This is critical, since generally speaking, when a dancer makes a movement, the movement is an intended action, an action that is consciously controlled. It is governed by the dancer's decision to move and in some cases by a choreographer's decision that this action be moved. Conscious decision making in this way can be experienced as specific bodily sensations – the muscle tightening, tension between head reaching up and the legs rooted in the ground, all of which add up to the experience of body alignment in general.

However, in a state of transcendence, of integration of body and mind, I paradoxically both feel my body and do not feel my body and its alignment. Deborah Hay (1974), Pakes (2006), Nadel (2003), Fraleigh (1987), and Zarrilli (1990) talk about the dancer's mind-body integration, and Pakes (2006) proposes integration of mind and body as central to the dancer's lived experience. Nadel (2003, p 137) points out: "For many dancers and those connected with dance, true spiritual fulfilment means education and religious practices that employ an oneness of the mind-body experience".

In Chapter 3 I try to weave the experiential and unconscious voice of the dancer into the self-conscious and analytical to explore this proposition. I have drawn on Deborah Hay's account in *My Body, The Buddhist* (2000) which is in fact a classic example of auto-ethnography and body-mind integration. She is a dancer and choreographer whose works are focused on the individual qualities of the dancer herself. Her work explores the belief that body and consciousness are

conjoined and I draw on this concept especially in my second dance work *Emptiness* (Go, 2008) (DVD 1).

Hay does not warm up, and she does not rehearse. She is not interested in mastery, rather she is interested in process. She calls this process a “practice” and she emphasises the getting there not the arriving (Daly, 1992). Hay’s staging of the dialogue between body and consciousness, where she emphasises the connection between the dancer’s inner and outer life, inspires me. In my research the practice of technique is fundamental to explore this process, building on Hay’s notion of “the sense of the body unfolding as a site of infinite possibilities” (Hay, 2000, p xv).

While I aim to focus on feeling and “presence” at the moment of dancing, I see the moment as containing not only the present but also the past – what I have been – and the future – what can be done by my potential self. In these terms this research project is a vehicle for my own artistic and personal journey, driven by the search for transcendence or transformation through dancing, but also mediated by critical thinking about how my body has been inscribed by its cultural influences, hierarchy and ideology in training and the aesthetic differences in the cultural movement forms that I practice and investigate.

I propose that in this heightened state of emotional experience dancing causes an internal shift in my consciousness and disrupts the separation of mind and body, subject and object, performer and audience, to reveal that they are all in the same

space/place - my dance (see more in Chapter 3).

Dancers talk about their bodily experience as a sense of freedom, enjoyment, involvement, challenge, knowledge accumulated, relief from stress, exercise, and as an aesthetic pleasure they gain from dancing (Hast, 1993). As Hast (1993) claims, dancers experience rich sensory pleasure in their dancing. Based on my own critical reflection, I would agree with this, and see these sensory pleasures as a key point on the journey towards higher awareness. Pleasures such as the sense of freedom, the letting go, the smell of sweat, the smell of the point shoes, the feel of the rubber mat on a wooden floor, the tense atmosphere on the stage and in the theatre. From this sensory impact comes an apparently indefinable moment which occurs while dancing. I explore this as a moment of change, happening to / in my body, the change from everyday experience to a transcendent moment. One of the aims of this research is to document, describe and analyse this intangible “experience of bodily feeling” (Damasio, 1999; 2003) from a dancer’s perspective.

I situate myself literally as being the body of my own research and the thesis comprises three pieces of dance practice (*Mirror of Water, Still Sky* (Go, 2005) – a dance film and *Emptiness* (Go, 2008) – an experimental solo dance at the MacMillan studio in the Royal Opera House, also in London), this written text and the voiced monologue *I speak* (Go, 2009).

The research builds complex connections between the differing roles of dancer,

researcher, choreographer and Korean and is a spotlight on the depths of experience, not only of a dancer, but also of a person. It aims to be a tangible analysis of what really happens during a performance that the audience cannot see.

Dance constitutes not only the dancer's invisible experience, but also the transient moment, the idea that only in that moment will the event occur. My overall aim is to analyse and document this ephemeral state of being. It has been seen as an almost indescribable invisible experience, as evidenced by the way in which dancers, choreographers and scholars such as Andre Lepecki (2004), and Mark Franko (2004) talk about dance's disappearance.

Throughout this self-observational research, I have been shaped by different ideologies that point to a lived experience of contradictions, paradoxes and differences. My lived experience as a dancer is a trans-cultural journey involving the interweaving of Korean dance and Western ballet that I argue produces a new cross-fertilised body intelligence. I use auto-ethnography as a method both to establish the context for this research and also to define what I understand transcendence to be. I have asked what it is to know something in movement as a dancer and to think using my body. Thus, for me transcendence is neither the spiritual experience of mystics nor that of religious scriptures but my own way of expressing what I feel as I dance.

Human experience is too complicated to describe with one word. However, in

this study, I have used the word “transcendence”, which Pearce defines as a “condition of the possibility of experience” (Pearce, 1990, p 16) to convey my experience as a dancer. I have further used these dance scholars in order to make my own research more accessible. Dancers and dance field scholars such as Sheets (1966), Fraleigh (1987), McKayle (2002), Marshall (2003) and Gil (2006) have discussed the issue of transcendence in dance. Fraleigh (1987), for example, holds that transcendence is not beyond everyday life and that in dance, it comes through the experience of the dancer’s purposeful undertaking. Gil (2006), similarly, speaks of transcendence as a unique space where the dancer feels no gap between her body and the space that surrounds her when she is dancing. In addition, Alison Marshall (2003) sees transcendence in a dancer as negotiating a unique experience that she calls the ecstatic:

The ecstatic is not an involuntary participator in the process controlled by some unknown force or power. Rather, the ecstatic is negotiating his or her unique experience, using it as a goal, defining the experience for himself or herself, and cultivating purity and morality. These negotiations determine the quality of transcendence (Marshall, 2003, p 10).

Dancers’ body movements, which include the dancers’ abilities to project the sensory, and the expressive form of dance composition, are the main elements in composing a dance. Dancers must attend to the body within the dance and “dance utilizes the body to create illusion” (Friesen, 1975, p 101). The body itself is reality but a dancer’s movements contain more than the appearance of the body. They may contain the individual’s previous perceptions of the human

body, influenced in part by various personal and cultural viewpoints. The dancer's interpretation results in each dance being executed differently, even if she dances with the same movements, which are created by the same choreographer. The movements and the dancer's expressions, which the audience can actually see, are created with the dancer's body and her aim of creating illusion from their inner mind – a process which involves volition, feeling, etc. – which the audience cannot see. There may be a parallel here to what Fraleigh calls “purposeful undertaking” (1987, p 15) and I might call transcendence. Maxine Sheets (1966) holds there is more to it than this. The audience enters the situation with this understanding of the aesthetic image of this illusion created by the dancer:

The description of the lived reality of movement leads ultimately to a description of the human body as symbol within the global phenomenon of the illusion. In sustaining an illusion of force, the dancer transcends the material reality of her body: she becomes the source of the illusion, a symbol within the total phenomenon of the dance (Sheets, 1996, p 36).

Sheets (1996) also claims that transcendence is required for the dancer, and that even though this transcendence is not visible, the body becomes the source of symbolic illusion, which is Sheets's version of transcendence, to make it dance.

Susanne Langer (1953) also examines actual dance, the centre of dance practice and the dancer as a key influence. She speaks of dance's “virtual powers” in her book *Feeling and Form*, and asserts that art's function is the expression of

feeling. She refers to “the vital import of all Art, the ways of human feeling” (Langer, 1953, p 148) and holds that dance is a “virtual realm of Power” (Langer, 1953, p 175). According to her, feeling is not simply what was felt on a particular occasion but it is influenced by the artists’ background with regards to emotional conception, and individual sensitivity. It follows that the art works are their ways of articulating and projecting their feeling.

As with my approach, self-observation as research has gradually been on the increase in academic writing. For example, Jewett (2006) observes her experiences teaching multicultural education to teacher-training students and learning zydeco dance as she explores semblances of intimacy across self and others in her PhD thesis “A Delicate Dance: Auto-ethnography, Curriculum, and the Semblance of Intimacy”. Saliha (2000) also embraces innovation by studying himself in the cultural context of an internship using the methodology of auto-ethnography and performance. He states, “the styles of narration I use – such as words and graphics, prose and poetry, first person conversational texts, narratives and colleagues – blur the boundary of ‘academic’ writing, literature, and art” (Saliha, 2000, p 1). He sees himself as a researcher and a person using hypertext which is intended as a metaphorical, experiential, and intertextual journey of an intern and a researcher. Duncan (2004) discusses how she applied auto-ethnography in a study of the design of hypermedia educational resources and shows how she addressed problematic issues related to auto-ethnographic legitimacy and representation associated with her PhD thesis. She focuses on the interplay between perception and reality in qualitative approaches, and

encourages researchers to use auto-ethnography. Moreover, Tanton (1994) investigates himself with his experience as a tutor in order to explore knowledge in self-directed learning in his PhD thesis and Deborah (2007) uses self-observation auto-ethnography in her research, describing her lived experience of studying racism and whiteness.

However, there are some perceived problems with the approach of auto-ethnography, as the auto-ethnographers challenge the positivists' generalisation of universal knowledge (Clifford, 1988; Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont, 2003; Holt, 2003; Etherington, 2004). Holt (2003) gives us an example from his experience of being rejected by traditional ethnographers when he tried to publish his auto-ethnographic article about being a new teacher on a university physical education course. In addition, Anderson (2006) criticises Ellis and Bochner, who have been so influential in the development of evocative auto-ethnography. Anderson writes:

I am concerned that the impressive success of advocacy for what Ellis (1997, 2004) refers to as 'evocative or emotional autoethnography' may have the unintended consequence of eclipsing other visions of what autoethnography can be and of obscuring the ways in which it may fit productively in other traditions of social inquiry (Anderson, 2006, p 374).

He does not reject auto-ethnography as a methodology but rather, sees it as a viable method in analytical research stressing the value of analytic ethnography against evocative auto-ethnography. Anderson criticises Ellis' rejection of

traditional analytic ethnographic epistemological assumptions for seeking value in evocative auto-ethnography as lying outside its framework. Anderson, by contrast believes that evocative auto-ethnography should have a conventional sociological underpinning i.e. analytic auto-ethnography. He argues that the key goal of evocative auto-ethnography is to create emotional resonance with the reader with authentically described subjective experience, without offering any analysis, grounding theory, or methodological rigour.

Therefore, he claims that auto-ethnographers should use their empirical evidence to formulate and refine theoretical understandings of social processes. Anderson states, “I use the term analytic to point to a broad set of data-transcending practices that are directed toward theoretical development, refinement, and extension” (2006, p 387). As opposed to evocative auto-ethnography, a distinctive feature of analytic auto-ethnography is that it can offer not only a value-added quality that transcends this with its more representative sample.

Although Anderson claims that analytic auto-ethnography demands data from and about people other than the researcher, Vryan (2006) argues that it (without data from other people) can still give effective analysis and develop the concept and model of significant social processes in new ways, and thereby be called analytic auto-ethnography. Including data from other people is not an indispensable requirement of all analytic auto-ethnography but rather as Vryan points out: “the necessity, value, and feasibility of such data will vary according to the specifics of a given project and the goals of its creator(s)” (2006, p 406).

Just as there is no single study of any type that should be expected to produce complete, universal, and definite knowledge.

Conventionally, ethnographic practice has focused on the “other” as an object of study, typically spending time observing people in other cultures and societies that are being observed and analysed (Bochner and Ellis, 2002). Ethnography is a qualitative study where the researcher’s voice and those of his/her informants pervade the work for the readers. By extension, the reflexive ethnographer does not simply report “fact” but actively constructs interpretations of her experience and then questions how those interpretations came about (Hertz, 1997; Coffey, 1999; Etherington, 2004). In the same way, my research reveals the process of my work in the context of my whole life. Hertz states “the outcome of reflexive social science is reflexive knowledge: statements that provide insight on the workings of the social world and insight on how that knowledge came into existence” (1997, p viii).

Qualitative methodology and validity criteria are different from those of positivism because they are based on different perspectives of reality and knowledge. In other words, positivism is not more correct, truer, or more valid than qualitative research, but rather it is a just different approach. Indeed, while positivism aims at objectivity, according to Gergen and Gergen “such researchers turn to qualitative methods in the hope of generating richer and more finely nuanced accounts of human action” (2002, p 578).

Foucault tells us in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* that discursive understanding is not:

An ideal, continuous, smooth text that runs beneath the multiplicity of contradictions, and resolves them in the calm unity of coherent thought; nor is it the surface in which, in a thousand different aspects, a contradiction is reflected that is always in retreat, but everywhere dominant. It is rather a space of multiple dissensions; a set of different oppositions whose levels and roles must be described (Foucault, 1972, p 155).

The methodological approach is integral to and informed by ontological and epistemological assumptions (Roberts, 2007, p 5). Indeed, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2003) researchers approach the world with a set of ideas, a framework (ontology), that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that researchers then examine (methodology). According to them, qualitative research methods:

Combine beliefs about ontology (what kind of being is the human being? What is the nature of reality?), epistemology (What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known?), and the methodology (How do we know the world, or gain knowledge of it?) (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p 33).

Ontology can be divided into two forms, foundationalism and anti-foundationalism. Foundational criteria are discovered while anti-foundational criteria are negotiated as anti-foundationalists argue that “there are no such ultimate criteria, only those that we can agree upon at a certain time and under

certain conditions” (Lincoln and Guba, 2003, p 271). Epistemology will then be considered in terms of three primary positions which flow out of one’s ontological stance: positivism, scientific realism, and interpretivism (Moore, 2007, p 2). This combination that contains the researcher’s epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises may be termed a paradigm, however difficult it is to characterise exactly as a term because of its multiplicity of terms and meanings that blur every genre through postmodernist sensibilities¹.

Differences in perspective and approach are reflected in methodology. Methodology is defined as “the theory of how inquiry should proceed” (Schwandt, 2003, p 293) and the methodological question is: “*How can the inquirer (would-be knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known?*” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p 108). Indeed, while positivist methodology requires a sample that has the capacity to measure and generalise for validity, qualitative research methodology has a different requirement. Qualitative researchers do not view “the doubt and disagreements as the birth pangs of a new methodological foundation, but rather as opportunities for new conversations and new evolutions in practice” (Gergen and Gergen, 2002, p 575). Kvale describes how the qualitative research should be validated:

The complexities of validating qualitative research need not be due to a weakness of qualitative methods, but, on the contrary, may rest upon their extraordinary power to reflect and conceptualize the nature of the phenomenon investigated, to capture the complexity of the social reality. (Kvale, 1989, p 82-83).

Green and Stinson (1999) note that although the qualitative researchers may do not focus on factually true, the researchers may emphasise the participants' perception of that truth. And inevitably, though I am writing what I see as the truth of my bodily knowledge, the reader will add their own perceptions to this account. Green and Stinson (1999) also argue that if there is no means of correctly matching the world, then the scientific validity of accurate objectivity is lost and it remains for the researcher to answer the question of the role of methodology and criteria evaluation. Thus, I would argue here that just as qualitative researchers are interested in different contexts and subjects, the different validity measures should emerge to fit the practice-based auto-ethnographical qualitative research.

Thus, in this sense, if validity is looking for "truth" as the modernist researchers (that is, Enlightenment, scientific method, conventional, positivist) do, this sense of the value of eclectically mixing different approaches is consistent with the idea that this thesis is grounded in the ubiquity of possibility rather than in absolute truth. Foucault points to the connection between truth and prevailing power structures and suggests that "truth" is not as simple as we think, stating that it:

Is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse that it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means

by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault, 1988, p 131).

Indeed, this thesis is very much in “subjective truth as something relative” camp. What is possible in one world may not be a possibility in another. That world differs in the most radical way (Gangadean, 1980; Goldstein, 1996). Just as my experience of transcendence may be only my feeling of what happens and others may experience it differently, ontology inquires into possibilities being radically incommensurable between different worlds.

That is one of the reasons why (meaning my methodology in this research with the philosophical assumptions that underpin my research processes) I have undertaken this study. I want this thesis to contribute to our understanding of how we see the world with the many different experiences an individual has, and to demonstrate that there is value not only in the visible but also in the invisible. Peggy Phelan (1992) argues that seeing involves more than just a visual reception but also an interpretation of what we are seeing through a lens that is both personal and cultural and filtered through internalised power structures: “the relations between visibility and power are never only representational; representation is not a simple abacus adding and subtracting power from visible beads” (Phelan, 1992, p 140). Rather, she suggests that consciousness is determined by the traces of the past left in the unconscious: “the visible is defined by the invisible” (Phelan, 1992, p 14). Following her notion of invisibility, (a central concept of this research) I investigate a dancer’s

experience, an experience which is always invisible to others, considering the value of that which we cannot see. As this thesis includes an exploration of a dancer's trajectory of a journey of the unseen, it attempts to reveal one of the characteristics of a dance of "now-you-see-it-now-you-don't-status, its evanescent nature" (Solomon, 1993, p 21).

In this sense of the invisible value of dance, the reader can see how my dance is shaped through the invisible elements of how I construct identity, relationships, culture and society, how I see the world with others and my understanding within the dance. In a wider context, throughout this thesis the reader may understand how we construct the world [and our notion of ourselves and others] differently and "how standard objectifying practices of social science unnecessarily limit us and social science" (Richardson, 2000, p 5). Moreover, this research offers perhaps a direction for something that does not lend itself easily to description and analysis to be documented for the academic community. In other words, it contributes to the technique that is used to document, record and analyse the non-logical experience of my feeling of transcendence, which can be intimated rather than spelled out. In my thesis, I explore the theoretical framework related to the tension that exists between the visible and the invisible, in the absence made present by the act of my dance.

This thesis is a composite of my thoughts and does not apply in totality to all dancers or other people. However, to the extent that it *can* be applied to others, it is valuable because it generates a broader context. Where it cannot, it is still

valuable because it provides a unique document with an exploration of the value of the invisible (my inner experience), which may define the visible (my dance), as in Phelan's categorisation (Phelan, 1992). Moreover, using auto-ethnography, I aim to delve deeply into non-logical human experience rather than finding unifying, generalised and measurable answers which represent only one layer of belief. Through how I see the world, I want the reader to understand how a person engages with it.

The creative pieces in this research play a role not only in documenting my feeling but also the process of planning, wherein key elements of practice are regularly reviewed by myself as a researcher, often in moments of reflection in action. The practice and theory support and augment each other and the work is both my own entirely and also something that has been informed by the aggregate of my experience of watching and learning aspects from other performers, and which I attempt to describe in as honest a way as possible. This thesis furthermore refers to the work of other dancers and writers such as Hay (1987; 2000; 2001), Fraleigh (1987; 1999; 2000), Barba (1991; 1995), Beardsley (1982), Claid (2006), and Hahn (2007).

My thesis does not attempt to overcome dualistic consciousness through accurate description or representation, but rather is the voice of a dancer's perception and seeks the hidden knowledge of dance and culture which gives a different way of seeing the world. Deliberately, it blurs many boundaries between professional and amateur, insider and outsider, researcher and

researched, research and thesis, inquirer and respondent, teacher and learner, performer and audience, and myself and others. My thesis is not a dualistic attempt to elevate movement over language, auto-ethnography over the methodology of traditional ethnography, qualitative inquiry over quantitative, Eastern philosophy over Western philosophy, nor Buddhism over Christianity. But rather it reflects on how people think, believe and experience differently.

I use auto-ethnography because I want to explore my own experience and journey of self-development that influences and is influenced by the research. I want to reflect upon and analyse the critical moment of my experience while I am dancing. It is uniquely that moment, the current moment, that only I can know and experience. However, this is not merely a personal diary, as there is a distinction between auto-ethnography and biography (Reed-Danahay, 1997; Coffey, 1999; Hudak, 2007). Historically, the early ethnographer studied a culture, a group of individuals joined together by some shared experience while the biographer focused on the experiences of a single individual who may have a relationship with one or more cultures considering mainly the experience of the individual with the “past-related nature of writing” (Tanton, 1994, p 55). This distinction is no longer clear and a number of ethnographers (see Minh-Ha, 1991; Mykhalovskiy, 1997; DeVault, 1997; Patel, 1997; Reinhartz, 1997; Cilfford, 1988; Coffey, 1999) now focus on an individual.

Scholarly writers have long been admonished to work “silently on the sidelines, to keep their voices out of the reports they produce” (Chrmaz and Richard 1997,

p 193). However, it could be argued that all writing that generates the researcher's opinion necessarily involves their subjectivity, even scientific research as it uses certain conventions based on cultural construction and preconceived assumptions.

Shapiro (2004) shows how one's prior knowledge affects the outcome in his article, "How including prior Knowledge as a Subject Variable May Change Outcomes of Learning Research". He suggests that we can see that all individual knowledge is different and depends on the person, thus, the text will be different. Indeed, in one sense, almost any fieldwork report can be considered a personal narrative of sorts (DeVault, 1997, p 218) because the ethnographer is working with personal experience and placing it with their text. DeVault discusses how ethnographer's fieldwork is tied to personal interpretation:

It is becoming commonplace to recognize that fieldwork is all about text and that we produce, interpret, and present data only through writing [The use of] personal narratives is woven into the production of fieldwork at the most fundamental level. [What has emerged] is a greater tolerance (or demand) for the personal to appear differently in our writing – to be expressed and placed more prominently and to be read as having greater significance for our findings and interpretation (DeVault, 1997, p 220).

Polyani's notions of focal knowledge and tacit knowledge are discussed in Chapter 5 and combined with my own lived experience. Despite the fact that as a chemist, he could be considered an exponent of the 'hard' sciences, he stresses the significance and value of subjectivity to the research endeavour. He says that

it is impossible to remove the researcher's passion and commitment, and highlights that these are essential to the investigation and experience of the world.

In addition, individuals construct very different narratives about the same event (Riessman, 1993) and therefore it is always possible to tell the same events in different ways, depending on an individual's values, interactions, their own history, and experience. Reality is based on our perception and researchers are influenced by our past experience in that "reality is neither fixed nor entirely external but is created by and moves with the changing perceptions and beliefs of the viewers" (Duncan, 2004). Original knowledge relevant to other people, experience, and context can be produced from analyses of a single individual (Vryan, 2006).

No matter how objectively I try to write, the texts are produced through my personal experience, observation and knowledge. Schwandt (2003) holds that what distinguishes human action from the movement of physical objects is that the former is inherently meaningful. Thus, to understand human action, we should grasp the meaning that constitutes the action. Schwandt (2003) suggests that to say that human action is meaningful is to claim either that:

It has a certain intentional content that indicates the kind of action it is and/or that what an action means can be grasped only in terms of the system of meanings to which it belongs (Schwandt, 2003, p 296).

If how we make sense of the world depends upon interpretation, it could be argued that our very understanding *is* interpretation. Under this condition, the records of research based on this theoretical framework will, naturally, bear the signature and voice of personal interpretation (Duncan, 2004, p 4). Knowledge accumulates as a process, as I discuss further throughout this research. Thus, the accumulated knowledge will not only present a record of the world in which I have lived or been a part of but rather, it will contain how I as a researcher make sense of and interpret the world. Even if I see Korean dance for the first time and try to obtain the data objectively, the knowledge that I have already accumulated has an inevitable effect on the new knowledge, as tacit knowledge affects focal knowledge and the level of each person's knowledge is different. Thus, even if the researcher formulates the data collected from others to reach beyond self-experience, the researcher's self is already there and interpreted.

In addition, the ethnographer spends only a certain period of time on research. An ethnographer, who is a third person, gets only a snapshot of life of their subject whereas the auto-ethnographer has more time to observe and draw conclusion over a period of time. I could argue therefore that this approach is at least as valid as a more traditional approach. In this sense, it is at least as valid for an insider to reveal her self and use it as a key research subject. While the evocative auto-ethnographic approach has been criticised by several scholars such as Anderson (2006), Atkinson (2006) and Delamont (2009), as un-analytical and for its unscholarly representation of the research experience, with too much reliance on personal emotion rather than broader theoretical concepts,

Vryan answers that:

A skilled autoethnographer with the serendipitous advantage of having relevant analytical and methodological education and experience and a naturally occurring life – the stuff we social scientists like to conceive of as data and analyze – may be able to examine features of human experience that would not normally be observable to researchers studying other people, whether due to communication norms, embarrassment, shame, guilt, limitations of informants' self awareness, lack of the depth of trust in researcher-as-other interactions that I can grant myself in self-inquiries, and so forth (Vryan, 2006, p 407).

Just as a traditional ethnographer's claim that immersion within others' experience allows a more profound understanding than is possible via other methods such as survey research (Clifford, 1998; Frosch, 1999; Green and Stinson, 1999), auto-ethnography develops a method of articulation that opens a window to vital aspects of human experience that cannot be articulated using other available methods. If the readers consider value as an analytic product then it is more appropriately determined by usefulness to others – whether the work helps us better understand or explain other people and their experience rather than by copying a widely sampled methodological strategy. Bhabha claims that the language metaphor opens up a space where a theoretical disclosure is used to move beyond theory and theoretical description:

[It] does not set up a theory-practice polarity, nor does theory become 'prior' to the contingency of social experience. This 'beyond theory' is itself a liminal form of signification that creates a space for the contingent, indeterminate articulation of social

‘experience’ that is particularly important for envisaging emergent cultural identities (Bhabha, 2007, p 257).

While Anderson argues that auto-ethnography “loses its sociological promise when it devolves into self-absorption” (2006, p 385), the intensive self-immersion could be transformed into greater potential as a methodology. If both analytic and evocative auto-ethnographical approaches demand hidden aspects of possible issues that truthfully render the social world the question can be asked as to how the researcher can find out the truth if it is hidden?

In addition, there is a time gap between the moment they actually experience transcendence and the time of the interview. There are gaps between one’s experience, recollection and one’s subsequent description. Nevertheless, I have reduced the gap in my research by researching into the moment of my own dancing rather than researching others and I have written down the essential moment of my feeling straight away. I started writing down field notes within five minutes of the end of the dancing when *Mirror of Water, Still Sky* (Go, 2005) was filmed and for Chapter 5 in particular, which describes the dance *Emptiness* (Go, 2008), which is based on the field notes which were written when I was fresh from the dance and still in the same atmosphere - the same studio, no one interrupted and no music started or finished. There could be less of a time gap here than in traditional statistically significant research where a possible obstacle is that there is a delay between the moment of the experience of the respondents and the time of the interview. Furthermore, during the research, I know what I want to explore.

However, it could also be argued that we perhaps remember only what we want to remember. In that sense, how do I believe everything I remember? I can answer that I, at least can believe my body, which can never lie, as body memory never forgets how, and as this thesis is sourced from my bodily knowledge. This concurs with interpretivist thought, which is the epistemological ground of this thesis, that “we always *see* (make sense of, know) everything through interpretation, we must conclude that everything in fact is *constituted* by interpretation” (Schwandt, 2003, p 312). Knowledge of what people are “doing and saying always depends on some background or context with their meaning, beliefs, values, and practices” (Schwandt, 2003, p 201). Schwandt noted that, “understanding is interpretation all the way down” (2003, p 312).

I do not justify any particular interpretation as more correct, or better or worse, than any other but rather relate to Schwandt’s view that, “it is not about justification, disclosure, or clarification of meaning, but ‘textualistic’, caught up in the larger game called the play of signifiers” (Schwandt, 2003, p 313).

Traditional scientific approaches are still very much employed today and demand a minimising of the self, treating it as a contaminant. Wall writes, “so strong is the positivist tradition that researchers who use even well-established qualitative research methods are continually asked to defend their research as valid science” (2006, p 1). Just as qualitative research is criticised by the scientific approach, auto-ethnography is criticised by traditional ethnographers. However, Kevin Vryan points out that it is similar to ethnographers defending

their approaches to quantitative or positivist-minded scholars:

Does traditional (cf. auto-) ethnography's immersion within and analysis of a single group (cf. individual) in a given temporal and cultural context that does not necessarily represent anyone or anything else limit us to learning or making claims only about our particular informants or the localized group or setting studied (cf. the individual autoethnographer)? (Vryan, 2006, p 406).

Denzin describes auto-ethnography as “a turning of the ethnographic gaze inward on the self (auto), while maintaining the outward gaze of ethnography, looking at the larger context wherein self experiences occur” (Trujillo, 2003, p 258). Therefore, to write about self contains more than self, it is “a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context” (Etherington, 2004, p 139-140). Fraleigh states: “human experience arises always in the particular contexts of ‘being-in-the-world’ (1998, p 136) in that we are conditioned by the existence of others. Self and other are terms that take on meaning in relation to each other. Fraleigh (1991, p 11) notes: “Individual subjectivity is therefore understood in view of its intersection with a surrounding world, constituted by other objects, natural phenomena and other human beings”.

Moreover, auto-ethnographic texts reveal “the fractures, sutures, and seams of self interacting with others in the context of researching lived experience” (Spry, 2006, p 190). What I have lived through is not just about me; it involves interaction and is profoundly social and cultural. Rather than speaking only of itself, the auto-ethnographical product has a wider appeal in that the texts are

from the researcher's perspective of having been to, and lived in, the field.

According to Coffey writing the self into ethnography can be viewed:

As part of a greater trend toward authenticity, and as part of a biographical project. It can be seen as part of a movement towards the representation of voices in social research (Coffey, 1999, p 118).

I have found that it is difficult to locate my personal experience as a source of insight in analysis. However, through this research, writing it auto-ethnographically has given me the opportunity to write about my experience, not trapped in a kind of narcissism or self-indulgence, because I try to write in a way that provides insights for others. Even though considering only one's own situation, an auto-ethnographer will expect others to be touched empathetically and in this sense auto-ethnography reveals something hidden in the researcher's self to give others access to this experience.

According to DeVault, "personal writing is useful for exploring the unexpected and thus for bringing to light aspects of 'ordinary' experience that are typically obscured" (1997, p 226). In fact, personal narrative has been proliferating into the humanities (Ellis, 2004; Etherington, 2004; Hertz, 1997). Investigating personal narrative in depth may yield insight into our constantly changing and increasingly complicated lives. Russell says auto-ethnography is "an 'art memory' that serves as protection against the homogenizing tendencies of modern industrial culture" (1999, p 1).

First of all, this research is about bodily knowledge that explores how I know what I know where I know and when I know. To explore what people know is a difficult task because people learn through their individual experience, learn differently, interpret differently, live differently, think differently, respond differently and therefore, each person is simply different. We cannot conclude or define knowledge with a singular perception because it is incommensurable and multi-valenced. Oakley relates this issue to the act of knowing:

The act of knowing is an extremely complex endeavour: not only do different human beings know different things, bringing different values, beliefs and perceptions to what they know and how they know it, but the act of knowing and what is known are often irredeemably fused (Oakley, 2000, p 291).

In this research, my bodily knowledge contains not only the period of this study but also interweaves my past and present experience - that is, my whole life. In other words, this research investigates my knowledge regarding the “feeling of what happens” (Damasio, 2000, p 10) when I am dancing, that the feeling means more than the moment of a specific occasion, rather it is also feeling with experience accumulated throughout my whole life. My knowledge connects past knowledge, which has dissolved, with present reflection, which can stir up the past knowledge into the present. This knowledge that is present when I dance becomes past knowledge as I write this thesis, and as I am both researcher and the subject of research.

In Chapter 3, I confess something I cannot say to anyone face to face as a

Korean woman. This stems from our cultural and racial characteristics based on Confucianism, in which we were taught not to expose ourselves deeply to others, especially if this involves shamefulness as a woman. Despite the huge influence of Western thought on contemporary Korean culture, my Korean upbringing and education demands to a certain extent that a highly personal story such as mine should not be revealed to an unknown audience. However, auto-ethnography is a method that uses highly personalised accounts to reveal one's self to extend sociological understanding. Thus, while I would not reveal such information face to face to a stranger, I share this information willingly within the discipline of auto-ethnography in order to shed light on what is normally a hidden lived experience.

Moreover, in this research, there is a current moment which is not usually possible if I research other dancers. In Chapter 5, I attempt to grasp my potential bodily knowledge and try to listen to my body and consciousness. I am able to make use of the opportunity to perceive my own dancing and it is essential for me to attend to the entire being, what can really be felt during the dance. I discuss what happens moment by moment during the dance (Chapter 4 and 5). I am there throughout each moment, I can enquire into myself during the dance at the same time, in the same space, and with the same body.

This research reveals a dancer's experience of knowing bodily knowledge regarding the feeling of what happens, which goes unnoticed to other people, and this experience can apply not only to dancers but also to artists, athletes,

singers, boxers, writers and so forth, who may be inspired to think deeply about their own knowledge in a different way. I believe that even if they are not in the same situation as myself (as a dancer), the findings in my research can apply and be valuable to other cases.

Secondly, as an auto-ethnographer, I have the benefit not only of being fully immersed in the situation, as the subject of my research but also of not having to encounter obstacles such as the issue of accessibility and permissibility of informants which are often challenged in traditional ethnography (see Duncan, 2004). Moreover, human stories are not static, depending on the informant's present feeling, but rather the meaning of experience within these stories shifts as consciousness changes. Research into someone else's experience can pose a problem of credibility as to how I extract the most relevant information. Exploring myself, during the research I can be candid and investigate the research question in-depth.

Thirdly, this research identifies and describes particular dance techniques, which are ballet and Korean dance, and the cross-fertilisation of movement and breath technique. This breath technique can be used or adapted not only by other dancers but also theatre practitioners, actors, actresses, yoga practitioners and someone who seek to enhance their technique and body awareness.

Fourthly, this research is an exploration of my unique experience, which combines the hybrid background of growing up in Korea, learning Western

ballet and Korean dance, the experience of being a professional ballet dancer and the carrying out of research in London in English, revealing cultural clashes with an honest and uniqueness, yet through an ordinary person's perception. This auto-ethnography can be valuable for ethnographers, dancers, choreographers, and anyone interested in history and culture. As I have said above, my research could constitute elements of "ordinary experience that are typically obscured" (DeVault, 1997, p 226).

In fact, the requirements and the goals are all different to every type of study that is multi-valenced. Just as ontology holds the idea of possibilities being radically incommensurable between different worlds, this thesis is an attempt to know just one dancer's body in depth based on this ontological thought. This is how I see the world, how I see transcendence as it becomes a characteristic of a dancer. Perhaps golfers, singers and footballers see it differently and also other dancers experience it differently. Each of these views has value in its own terms but *this is how I see the world*. Writing about aspects of our lives "strengthens our connections with our body, mind and spirit through sharing our experiences and newly discovered self-knowledge" (Etherington, 2004, p 145). In this research, I propose that my own blending of styles of dance movements as performance text can provide a space to breathe and a space to think; a place to share emotion with others.

Rossmann and Sallis note that auto-ethnography is a "useful way of conducting research and has provided a methodology that legitimises and encourages the

inclusion of the researcher's self and culture" (1998, p 67). Auto-ethnography can provide insight into issues often overlooked in traditional "objective" methodologies – issues such as the nature of identity, race, gender and academic conventions.

Verbal language alone is not capable of expressing the full spectrum of human experience (Press, 2002): "Language is only one form of communication, and it can be extraordinarily ambiguous and inaccurate, especially when describing feeling" (Press, 2002, p 117). Language is very complex in that people express their subjective feeling with words, however, those words objectify the experience. Nevertheless, the most communicative way is through language; thus, in this research, through the different voices of dance, writing and monologue, I document and analyse my subjective experience. Written text, dance and speaking are employed to complement each other. To link subjectively formed individual body experience in dance, expressed through the dancer's body without words or language is one of the difficult challenges in this research.

Movement may be a fundamental instinct of humans. We know from watching children that they are physically animated and they try to tell things to people with their bodies as physical language before they can actually speak the language. Dance is also composed of human movement and all movements involve the body. These movements are processed in the interweaving of our senses, perceptions and emotions as well. These senses are put together through

people's movement but not in isolation. When people pay conscious attention to their movement, even though only their outer appearance is seen by others, there are also concrete sense perceptions of each movement on the part of the moving person. It does not mean that movement is always communicated well but rather in my case of research, which is the dancer's subjective enquiry, movements may have more verisimilitude and authenticity than language. So describing myself with movement may help me to express myself in a more varied way than with written language or give different insights into sociology through my bodily movement, in part because it stems from a different perspective.

In this thesis, I use several stills of the rehearsals, recalling myself in those times of performance through the auto-ethnographic method. While my dance provides ways of creating and sharing meaning without words with subjectively created body movements, objectified written text can enhance communication with others by combining these two elements. By utilising an experiential method such as performance, auto-ethnography offers a "body-centred method of knowing to understand performers' culture and lived experiences" (Alexander, 2005). The body is the medium of a dancer's communication, and therefore this performing auto-ethnography can be a step towards understanding myself in relation to my cultural contexts.

I aim to connect the pieces of work and writing not just on the basis of prepared papers and formal responses, but through "lived experience". As auto-ethnography engages ethnographical analysis of personal lived experience and is

also “designed to engage a locus of embodied reflexivity using lived experience” (Alexander, 2005, p 423), my personal auto-ethnographical story of lived experience can offer an audience access to personal experience with the intent of wider aspects of human experience as I also describe dance in general through auto-ethnography.

As dance is full of lived experience, to investigate the issue of linking performance text and written text, I also use the self-reflexivity of auto-ethnographical text otherwise referred to as “context researching lived experience” (Spry, 2006, p 190). Moreover, I also use “felt-sensing” text (Spry, 2006, p 205) following Spry’s idea that “good autoethnography must be emotionally engaging” (p 192) speaking from “subject ‘I’ to a disembodied ‘you-self’” (p 193). He argues that felt-sensing text negotiates between theory, writing and performance, “felt-sensing is not part of the Mind over Body rational world paradigm upon which academe was founded. Felt-sensing requires vulnerability allowing one’s self to be pushed and pulled in the dialectic whirl of discursive bodies” (p 205). He states:

In calling to myself through the performance of autoethnography, someone, someone from inside my body, finally, gingerly, began to call back. [...] Theory helps me name the experiences interred in the body, whereas performance helps me to reinhabit my body, [...] so that the semantic expression of autoethnographic practice reflects the somatic experience of the sociocultured body (Spry, 2006, p 194).

As artistic encounters are fundamentally emotional, thus auto-ethnographic writing with “felt-sensing” text can be fully embodied in myself. As Spry (2006) says, knowledge is constructed at the junction of the mind and body. Coffey (1999) also speaks of embodied auto-ethnography in the following way:

Connecting and writing lives is also about connecting and writing about the embodiedness and physicality of the self. [...] in writing ethnography, we are engaged in a practice of writing and rewriting the body. [...] We are also engaged in responding to and writing our own bodies – as well or sick or fit or hurting or exposed or performing. It is possible through autobiographical ethnography to capture and emphasize the physicality of fieldwork and the embodiedness of the fieldworker (Coffey, 1999, p 131).

Therefore, in this research, I conjure up emotional, visual and other sensory images about my experience of myself engaged in an actual event: dancing. Then I cast my mind back, replay moments of my performance and elements of my past, and use tools such as introspection and emotional recall in my writing. Nadel (2003) claims that although some Western systems of psychology have recognised the inseparable nature of mind and body, they have not pursued that line of thought to its fulfilment, particularly in relation to dance. In my research I also see emotion and the physical as inextricably interwoven but for the purpose of analysis I pick out strands of the two through auto-ethnographic “felt-sensing” text. With the auto-ethnographic texts I reveal myself as a whole human being with my emotion like Gergen and Gergen (2002), who talk about distinguishing features of the interpretive, narrative and emotional auto-ethnographic project:

In using oneself as an ethnographic exemplar, the researcher is freed from the traditional conventions of writing. One's unique voicing – complete with colloquialisms, reverberations from multiple relationships, and emotional expressiveness – is honoured. In this way the reader gains a sense of the writer as a full human being (Gergen and Gergen, 2002, p 14).

I dance using my own vocabulary, placing emphasis on flowing movements through the combined energy of Korean dance and Western ballet. I then search for words to describe the feeling running through me: finding my voice through the dance I have performed and auto-ethnographical texts. With auto-ethnographical writing, during the process, I claim to be able to research more deeply through my own experience than with any other theoretical methodology as this study talks about human movement – dance, through my own experience and myself. As Reed-Danahay (1997) states:

For the most part, auto-ethnography has been assumed to be more “authentic” than straight ethnography. The voice of the insider is assumed to be more true than that of the outsider in much current debate (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p 3-4).

As when Fontana and Frey describe the methodology and method of data collection as “a view of collecting data that matches my own” (2000, p 657), I use myself as data in order to explore a dancer's own experience of transcendence and therefore, I am able to explore a dancer's trajectory of a journey of the “unseen” which makes the “seen” appear to others. The aim is to

illuminate an individual's understanding of her culture with her dance as it evolves, as ethnography usually involves "the taking on of a new role specifically for research purposes" (Tanton, 1994, p 55). Throughout this research, I tell of a "present" that rests upon a remembered past and leads to an anticipated future. Art, and dance in particular, permeate my experience and play an important part in shaping my life. My understanding of, and connection with, these concepts guide the decisions I make about my choice of methodologies to create a "layered account" (Ellis, 2004, p 198). Ellis writes:

I start with my personal life and pay attention to my physical feeling, thoughts and emotion [...] to try and understand an experience I've lived through. Then I write my experience as a story. By exploring a particular life, I hope to understand a way of life (Ellis, 2004, p vii).

My research is "self-reflexive" (Etherington, 2004, P 19), "self-revelatory" (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997, P 43) with "felt-sensing text" (Spry, 2006, P 205) based on the proposal that we are part of the world we perceive. My personal subjectivity is involved in the dance and writing as "being introspection" (Tanton, 1994, P 23).

Holt (2003) suggests that: "Ethnographic writing practice involves highly personalised accounts where authors draw on their own experiences to extend understanding of a particular discipline or culture" (p 1). The difference is that it does not portrait Other such as person, group and culture, but the self. Reed-Danahay suggests:

The concept of auto-ethnography [...] synthesizes both a postmodern ethnography, in which the realist conventions and objective observe position of standard ethnography have been called into question, and a postmodern autobiography, in which the notion of the coherent, individual self has been similarly called into question (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p 2).

As the boundaries of ethnographic writing have expanded with auto-ethnography, so this discipline offers expressive potential to qualitative ethnographic researchers, dealing with the subjectively surrounded complex self and others. Autobiography becomes ethnographic at the point where the writer understands his or her personal history to be implicated in larger social formations and historical processes. Identity is no longer a transcendental or essential self that is revealed, but a staging of subjectivity – a representation of the self as a performance (Russell). It merges self-representation with cultural critique as Spry defines auto-ethnography as a “self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts” (Spry, 2001, p 187).

Historically there has been a mistrust of self as a research vehicle. As Charmaz and Mitchell argue, scholarly writers are expected to stay on the sidelines and keep their voices out of their articles: “the proper voice is no voice at all” (1997, p 194). However, the boundaries of research and their maintenance are themselves socially constructed (Minh-Ha, 1991; Sparkes, 2000; Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). In ethnography, the subjectivity of the researcher is seen as a resource for understanding the problematic world they are investigating, as

something to capitalize on rather than exorcise (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992). Mykhalovskiy (1996) challenged reductive, dualistic views of auto-ethnography, and suggested that to write individual experience is to write social experience.

Ellis and Bochner advocate auto-ethnography as a form of writing that, “make[s] the researcher’s own experience a topic of investigation in its own right” (2000, p 733) rather than seeming “as if they’re written from nowhere by nobody” (2000, p 734). Reed (1997) also describes auto-ethnography as an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. Atkinson, Coffey and Delanont addressed this issue:

Back and forth autobiographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations (Atkinson, Coffey and Delanont, 2003, p 65).

As Atkinson and Silverman (1997), Reed-Danahay (1997), Ellis and Bochner (2000) and Holt (2003) explain, auto-ethnographic texts are written in a first-person account through the personal experiences of the researcher and feature emotion and self-consciousness as relational and institutional stories affected by history, social structure and culture. Coffey suggests that:

We cannot separate the researcher from the social and the intellectual context of fieldwork. Therefore, we are constructed,

shaped and challenged by fieldwork. [...] Fieldwork always starts from where we are. We do not come to a setting without an identity, constructed and shaped by complex social processes. [...] We also bring the self, which is, among other things, gendered, sexual, occupational, generational – located in time and space (Coffey, 1999, p 158).

Therefore, auto-ethnography acts as a mirror to the individual self as well as representing an example of experience that has a commonality in some way with others. Cook (1998) argues that ethnographic writing is always autobiographical and that there is therefore some value in acknowledging this, whoever the author might be. “From the perspective of a psychoanalytically informed ethnography, researchers’ deeply-rooted past experiences are bound to influence their experiences in the field in unconscious ways” (Cook, 1998, p 13). Cook also claims that, “when attention is paid to such autobiographical explanations, ‘reflexivity’ inevitably gets stretched out from the traditionally ascribed field and into researchers’ (academic) lives and well before and beyond them” (1998, p 13).

Auto-ethnography is also associated with Narrative Inquiry in that it foregrounds experience and story as a meaning-making enterprise. On the one hand, some advocates of narrative inquiry argue for allowing stories to speak for themselves, but Clandinin and Connelly (2000) acknowledge that narrative researchers can and have had their work denied publication for being idiosyncratic and narcissistic. What is the social significance of narrative inquiry? For Clandinin and Connelly the answer lies in the process of transitioning from field texts to

research texts. Whereas field text contains stories, a research text involves analysis and interpretation and must consider “the way narrative inquiry illuminates the social and theoretical contexts in which we position our inquiries” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p 124).

Auto-ethnography allows me to describe my personal subjectivity which is constructed not only from a non-Western context (Korean and Buddhist tradition) but also by way of a hybridised cultural setting through my Western and Korean dance training, through my Korean and Western performance experience, and through my work now within Western academia. However, this is not just about myself and my cultural background. As interesting as such an exploration can be, it is only half the story. More than this, I am attempting to reach down and describe a psychobiological basis to the culture-specific lens to emotion and transcendence, as I explore the dancer’s states of mind and moments of transcendence. A dancer’s perception of transcendence signals the moment of change in the level of the dancer’s introspective state, and I try to explore what that moment of experience of bodily feeling is. This necessarily involves my emotion, feeling, and self-consciousness, including sensory and emotional experience. Gearing argues for an emotionally aware ethnography:

I do not think that effective ethnographic research can be done without emotional engagement, and the pursuit of a methodology that ignores what we learn from our emotions is undermining the validity of the resulting information [...] in fieldwork as in all of life, sensation, emotion, and intellect operate simultaneously to structure and interpret our experience of the world. Our emotional

reactions and those to which we interact, guide our analysis of life “at home” as well as “in the field” (Gearing, 1995, p 209).

Seeking to reveal my own subjective process this research examines how to tackle the objectifying of subjective experience. This process of objectification can expand the understanding of dance as a discipline that has its roots in subjective experience – “a researched branch knowledge” (Fraleigh, 1999, P 5). Susan Melrose argues that the use of metaphor in arts should be accepted, because, as she says: “it is unproblematic to assert of the practitioner that her memory ‘stores information in emotional sets’ but rather less so for the critical-analytical writer” (2002, p 13). She argues that there are various studies we can research and we must admit the differences of each study, because while some of them can be measured and yield an exact answer, others need to be described and explored.

There is both a non-problem and a problem in using metaphor, the former because its use is commonplace and helpful and the latter because it is not identified. Therefore, she suggests the use of metaphor for the latter in that the use of metaphor, simile or other rhetorical devices can be useful for description, especially in performing arts, which is “hard to calculate, hard to unitise, impossible to identify on the material constructs which enable their enactment, but essential to the practice of the discipline” (Melrose, 2002, p.11). She borrows from Foucault and Deleuze’s argument that “[visibilities] are not forms of objects, nor even forms that would show up under light, but rather *forms of luminosity which are created by the light itself and allow a thing or object to*

exist only as a flash, sparkle or shimmer” (Melrose, 2002, p 13). Therefore, this research is not open to visible precise measurement and we need to acknowledge each different genre of research whether it be about science, cultural theory, biology, art, music or dance. Melrose (2002) suggests that we need “reflective judgement” which produces schemata to be able to observe, and to experiment. In the particular case of dance, I am exploring the dancer’s invisible, subjective inner mind.

Dance is executed through a dancer’s body and this body is the main instrument in dance. Dance is knowledge of a particular kind – “one not through mental processes but experienced more directly through the body as a feeling, thinking, mysterious whole” (Fraleigh, 1996, p 27). We do not need to translate dance: it speaks in our own very first, and most intimate way (Williamson, 2004).

Williamson speaks of how dance can intimately reach people:

Movement and touch are material, things that our bodies can do: and yet we talk of being moved and touched as internal states, it is bodily dynamics that best describe our feeling. [...] Movement and touch are not a “language” that emotions can be translated into, they are our earliest, primary way of communication (along with the texture of the voice) – which is why dance can reach us in such a fundamental place (Williamson, 2004).

This research, about a dancer’s perception of dance, focuses on her feeling, and her bodily experience when she is dancing. It cannot, therefore, be quantified, clarified or identified in the manner of scientific research. Yet this research can

be helpful for dancers, choreographers and dance students and those who are struggling with writing their presence when they are dancing. In addition, this is not simply a dancer's confessional, personal experience. It is more than this, because experience is to be understood in a very rich, broad sense as including basic perceptual, "motor-program, emotional, historical, social, and linguistic dimensions" (Johnson, 1987, P 15). As Johnson states, "experience involves everything that makes us human – our bodily, social, linguistic, and intellectual being combined in complex interactions that make up our understanding of our world" (1987, p 16). This research is a practice-led account giving an original perspective on dance and the dancing.

¹ My thesis is a rooted and grounded in-the-moment ontology of performance and relates to the interpretivist idea that “to understand the meaning of human action requires grasping the subjective consciousness or intent of the actor from the inside” (Dilthey cited in Schwandt, 2003, p 296). While paradigms of positivism and postpositivism are realist and critical realist ontology and objective epistemologies, and rely upon experimental, quasi-experimental, survey-based and rigorously defined quantitative methodologies, the aim of interpretivism is to grasp how we come to interpret our own actions and those of others as meaningful and to “reconstruct the genesis of the objective meanings of action in the intersubjective communication of individuals in the social life-world” (Outhwaite, 1975, p 91). The approach of my thesis cuts across traditional boundaries or paradigms, based upon notions of deconstruction, reflexivity. The lived experience, emotion, cultural practice and subjectivity.

Chapter 2

Transcendence

To transcend is to go beyond the usual limits – the ordinary range of perception – possibly into a different or higher realm. This passing beyond could indicate that there is a realm above or beyond this one, a world that would be transcendence. Transcendence indicates a structure which, though it cannot be experienced directly, is the solid, unvarying, universal ground of experience (Pearce, 1990). According to Pearce, debates on transcendental arguments have shared this same understanding:

That transcendental arguments are arguments to a pre-established structure which founds human experience, knowledge or activity, and that this structure itself is properly found in relation to that knowledge (Pearce, 1990, p 16).

Transcendental arguments are concerned with the specification of conceptually necessary conditions of the possibility of experience (Pearce, 1990). As this study discusses the dancer's own experience of twenty years as well as my entire life as a person, transcendence is also described through my own experience.

This is based on the premise that as a dancer I gain bodily knowledge which enables me to go on to experience a different stage – transcendence. Even though the vital principle in this research is my experience of bodily knowledge, this chapter discusses how other people have related transcendence to dance and as such is a survey of the literature available.

In both the East and the West, there has been a close connection between transcendence and dance, where dance is seen as a vehicle for achieving transcendence in both religious and secular cultures. As Hanna states, “humans commonly relate to the supernatural through the nearly universal form of dance” (1979, p 101). Perhaps dance worldwide is rooted in universal origins; many writers on the history of dance (see Hanna, 1979; Lihs, 1998; McFee, 1992; Myerhoff, 1990; Williams, 2000; Williams, 2004) posit that dance evolved to cope with the unknown in the human environment, with forces beyond his control such as disease, drought, floods, predators, and other natural phenomena.

Early archaeological finds hint at “dancing masked sorcerers or shamans and hunters in caves in Europe” (Hanna, 1979, p 51). According to Grau (1998), early paintings of sculptures, for example in the cave of Trois-Frères, show a religious dance being performed. Lihs (1998) also shows how early people strived to please their gods and to request favour from them through dance. Cave paintings found in France and Italy, dating back to the Paleolithic period, depict dancers in animal skin simulating a hunt. While early people lived in close contact with and dependence on animals, they motivated the early people to

imitate them. Similar engravings have been found in Southern Africa and other parts of the world and all point to the idea that in pre-history human beings, in Lihs' works: "danced to contact the supernatural world" (1998, p 199).

Other writers talk of how religion "institutionalizes optimism, makes predictable the unpredictable, and attempts to bring under control those things that knowledge and science have yet to control" (Blumberg, 1963, p 158). Hanna suggests that because dance is "extraordinary, it is an attention-getting device, arresting, and seductive. Its departure from ordinary behaviour emphasizes the distinctiveness of dance and makes it memorable. Thus dance is useful as a medium of evocation and persuasion, it focuses attention by framing experience" (1979, p 103). Therefore, to make contact with a supernatural power which humans cannot achieve with their ordinary behaviour, early man looked to dance to mediate and transcend unpredictable events.

Two exponents of contemporary dance, Erik Hawkins, and Lucia Dlugoszewski, composer and musician for the Hawkins company, suggest that creating the two elements of art and nature is based on notions of perfection and imperfection, where nature is seen as perfect while man is imperfect. The function of art through ritual then becomes a means to help men identify with this perfect ideal. Therefore, dance has been regarded as a tool for people to "present man, not man instead of nature, but man identical with perfect nature, that is man at his very best, real, alive, and free" (Hanna, 1979, p 104).

However, in contrast, classical ballet expresses the potential for domination over the forces of nature, over gravity in weightlessly sustained balance, and over muscular limitations in the high leg extensions. Lee writes:

The supernatural scenes of the ballets called for a greater development of the aerial aspects of the danse d'école as well as national folk dances and demi-catéres styles. That is ballon, of the quality of lightness in a dancer's movement, signified the epitome of her achievement as an interpreter of the ethereal. [...] these fleeting spirits were "powerfully present and dangerous" (Lee, 2002, p 141).

Moreover, nineteenth century dancers further defied gravity by using wires to suggest they could launch themselves into the air from the point of their toes:

To fly dancers short distances, thus heightening the magical effects of the ballet. As the technical skills for flying objects and people developed, wires were used to suspend dancers on the tips of their shoes. Immediately before ascending in a flight of fancy, the dancer, perched on the point of a toe appeared weightless and the mastery of pointe dancing became more desirable than ever (Lee, 2002, p 143).

In this approach, the supernatural is conjured when, through gracefulness, the dancer achieves a sublime presence (Levin, 1973, p 42). Hanna (1979) suggests that dance often mediates between the individual and society, human and supernatural, time and space, good and evil. Dance is an extraordinary nonverbal body movement which contains aesthetic value, different from everyday behaviour which occurs in actual time and space. He writes "dance as kinetic

symbolism vis-à-vis the supernatural in Africa appears to fall within what I call one of the universal genres of dance: transcendental dance” (Hanna, 1979, p 126).

According to Hogarth the terms ecstasy or trance, which are generally used to describe the altered state of consciousness that the shaman enters to make contact with the spirits in religion, implies “the involuntary, unconscious condition that spirit mediums enter into” (1999, p 15). Hutkrantz also explains “the trance” as follows:

The trance cannot be compared with ordinary comatose states. In its genuine form it is a psychogenic, hysteroid mode of reaction forming itself according to the dictates of the mind. It may also be described as a mentally abnormal state of introversion which may be provoked suggestively or with suggestively acting artificial means (drugs, narcotics, etc.), and which is an expression of the conscious or unconscious desires of the visionary. The trance states may be of varying quality and intensity, from light trance to deep trance with amnesia which is practically tantamount to complete unconsciousness, but the different types may gradually merge into each other (Hutkrantz, 1996, p 15).

Myerhoff (1990) argues that ritual performances are testament to our capacity to endlessly bring new possibilities into being, while not entirely giving up old, prior understandings. He writes “we make magic, believe in it and do not, at once, we make ourselves anew, yet remain familiar to ourselves, are capable of being carried away, changed, yet know fully and freely exactly what we are doing and why” (1990, p 249). Nordstrom (1981) claims that most writing on

mysticism would agree that transcendence is crucial for mystical experience, and that there cannot be, in principle, mysticism without transcendence. However, in dance, the term transcendence not only relates to mysticism but is also used in various other ways by choreographers and dancers.

One way in which the term has been used in dance is with regard to altered states of consciousness, which it is held are commonly induced in ritual performance (Hogarth, 1999; Lee, 1990; Myerhoff, 1990), “more powerful altered states: trance, ecstasy, possession, obsession, conversion, and the like, often regarded as ineffable” (Myerhoff, 1990, p 245). In dance, the term consciousness often focuses us on an “individual, subjective state, rather than that of collectivity or sociological relationship” (Myerhoff, 1990, p 245). Myerhoff uses “transformation” to describe these conscious categories, stating that “transformation has been usefully described in several places” (1990, p 246). According to Myerhoff, speaking of transformation:

One becomes something else, state of consciousness, a new perception of oneself or ones’ socio/physical world, a conversion in awareness, belief, sentiment, knowledge, understanding; a revised and enduring emergent state of mind and emotion (Myerhoff, 1990, p 245).

Transformation is a multidimensional alteration of the ordinary state of mind, “overcoming barriers between thought, action, knowledge, and emotion” (Myerhoff, 1990, p 246). Myerhoff (1990) claims that the performer cannot completely get lost in her own portrayal or obliterated, rather she maintains a

measure of control and awareness. We know that religious ritual, which is “with the state playing role of the transcendent” (Schechner, 2002, p 47), is generated by human societal needs. As Myerhoff writes: “rituals are communicative performances that always provide a sense of continuity and predictability. They must be reasonably convincing, rhetorically sound, and well-crafted” (1990, p 246).

Myerhoff describes someone in a transcendental state as “aware simultaneously of being in flow as well as aware of his/her actions” (1990, p 247). Turner (1982) alludes to an in-between state that challenges the clear cut dualistic division between awareness and flow. They are rather, he argues, in a complex inter-relationship. Eliade alludes to this by discussing shamanic trance as an “archaic technique of controlled ecstasy” (1964, p 24) in that the shaman is also trained to consciously simulate transformational states.

Similarly, not only in religious dance but also in dance more generally, someone dancing can experience “altering states of consciousness” (Hanna, 1979, p 69). The feeling of transcendence is open not only to professional dancers, evidently, but also to someone dancing for pleasure. Most contemporary cultures have in addition to their traditional dance, popular modern trends which are composed of active participants who share their vocabulary, emotion and joy and most of whom cannot or do not try to be a professional dancer. In other words they dance as a leisure activity. Turner defines some of the characteristics of leisure:

Leisure is freedom from forced chronologically regulated rhythms of factory and office and a chance to recuperate and enjoy natural biological rhythms again [...] It is, furthermore, freedom to transcend social structural limitations, freedom to play [...] leisure can be hard or exacting, subject to rules and routines even more stringent than those at the workplace, but because they are optional, voluntary, they are part of an individual's freedom, of his growing self mastery, even self transcendence (Turner, 1982, p 37).

People seek out the sense of freedom, transcendence, enjoyment, involvement which then brings relief from the stress and tedium of everyday life. According to Hanna “many psychologists, psychiatrists, and dance therapists recognize that dance may serve as a psychological defense mechanism embodying psychologically or socially unacceptable impulses, and so gratifying or deflecting needs” (1979, p 68).

Similarly, professional dance, that is not dancing for leisure, also allows an individual dancer to negotiate the spaces between the rules of dance and everyday life. My own experience of this is discussed throughout this thesis. Safier writes about how dance is extraordinary in comparison with ordinary life:

Convention dictates which postures, stance, carriage or gait we assume in this or that area of life. Dance is perceived as an escape from this stylization of movements. At least, dance movements are different from the movements of routine living. Thus dance encourages relaxation both in reality and in illusion (Safier, 1953, p 242).

Dance, like many other forms of intensive physical activity, “often provides a

healthy fatigue or distraction which may abate a temporary rage crisis and thus allow more enduring personality patterns to regain ascendancy” (Munroe, 1955, p 630). The rhythm, movement, coordination and synchronisation tend to induce “altering states of consciousness” (Hanna, 1979, p 69) which Hanna describes as “feeling tone without attendant loss of acuity in intellection [...] which gives the feeling of bliss and elation” (1979, p 68). These altered states of consciousness might be induced by socialized response to a contextual situation, by physical behaviour or by autosuggestion.

Secondly, we are not usually aware of how our bodies form patterns and rhythms, or of how our bodies command space. However, as Tuan (2003) states, in performing ritual or theatre, performers are far more conscious of their relations to the space around them. Dancers work in a space – that is, a studio, stage – but they also work with space; it is alive, like an active partner (Ashley, 1996). Gil (2006) writes about how dance becomes space in terms of transcendence.

Mary Wigman (1886 -1973) was a German early-modern dance pioneer famous for the way in which she used space as an active element. Rudolf Laban (1879-1958) classified dancers by their preferences for moving on a certain level – high, medium or low in space around the body kinesphere. Laban writes that movement is:

So to speak, living in the sense of changing replacements as well as changing cohesion. The architecture is created by human movements and is made up of pathways tracing shapes in space

(cited in Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2002, p 29).

Gil writes “we know that the dancer evolves in a particular space, different from objective space. The dancer does not move in space, rather, the dancer secretes, creates space with his movement” (2006, p 21). The dancers are not just moving but rather keep prolonging the space that surrounds their body in time; or as Barba writes “an actor doesn’t actually finish where the gesture has stopped in space, but continues in time” (1991, p 14). Newlove and Dalby (2004) describe how motion in space is contained inside us:

We need space to be able to move and when we do our bodies displace space. When we take a step we push some space out of the way and, as we do so, space fills where we have just stood. As well as this, motion in space exists within us. Whilst the human body lives, it breathes; the heart and pulse have their rhythms and the blood circulates. These movements are a proof of life (Newlove and Dalby, 2004, p 112).

Gil observes how space is intimately connected with the dancer’s body, saying “the space of the body is the skin extending itself into space; it is skin becoming space” (2006, p 22). He claims that space can become the dancer’s body, just as an actor occupies the invisible space with his body. An audience is able to experience different emotional values according to the actor’s movement in the space that can be described as “dense or rarified, invigorating or suffocation” (Gil, 2006, p 22).

The space in and around the dancer’s body is “the first natural prosthesis of the

body: the body gives itself new extensions in space, and in such ways it forms a new body – a virtual one, but ready to become actual and ready to allow gestures to become actualized in it” (Gil, 2006, p 22). Raumkörper also states how space is regarded by a dancer: “the space-body [...] is to the dancer as substantial and real as his physical body” (1983, cited in Preston-Dunlop, 1995, p 296).

The dancer’s body unfolds in the body-space where it dances, there is then no longer any interior space available as it partakes intimately of exterior space. It means “movement *seen* from the outside coincides with movement lived or seen from the outside [...] this is what happens in danced trance, where no space is left free outside of the consciousness of the body” (Gil, 2006, p 23).

Gil also argues that “all dance movements are learned and it is necessary to adapt the body to the rhythms, to the imperative of the dance and the unimpeded flow of the dancer’s energy” (2006, p 22). The “inside of the body invested with energy, and the outside where gestures of the dance unfold. Interior space is coextensive with exterior space” (Gil, 2006, p 23) and this is his explanation of transcendence. Gil states, “Skin no longer delimits the body-proper, but it extends beyond it across exterior space: it is the space of the body” (2006, p 33).

The final example in this survey comes from the work of Zarrilli (1990), who also uses the term transcendence, in the context of Asian in-body disciplines of practice, describing what “becoming the character” (p 146) means in an Asian performer. In the Asian tradition, for the performer to become the character, “the

lifelong process of training” (Zarrilli, 1990, p 131) is essential as a first step as, “daily repetition of physical exercise and/or performance techniques encodes the techniques in the body”. According to Zarrilli, through this act of repetitive practice “comes both control and transcendence of ‘self’” (1990, p 131), Barba also stresses the importance of a performer’s practice:

The study of the performance practice is essential. Theatre history is not just the reservoir of the past, it is also the reservoir of the new, a pool of knowledge that from time to time makes it possible for us to transcend the present (Barba, 1995, p 11).

To prepare for higher stages of development for a performer, fundamental techniques must be embedded into her body through the constantly repetitive practice that constitutes a given discipline. In other words, the first step in performing training is reached when the performer has embodied the required technique through practice. As Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg state, “dance practice is one of embodiment” (2002, p 7). Zarrilli also claims “such techniques are a part of his body-consciousness, ready-at-hand to be used at any moment” (1990, p 132) as body memory. At that stage, the performer can be free from the “consciousness about” (p 134), like a yogi is freed for meditation, the performer is “freed to perform” (p 134).

In terms of my own definition and approach to transcendence in this research, I propose that continuous practice leads the dancer to become embodied with the technical rule and then becomes free from the constraints of the same rigorous

rule (this is further discussed in Chapter 4). This set of rigorous rules are closely bound up with conventions, ideology and by definition the dominant hierarchies within dance forms, but through acquisition and thus overcoming them the dancer can experience a feeling of freedom. In addition, this experience of freedom, which can be only achieved through sustained practice, has to be experienced individually and personally, it is a subjective and personal matter.

However, though the feeling or experience might be different in each person, there is an argument that human feeling and emotion have similar characteristics that are shared across humanity (see more Norris, 2002; Pearce, 2002; Norris, 2005). As Korean Buddhists asserts, we are all connected and part of the whole (Lee, 1993; Pak, 2007; Pearce, 2002). According to this religion, a human being does not exist alone, but all stand in infinite relation. Manhae says, “If there is no I, there is no other, and vice versa [...] I am the gathering of the other, the other is the scattering of me” (Kim, 1998, p 202). All sentient beings exist “in the nexus with infinite others, and that the being itself has no self-center rather it is absolute nothingness” (Kim, 1998, p 202).

For Sartre (2004) no ego can appear if there is no reflected consciousness, as he states, “there is no I in the unreflected consciousness” (Sartre, 2004, p 12), and it is this that leads Sartre, in *Transcendence of the Ego* (first published in 1937), to describe that level of consciousness as “pre-personal” or “impersonal” (Sartre, 2004). He also states that there is an ego encountered in reflection, “viewed out of the corner of the eye” (Sartre, 2004, p 14).

He suggests that consciousness discovers its personal being only when it reflects upon itself. Moreover, he claims that this ego is a transcendent object of reflective consciousness. He uses the term “transcendent” in its root sense of going beyond. In that consciousness has the capacity to go beyond this ‘I’ given, it is linked to Sartre’s notion of freedom. What also links transcendence with freedom:

The fact that our freedom is never completed, that it always fails by my limitations, which are finally my faults, makes us relate ourselves to transcendence (Whal, 1948, p 539).

I emphasise how important it is for a dancer to get to a certain point of technical achievement when dancing, and this involves breathing as a critical element. Once the external form is physically embodied by the performer, breathing energizes her body. Then, “the forms that the body is now capable of assuming become the conduit for the release of the energized life-force” (Zarrilli, 1990, p 137). Zarrilli (1990) suggests that practice is combined with external realisation of form, where correct breathing is associated with a particular pose. The manipulation of the breath makes possible the release and control of internal energy. This enables the performer to in his words “become the character” (p 146).

This process occurs once the breath, or life-force, is controlled and the performer is able to “spontaneously release her energy into the embodiment of character” (Zarilli, 1990, p 142). The “character” is therefore, not created in the personality

of the performer but rather “embodied and projected/ energized/ as a living form between actor and audience” (p 144). Zarrilli writes:

The “power of presence” manifest in this stage other, while embodied in this particular actor in this particular moment, is not limited to that ego. That dynamic figure exists between audience and actor, transcending both, pointing beyond itself (Zarrilli, 1990, p 144).

Dance is of course, much more than the simple execution of outer technical movement. There is a more profound emotion that the dancer keeps deeply in her body. As Freeman writes, “To dance is to engage in rhythmic movement by others. The reciprocity fosters transcendence over the boundaries of self in physical and emotional communion” (1995, p 153). Furthermore, researchers have discovered that the emotional state we are in becomes an integral part of us (Pearce, 2002, p 33). Pearce (2002) describes the universal-yet-personal nature of the frequency realm of each heart and how it is linked with the brain. Transcendence is the recognition that we are part of the whole, that we are all interconnected, and that what we do affects our environment as much as our environment affects us.

As with religion, dance also concerns itself with notions of shared humanity, extended self, and interconnectivity. One commentator is Hagendoorn (2005) who speaks of the commonality of dance across cultures, viewed from an evolutionary perspective, where certain configurations seem to have a cross-cultural appeal such as synchronized rhythmical group scenes found from

classical ballet to African aboriginal tribal dances. Similarly, virtuoso solos have widespread acclaim. Their dancing, regardless of whether it is ballet or capoeira, appeals to audiences around the world. Applying Darwin's theory of survival of the fittest to dance, Miller writes:

Beauty equals difficulty and high cost. We find attractive those things that could have been produced only by people with attractive, high fitness qualities such as health, energy, endurance, hand-eye coordination, fine motor control, intelligence, creativity, access to rare materials, the ability to learn difficult skills, and lots of free time (cited in Hagendoorm, 2005, p 5).

This theory may explain why audiences rejoice in the virtuoso's solo. However, the virtuoso's solo is not only about advanced technique such as high jump, turn, and some difficult and beautifully executed tasks. There is a more profound emotion shared by humanity, which both the dancer and the audience can feel. The audience may feel differently about the same event through their individual interpretation but regardless of the way in which they respond, they all feel it. According to Hagendoorm, "neuro-aesthetic analysis of dance does not deny the cultural context within which specific dance forms emerge, but acknowledges that neural mechanisms are the same in all human beings" (2005, p 6). An individual person's experience is not just based on data provided by their senses, but "is shaped by memories, desires, and intentions, conditioned by expectations, coloured by emotions and contingent on the physical state of the body" (Hagendoorm, 2005, p 6). He also suggests that the reason why a certain piece may be meaningful to someone, lies beyond scientific investigation,

philosophical speculation and even beyond each person's own understanding.

In dance, learning external patterns of movement and transforming them identification with the dancer's own feeling that are further parts of the embodying process. (Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2002). As a result, according to them, "the lived experience of the technique gradually seeps into long term memory, inscribed into the body and person, to be used as opportunity provides" (2002, p 8). However, the body is not just a physical vehicle of meaning but "an intersubjective identity-in-the-making" (Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2002, p 11), just as Sartre and Korean Buddhism speak of our connectedness. There are then, many ways we can find, apply, and translate the term transcendence in dance.

In the next chapter, I discuss my personal experience and understanding of transcendence. However, transcendence is not something I can define with a word, rather it will be described as a process of long-term experience combined with the feeling of specific moments. The next chapter describe this process in detail.

Chapter 3

Embodiment

My story is about the developmental integration and exploration of relationships: relationships between parts of myself, between myself and all inner and outer manifestations of the other, human and emotion, mind and body. It is described through my confessional story of my family, my upbringing, Korean culture, and my life. During this research, I found that this confession is very hard for me as auto-ethnography is an essentially Western mode relating to Catholic confession and the emphasis on the individual self in psychoanalysis. I situate myself literally as being the body of my own research. I try to deepen this moment of dance experience to include not only my feeling of the experience of dance but also the elements that lead to the making of the feeling such as my cultural inscription, gender, politics and history. Throughout this chapter, I explore how this hidden knowledge of political, historical and cultural issues informs my own research and the dancer's bodily experience that it is exploring and attempting to document. I claim that this new connection in dance with its new forms of dance alignment and other technical aspects, opens up space to experience a unique, critical transcendental positioning of myself. As I explain further throughout this

chapter, to reveal my emotional experience as a Korean, dancer and a woman to the inspection of others is a difficult task. Highlighting the transformative passageways that dance has taken me through, opened up and joined, this story tells how I have enlarged my sense of entry into what is blocked in my inner self and yet also somehow available to explore (this chapter relates to DVD 2 *Towards Embodied Knowledge: the Dancer's Journey*). As Louise Steinman states "Performance is a vehicle by which the performer can be transformed into a heightened state of consciousness. It is also a means for performers to transform aspects of their lives, their dreams, their experience" (Steinman, 1985, p 27).

A solo dance piece called *Two*, choreographed by Russell Maliphant on 1st October 2005 at Sadler's Wells and danced by Sylvie Guillem, provided the greatest scope for her abilities, while demonstrating extremely fast dance movements. Guillem was trapped in a box of light created by Michael Hulis. The audience could not actually see each individual movement clearly but could only see the trace of her in-between movement because of the speed at which she was moving. The pace of the music was slow at the start, but after a while the music sped up along with her movements. Her swooping arm movements and fluid leg movements, along with the quick changes only between standing tall and crouching down were performed with unbelievably fast speed thereby creating the illusion of great movement for the spellbound audience.

After the performance there was a lecture, and an audience member asked her

what she had been thinking during the performance with those extremely fast movements. Guillem replied that she could not answer the question because she could not explain the feeling with any words or she did not know what she was thinking about exactly. However, she also said that she could answer certainly that she had practiced again and again until the movements became naturally operated. She subsequently never thought about the movement at the moment she was doing it or the next movement she was going to be doing because those movements were already in her body, and there was no time to think of the next one. If she was distracted once, even by thinking of the movement itself, she would miss the timing. Her movement was already embodied in her so that she did not need to think about that movement or the next.

In this chapter, I consider the dancer's bodily feeling of experience in relation to practice through an analysis of bodily structure and technique in dance and how this structures movement. Norris (2005) states that through practice, dancers are able to develop not only physical abilities associated with strength, endurance and so on, but also stronger emotional processes, as emotion is also evoked and re-felt.

Dance "at its most pure deals with the immediate expression of sensations experienced by the body/mind" (Steinman, 1985, p 10). To talk of mind body integration as a dancer involves critically not just getting the movement physically into the dancer's body but must involve the lived experience of the whole individual person. "The dances of no two persons should be alike"

(Duncan, 1924, p 124). In my case this essential element of performing involves my immediate bodily experience but also my experiences and memories of growing up and learning ballet. Western ballet technique therefore affects the awareness and understanding of my body. See Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 for an account of particular techniques and embodied processes in relation to this. Physical awareness of the technique, for example, is one of the key elements here, as I describe in particular alignment, energy and breathing technique.

Zarrilli (1990) also speaks of “‘in-body’ disciplines of Asian performers” (p 131), which for a dancer, comes after she reaches a certain level of dance performance. For Zarrilli, it is imperative for a dancer to understand the dance, not only at an intellectual level but also through a trained awareness that is able to manifest the appropriate creative energy. Once the training has reached a certain stage of technical mastery, the body has embodied performer discipline which involves a range of movement possibilities, and crucially, co-ordination of the body and mind. According to Zarrilli, with such a level of mind body integration, the dancer is finally ready for the higher stages of human expression in that he/she is able to feel and look at the inner self – the spiritual self. Only after inner control over one’s ego can a different level be reached where the dancer is capable of transcending expressive states from ordinary human to dancer. Building on the experience proposed by Zarrilli I can begin to particularise the circumstances of my own unique experiential moments in this manner.

Once my body has achieved a certain advanced stage of technique, I feel a

freedom, free from my own body, my own nationality, gender, cultural restriction, political issues, and every environmental influence that surrounds and weighs down heavily on myself, constructed by society's outlook and values (Chakravorty, 2004). When I dance, my dancing body enters a kind of neutrality within the space where I am dancing, in that I become an open medium for surpassing not only dance technique itself but also my female gender identity whereby the everyday social constructs of gender are transcended. Once such an integration occurs, I and the dance I am dancing become one inseparable entity of process.

I follow James Hillman when he states "There is no part of my personal record that is not at the same time the record of a community, a society, a nation, an age" (Hillman, 1983, p 45). To explore in relation to my own "record", I trace the story of my childhood up to when I became a professional dancer I position myself in the interface between Korean history, the technique and the history of ballet and traditional Korean dance. This makes for very particular elements of cultural inscription and to identify these I trace the path from my childhood to the stage where my training begins to yield the real possibilities of transcendence through dance. There is also a short depiction of some technical differences and how they are generated within each culture. This gives some useful background to what I see as new and enhanced connections within the cultural and historical space I occupy.

In Western culture, throughout history, people have long been conditioned to

regard themselves as bodies and spirits, bodies and minds, bodies and souls. Much about their culture affirms Plato's notion that their true selves are trapped in these bodies of theirs (Johnson, 1987; Weiss, 1999; Block and Kissell, 2001; Judovitz, 2001). Furthermore, Korean people have been affected by Western ideas to the extent that we tend to see ourselves as being spirits in a machine. According to Block and Kissell (2001), bodily impulses are hidden inside us like shameful relics of our humanity because those who have the capacity for high level verbal thinking processes are more highly valued. They also suggest that:

Embodied knowing is the ability to interact with a thought or an experience holistically that involves the integrated power network of the total person. The integrated power includes neural elements, efforts, memory, language, perception and attunement and are found integrated throughout the body, not just in the brain. It is the way we process the experience of life and select or reject others (Block and Kissell, 2001, p 6).

However, my own conception is not based on such dualistic ideas (Descartes, 1986) but on the idea of an integrated embodied consciousness as proposed by the traditional Korean philosophy of body-mind-universe.

Norris considers the state of transcendence to be a matter of body knowledge, stating:

How transcendent states such as states of prayer (mental prayer or prayer of the heart, for example) or Buddhist meditative states are learned, and it has become evident to me that, although an element of verbal cognition is necessary to recognize and contextualise these

nonverbal states, they are primarily somatic states, transmitted and learned through the body (Norris, 2005, p 182).

Relating this to dance, he demonstrates two ways in which we experience our own body knowledge Norris (2002): first, the experience of forgetting the next dance steps but finding one's body moving into those steps with its own sense of certainty. In *The Biology of Transcendence*, Joseph Chilton Pearce (2002) refers to the structure and function of the brain, and quotes the work of scientists, who have identified four evolutionary developments to the brain which also correspond to developmental stages in the growth of each child. He also points out that with the development of the prefrontal lobes, which is the latest brain development which gives us our potential of transcendence, no such development can be clearly observed. And thus, he suggests that it could be that the heart is involved in the phase of development of the prefrontal lobes, preparing the individual for a transcendental step forward. According to him, the heart has an intelligence in its holistic capacity that responds in the interest of well-being and continuity, sending to the brain's emotional system an intuitive prompt for appropriate behaviour. The brain and the heart are interconnected and interact constantly, and while the brain is indeed the organ of intellect, the heart can help our deeper intelligence beyond the brain but also in collaboration with it. And thus, in this research, I do not separate body, mind and brain but rather assert that they are all interconnected.

As a dancer, I can see that it is self-evident that practising is one of the most important elements. The main composition of a dance is the dancer's body and

her movement and this dance experience is primary a bodily state, in the sense that it cannot be learned through merely thinking and reading.

Regardless of whether the genre is ballet or folk dance, the dancers work hard to learn a particular posture and technique, although, depending on the genre, the dancer can choose different ways of practising. At the outset of training in most dances, the dancer tries to fit into the dance's technical pattern. This effort, which Barba calls "depersonalisation" (1995, p 13) is expended in the training routines of repetitive practice.

Clearly, the medium of a dance is a dancer's body and the dance movement is learned through practice which becomes intelligence of the body (Norris, 2002; 2005). Moreover, Norris argues that even a religious divine transcendental state is transmitted and learned through body knowledge:

The body is the medium through which the divine is experienced, the medium for the transcendent, and the means through which religious knowledge and experience are transmitted and learned (Norris, 2005, p 184).

Barba speaks of, "a well-proven complex of rules actually [...] useful to the performer" (1995, p 14). Therefore, I believe that the dancer's unceasing practice to reach that objective is a fundamental requirement that must be possessed in her body. I believe that dancers have to go through objective stages of mastering the movements of the dance, before it is embodied. Then the dancer

can witness her own body knowledge as the musculo-skeletal system develops the moving intelligence of the body that never forgets.

This is supported by Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg who say “dance practice is one of embodiment” (2002, p 7). They suggest that embodiment is a process by which the dormant ability in practice emerges. In dance, “it fuses the idea with the movement and with the performer of the movement” (Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2002, p 7) through each practice. According to these authors embodiment is more than just getting movement into the performers’ bodies, more than their physical muscle, bone and skin. “Embodiment of movement involves the whole person, a person conscious of being a living body, living that experience, giving intention to the movement material” (Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2002, p 7). Block and Kissell (2001), following Laban’s line of thought, claim that: “movement becomes *agency* with what Laban calls *effort*: the inner impulses from which movement originates [...] At this point, movement with its inner impulses and the emergence of value, becomes embodied and thereby fully human” (Block and Kissell, 2001, p 9).

Embodiment therefore, continuously develops through practice. Norris argues that the body is capable of a certain possibility of development in that the body is an unfinished state, “then, it is *not* a question of imagining perfections in the bodies of beings other than, and higher than, ourselves, but is rather a question of imaging such perfections in an embodiment which we are capable of

becoming” (Levin, 1985, p 218). Thus, describing the process of my practice as a dancer, on the way to achieving embodiment, is essential in this research because my potential to develop live embodiment is shaped through repetitive practice and technique. Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg speak of what embodying a technique:

[Involves], such as clothing, attitude to the teacher, personal investment in the movement, attitude to interpretation of the movement or exact acquisition of its form. Attitudes to sound, to sexuality, to the role of personality all matter in the embodiment of a technique. Then an understanding of the form’s content, learned by living it and experiencing its layered potential, enables the embodying person to give the physicality required or the interpretation chosen (Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2002, p 8).

Norris states: “nonverbal modes of memory and processing may be experienced as an intelligence of the body, a development capacity of a nonconscious level” (2005, p 188). Dancers are able to control and anticipate the next movement without hesitating, without having to think of the preparation for this movement, and thus, with embodiment, they can dance freely. Norris also speaks of learning and embodiment:

Once the attention no longer must be focused on the new skills of text, once the body has learned an activity, the mind and feeling are free to also participate in a new way (Norris, 2005, p 188).

She claims performance is “pre-scribed postures, and gestures and movements”

(Norris, 2005, p 188). Levin also states that the understanding becomes clearer, “since it is an understanding which exists only by virtue of its being (increasingly) embodied” (1985, p 209-210). More simply, I can argue that dance is not a form of representation – where something stands for something else – but an act of embodiment (Williamson, 2004). Indeed, embodiment involves perceiving not only the pure movement itself but also its surrounding space, sound with kinaesthetic awareness and control of the movement. As Rudolf Laban suggests, dance incorporates, on the one hand a physical environment bound by space, time and gravity, while on the other, it is essentially tied to the senses, including the kinetic, with its dependence on vision, touch, sound and rhythm (Newlove, 2001; Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2002; Newlove and Dalby, 2004) and, more importantly the dancer’s emotion.

According to Norris, the body is “not a fixed, unchanging organism, and there is not a universal lived experience of the body” (2005, p 185). This lived experience varies according to culture, religious tradition, and personal histories. She states, “a tradition’s concept of self informs the experience of self, and the cumulative lived embodied experience is thus shaped in a distinct manner” (Norris, 2005, p 185). However, more than this, there is an automatic level of processing that the body can be understood to have learned and transmitted, which is universal. Norris (2005) uses neuroscience to support her understanding of these emotional processes that take place when emotions are evoked, re-felt and developed. This neurobiological processing of emotion parallels experience. Norris states (referred to on p 84): “emotion and the stimuli that evoke them are

necessarily culturally specific, but the automatic nature of this process is universal” (2005, p 196).

Norris (2005) argues that when assuming some posture (in particular she talks about ritual), the person has the multidimensional experience that can recall the image of the posture, which includes emotion in it, visualising the image as being taken by his or her body, and at the same time he or she receives the feeling impressions associated with that position the person. Therefore, “gradually the physical and emotional dimensions of worship become embodied personal experience, and each time a gesture is repeated, the kinaesthetic and emotional memory of that gesture is evoked, layering, compounding, and shaping present experience” (Norris, 2005, p 190-91).

Relating this to dance, each repetition of dance movement with my body not only reinforces the associations with the movement but also recalls the feeling associated with that moment, and this process is universal according to Norris even though the feelings connected to the experiences vary individually. “Re-enactment is a re-experiencing, because memory stores not just ideas but also feeling and sensory experience, and when an emotional memory is recalled it is experienced anew” (Norris, 2005, p 191). Norris also claims:

Refeeling is progressive rather than a static unchanging reexperiencing of the same emotion; the more material has been stored in association with a given posture of gesture, the more can be refelt. Repetition thus strengthens the recalled experience of a particular image of movement. Even spiritual qualities such as

endurance, ecstasy, or faith communicated directly to the body and feelings through those images become part of the reexperienced memory (Norris, 2005, p 191).

In addition, Damasio displays in his book *The Feeling of What Happens* that “reexperiencing” an emotion refers to the biochemical and electrochemical processes that associated with emotions which comes after the event and back to us. Thus, repetitive practice strengthens not only the appearance of the body movement but also introspectively the dancer’s interior map of the dance. “Awareness of our own motion, weight and position is obtained from within the body itself, rather than from the outside world” (Todd, 1937, p 26).

Although my body is imbued with Korean culture (including Korean traditional dance) and an education/training in Western ballet, the movements I make also involve going beyond cultural constructs as I explore my state of transcendence in dance. Use of the body must be learned, and each dance is generated by each specific culture. Accumulated personal lived experience is necessarily culturally specific, but beyond this, there are somatic processes by which experience is gained which I propose are universally human. The form in which I experience transcendence might be specific to my culture, but the idea of transcendence itself is universal (Norris, 2005).

This does not mean that all dancers feel transcendence in the same way as I do, but rather that they may have the capacity to feel a certain level of the extraordinary moment that might be called transcendence. Therefore, this

research is focussed on human experience, particularly at the point where emotions and the stimuli that evoke them are processed by the body into dance.

Historically, ballet was created for aristocracy to entertain, and the customs surrounding it reflected the hierarchical nature of society. Its roots can be traced back to the European courts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and it developed to sanctify absolute monarchical power. “The so-called *intermedii*, further developed by the French into the *entremets* of court ballet, were danced by the ruling class for the delectation of their aristocratic peers at intervals during elaborate spectacles and feasts” (Lee, 2002, p 26).

At an early stage, a ballet master added a refined style adapting to the change in status of ballet with each epoch, and then it kept developing up until the technique and style of the present day (Greskovic, 2000; Lee, 2002). This dance became so important in upper classes as a training of social graces that almost all nobles took daily dance classes. It is a well-known fact that Louis XIII (1601-1643) was a devoted lover of court ballet and he also danced. “In the production of *Renaud*, Louis XIII danced the role of a demigod, the Demon of Fire, an allusion to the concept of a divine right ruler” (Lee, 2002, p 49). In the initial stages, ballet was considered an important skill for the sons and daughters of the nobility.

By contrast, traditional Korean dance was created from understanding the working of nature in order to survive. Moreover, at the same time, the dancers

attempted to live in harmony with the mysterious supernatural order thought to be present in nature, which led to primitive ritual exorcisms and entertainments as well. However, with the coming of agriculture, the dance was ignored by people who saw the dancers as humble, especially the upper classes such as the Yangban class (Jung, 1995; Lee, 2000).

Korean dance is originally generated by Koreans' everyday life, as Kim states "in Korea, traditionally music and dance have always played a part in life. Dance and music brought people together and helped them express their feelings" (1999, p 45). The origin of Korean dance began with the history of the Korean people, their behaviour in everyday life, worshipping of heavens, and shamanism. Throughout Korean history, dance has been a powerful means of expression in that Korean traditional dance incorporates unique Korean phenomena, customs and emotions (Bae, 2004; Kim, 1996; Kim, 1999). Dance proliferated in the rituals of primal religions is an essential component and through dance, people celebrated various aspects of their lives as well as their relationship to nature.

In early religious rituals, which were an indispensable part of people's lives at that time, dancing represented an effort to deal with difficult problems and the limitations of people when they confronted with the power of nature. They primarily believed that the spirits controlled the most important part of their lives, in which the mysterious brings about birth, sickness, wars, and violent acts of nature. They also believed the spirits could be affected by magic activities,

which were presented through dance (Kim 1999; Seo 2003).

Before the advent of Buddhism and Confucianism in Korea, religious rites were performed as a way of orientation towards nature. Early totemic tribes followed communal shamanist practices such as “YoungGo” ceremony to pray to a supernatural force which cannot be overcome through their own power. Various shamanistic practices have been well developed in Korea throughout history. Korean shamanism has deep roots in folk beliefs from ancient times that are intimately related to the primitive cult of communal worship rites which were offered to the gods of heaven, and infused with Buddhist tradition (Jung, 1995).

When the ancients felt powerless against the might of nature, nature itself was a source of the greatest terror at the same time as an object of worship. Therefore, they created religious ceremonies in order to soothe, obey as well as overcome nature. Those ceremonies may be the origin of Korean dance (Bae, 2001; Jung, 1995; Lee, 1993; Seo, 2003). Therefore, dances were also indispensable elements in festivals and ceremonies in traditional society and Korean people inherit them and still perform the ceremonies in rural areas. Originally, Koreans made their living by hunting and collecting wild animals and plants. According to the Korean Foundation:

About 5500 years ago, groups of food-collecting people began to cultivate millet, then various kinds of beans. As early as 2700 B.C., rice began to appear in the southern parts of Korea (Korean Foundation, 1997, p 4).

As the nomadic life changed to farming life, the ritual group of dances which usually related to the shaman came to be enjoyed by Korean people. Shamanism influenced a lot of local artists in their individual developments and thus, over time, a lot of branches of Korean dance were born (Kim, 1998; Kim, 1999; Lee, 1993). However, with the rapidly developing influence of Western culture, Korean people have come to have contempt for shamanist influence and therefore also for dance which is related closely to shamanism.

Korean traditional dance is generally divided into two categories, folk and court dance. The ritual dance is in the folk dance category. Even though folk dance originated earlier than court dance, in my research, I discuss court dance as I was inspired by Salpuri dance (further discussed in Chapter 4), which is in the category of court dance. Court dance, dating back to the Three Kingdom¹ period, was promoted during the Koryo Kingdom² period, 918-1392 A.D., a period known for its love of festivals. Court dance took its present form gradually during the ChoSun³ period, 1392-1910 A.D. It is a beginning for the court dance to become an indoor occasion and dancers started being hired for national court ceremonies as professionals, although they were still performing out-of-doors during the ChoSun period (Bae, 2000; Bae 2004).

In 1910 Korea was colonised by the Japanese and they put an end to the royal court. Around the same time, Western-style theatres began to appear in Seoul (Seo, 2003). The tradition of female court entertainers was transformed as

dancers and began to perform for common people and in theatre buildings. Since this time, Korean dance has been gradually polished rather than systematically organised from the beginning. As Lee states “Korean dance has been polished over the centuries to add artistic value and become structured” (1997, p 33). He adds that the dance was increasingly developed in ChoSun Dynasty:

Although many are said to trace their roots to earlier eras, as performed today the dances are believed to be akin to those performed during the ChoSun Dynasty (1392-1910) (Lee, 1997, p 51).

Dancers became professional and more aesthetically polished in the ChoSun Dynasty. The overall feelings of traditional Korean dance are predominantly soft and gentle, characteristics epitomising femininity in the Confucian – dominated dance in the ChoSun Dynasty. During the Dynasty, lasting over five hundred years from 1392, Confucianism was the primary system of belief among the scholarly upper classes and generalised as a state ideology. Everything in the culture was accommodated in accordance with Confucianism.

Today the legacy of Confucianism still remains and affects Korean people’s life in that it shapes the moral system, the way of life, family line, social relations between old and young, men and women, and it is also basis for much of the legal system. There was a hierarchical system in which lower classes should always respect the upper classes and rules concerning men and women’s relationships were very strict. For example, the young were told that they must

always respect elder people and teachers, as my mother must obey my grandparents. In addition, when children reached the age of seven, they were supposed to avoid sitting together in the same room. Furthermore, when an upper class woman was in public, she had to wear not only a traditional long dress but also one more long dress around her head and hung down from head to toe to hide her face and body.

Therefore, Korean dancers who danced in front of the upper classes during a fete, were not allowed to be Yangban class people. The dancers were not only ignored by the upper class but also not recognised as artists. In addition, dance reflects a number of things relating to societal attitudes. For instance, a Korean dancer usually humbly keeps her gaze downwards, the chest is not opened out and she conceals her palm and so on. The dancers were not allowed to see and make eye contact with the audience – exactly opposite to a ballet dancer's attitude, which comprised of the king and his courtiers, who were usually Yangban class in accordance with Confucian culture.

Although there were court dances for royal celebrations, unlike in ballet the royals did not either dance or learn it. They enjoyed watching the dance; however, it was only part of the fete and never made a main performance. Although the dancers did not belong to the upper classes, they had to follow the upper classes' culture; to suit their taste, which was based on Confucianism. In other words, the dancers were from the lower classes, thus the dance naturally embraced the feeling of the common people.⁴ However, they had to dance with

elegance and restraint that is how aristocratic elites were supposed to behave. From this point of view, dance embraced people's rituals, thus to explain the origin of the characteristics of Korean dance it is necessary to mention Korean Confucianism which was the dominant doctrine at that time.

The Confucian notion of KiSaeng regarding the place of women and the low stature of professional dancers has left an indelible mark and is still present in Korean society. According to Kim:

KiSaeng were female Korean entertainers similar to the Japanese Geisha and the ancient Greek Goryeo. [...] First appearing in the Koryo (918-1392), they were legally slaves of the government, required to perform various functions for the state. [...] They were carefully trained and frequently accomplished in the fine arts, poetry, music and dance although their talents were often ignored due to their inferior social status. [...] although they were all of the same low status in the eyes of the YangBan classes (Kim, 1999, p 81).

Throughout the Koryo and ChoSun periods, they held the status of "ChunMin", the lowest rank of society. They were skilled and trained and became more focused on music and dance. Thus, some Koreans still have a distorted view about dancers through not only its shamanism roots but also the history of KiSaeng.

Korean dance is based on a theme of morality, in that the dancer performs very deliberately with a controlled manner, following Confucian notions. With strong Confucian ideals, during the ChoSun Dynasty in which the dance became

professional, one of the standards of female propriety involved avoiding the display of the palms, feet, and torso area (Lee, 1993). There are a lot more movements in which we can see the cultural aspects of Korea's tradition of humble and gentle female comportment. Moreover, because of the affection for Confucianism, Koreans are expected always to restrain their feelings such as anger, grief, excitement, etc., and the major characteristic of Korean dance is that it is also extremely calm, restrained, and moderated (these characteristics apply to traditional Korean court dance rather than folk dance and the style of Korean court dance will be further explained in Chapter 4). This notion of Confucianism has also had its influence on Korean dance. As with the holding in of emotions, the most significant rule I have learned in Korean dance is to hold my energy inside my body and feel the flow of energy inside, rather than radiating it to the outside of the body which is the complete opposite of ballet. This will be explained more in Chapter 3.

Traditional Korean dances always emphasise the subdued inner expression of most Koreans' emotion, which is our own national emotion, in that since early times in Korea, most notably for the nobility, people (especially women), were required by Confucianism to control themselves all the time and never show their anger (Bae, 2004). People were supposed to always hide their anger, displeasure, sorrow and so on. Therefore, our own special emotion has developed, called Han.

Within the context of Western ballet and Korean culture, the following pages are

a journey back towards my childhood self, to the origin of my subsequent journey into dance and where and who I am now. This mirrors in some ways the process behind the iconic dance piece “Education of the Girl Child” (Merdith Monk, 1981). I was alone in a small room reading a book. All my cousins were in the garden in my grandparents’ house playing hide-and-seek. I have six cousins at similar ages but I did not like to go out to play. I was always happier when I read a book in my cousin’s room. As long as I had a book to read I felt as if I was the hero and I would imagine the scene in my head like my own personal movie.

I was alone in a classroom reading a book. All my classmates were in the playground doing physical exercises at breaktime in between the first class and lunchtime. I did not like physical exercise. I always felt it was a combination of silly steps. I prefer reading books. I had a best friend called Jin, who was living in the same apartment as me and we would go to school together and come back home together. I rarely talked to classmates except her. She was the only girl I talked to. I did not see any necessity to talk to anybody else. I had a best friend.

My mum got angry when she found me reading a book in my cousin’s room alone. Her voice was calm and cold which means she was angrier than when she shouts. One day, she hired a private teacher to help me to become a little more outgoing and gregarious as she knew I hardly talked to people. In the very first lesson, I got very bored and I did not want to do lessons anymore.

When I was nine, my mother realised that my left leg was curved inward. My left heel got a wound when I wore slippers because my left foot was not straight, my heel was left outside the back of the slipper. Moreover, because I had a “pigeon-toed” walk, I often fell down because one foot clipped the other as I walked. My mum took me to a hospital and the doctor said I should do roller-skating or ballet. Their feet positions are all outward, or turned out. My mum took me to a ballet academic institute.



Figure 3.1 Me at Eighteen months with curved left leg

This is how I started ballet. I never saw a ballet dancer or a ballet performance which might motivate me to start dancing. It was simple: it was just because of my curved left leg. However, this leg has affected me hugely in forcing me to get the rigorous technique right (this will be further explained with my own

experience throughout this chapter). As Ryan and Stephens state:

If the femurs are twisted inward too much, the kneecaps face towards each other and the individual has a 'pigeon-toed' walk. This bony variation is anathema in ballet because of the demand for extreme turn-out; switching to a different type of dance would be recommended (Ryan and Stephens, 1988, p 106).

In fact, normally, the leg or tibia has a slight outward twist (about 12 degrees) along its length (Ryan and Stephens, 1988). A little bit more than the normal amount of outward torsion would actually be favourable in ballet.

“Living, the whole body carries its meaning and tells its own story.” (Todd, 1937, p 1) I was born in a small city in the south of Korea. My grandparents had six children and their children all married and had two children – a daughter and a son. We used to live so closely that when the grandparents wanted to see us we could be there very soon and there could be no excuse. Until my grandfather was in his late forties, just before the outbreak of the Korean War (1950), there was a strict hierarchy (described further below) in Korea. My grandparents were Yangban class, which was the highest class at that moment and when I was born in 1977, even though the classes did not exist any more, its vestiges still remained in everyday life. I grew up within a large extended family including grandparents, cousins, uncles, aunts and my parents, and I remember how my mother behaved towards and respected my grandparents.



Figure 3.2 My grandmother and grandfather wearing traditional Korean costume on her birthday

When I started ballet classes, my mother went to my grandparents' home to persuade them to let me do ballet. One of my aunts had really wanted to dance on stage but just the day before she was due to perform, my grandfather tore her ballet costume into pieces, because he thought it would be such a humiliation of our family. However, this time, my grandfather agreed with my mother that doing ballet could possibly help to straighten my left leg. I remember my very first day of being on a stage (see DVD 2, 0:31-1:51), my grandparents were seated in the audience watching all the dancers. When my solo performance finished, he told my mother just one sentence: "it is a good thing that she was wearing a tutu with sleeves".



Figure 3.3 My first time on stage when I was twelve years old

My hair had a bun and I was wearing pink tights, pink leotard, white tunic and pink canvas ballet shoes with pink ribbons. I was in a huge studio with a high ceiling and there were several barres standing in vertical lines. There were girls everywhere tall, thin and pretty, holding the wooden barres with one hand. The teacher showed me the first position for my feet and she touched my leg to help me to get the correct position. I kept practicing the position for more than a week. I practiced every day seven days a week for two hours. My body was moulded to fit ballet posture and ballet dancers' requirements in a way that Claid describes:

Young bodies are constructed to fit this aesthetic – to be taut,

muscular and straight, with legs that unfold to a great length, spines that arch upwards and backwards away from the central axis of the pelvis. I lengthened an already long neck and forced my feet to further extend the length of my legs into a needlepoint. Up, up and away: chin up, tits up, eyes lifted, bum clenched, knees pulled up, stomach lifted, hair scraped back – fight, fight, fight against the falling expanse of the flesh (Claid, 2006, p 20).

However, before I knew the technique or correct position or what ballet really was, I just enjoyed dancing and moving and for the very first time doing steps which I would not usually do in my daily life; “inconsistent” is the word Barba (1995) uses. With these new movements, which emerged in holistic process through my body, I got great pleasure.

However, dancing lessons throughout my childhood offered not only great pleasure in the sensation of moving with grace but also allows me to see in retrospect that they offered a form within which my energy could expand, become visible, and be contained. With ballet, I was able to express that which I could not otherwise do in a restricted upbringing, and this will be explained further below.

For me, ballet comes with pleasure first, and then through repetitive practice, I found there is more to it than just feeling delight. Getting everyday practice, my body remembered the movements and right technique of what I had done automatically. Hahn also speaks of body memory whereby:

The practice of learning through visual imitation, repetition, and

close proximity to the teacher reinforces imprinting – a transference and fixing of dance information in a student’s physical memory (Hahn, 2007, p 83).

Similarly, in my experience, it plays an important role in movement transference as Bakan, Sklar and Smyth say above, in which I experience and physically identify closely with the movements of my teacher and I sympathetically coordinate my muscles to resemble the teacher’s dance. However, this happens more strongly when the teacher adjusts my body directly with her hand rather than just demonstrating (see DVD 2, 16:20-18:18, 21:19-21:30). I could feel the difference through my body with her correction and try to remember the feeling of my body that I could remember from when my teacher was correcting me.

For example, Hahn, who learned traditional Japanese dance and wrote of her experience, also speaks of the value of correct practice and the teacher’s correction, quoting her teacher’s words, “you will remember clearly, fully, if I do corrections – and then the dance will be performed in the proper manner” (2007, p 42). She also puts emphasis on the importance of the right training and practice, “the spirit (or life) of art can exist only through disciplined practice of the mind/body and ‘fluency’ of artistic practice” (Hahn, 2007, p 44).

When I try to find the right feeling of each movement before it is embodied, the dance begins as if I am in a swamp that disorients me with slippery footing. The only firm ground seems to come to me when I executed a movement through the process of repetitive trial and error. It is as if a roller is helping to press the damp

ground to dry it, and make it firm. The roller is my teacher and my own process. When the ground becomes firm, I incorporate the articulated correct position into my body through remembering the feeling of what happened when the teacher had corrected me. However, without enough practice to embody, I felt that I was a woodpecker that pecks wood continuously because in less than a second, which was the time between one movement to the next, I needed to think about the feeling of the right position.

My first solo piece was choreographed by my teacher in 1988 (see DVD 2, 00:02-00:31), When I heard the music, I felt preoccupied with a sense of performing. Would I execute the pirouette on pointe well? Would I make any mistakes? Would the teacher think I had moved with acceptable technique? Would I remember all the advice from the teacher and apply it to the exact movement? Would I listen to the music and make the movement right on count? Would my movement be correct? Would I please my teacher? Would I be interesting to watch? There were too many things I had to remember during the rehearsal and training – I became trapped in a cycle of being judged and the fear of failure. From my own personal experience, continuous practice helped me out of this trap. Technique obliged me to think about the right bodily feeling and then through the body learn it as a holistic process. As Laws states:

Dance is more than an art. It is one of the most powerful tools for fusing the split between the two functions of the brain – the fusing of the logical with the intuitive, the fusing of the analytical perceptions with the sensorial perceptions, the fusing of holistic understanding with step by step thinking. It is a discipline which

within itself deals with basic understanding of human experience, and conceptualization (Laws, 2002, p 6).

Actually, Laws (2002) says that perhaps dance and science are not such disparate activities. He also says that dancers are gradually recognised that they can benefit by understanding that the human body movements must exist and the framework based on universal physical principles that apply to all moving objects.

As the practice has become imbued in my body, the intricate thinking has become automatic. Ballet became for me a way of relating a segment of my inner world with the discipline of the ballet steps. This relationship between my inner world and technique is crucial in enabling expression. I would say that dance, understood as training, technique and experience, allows me to become, once again, impulsive after the weariness of conformity. Repeated practice developed a body constructed with ballet movement, through a process of body memory. My body became familiar with ballet posture with legs turned out, shoulders down and open, straightened back and neck and so on. Claid states: “after six years of training, her tiny, constructed, jewel-like image has become inseparable from her real body” (2006, p 47). She also speaks of the necessity of training for ballet dancers:

Human bodies do not transcend naturally; gravity pulls the body down to earth. Consequently, the body itself must be inscribed incisively to represent and signify ballet’s meanings and values. Legs do not usually turn outwards or lift above hip height, necks do

not lengthen naturally, backs do not arch easily and spontaneously; they must be trained, persuaded, day in and day out, through years of practice, to conform (Claid, 2006, p 40).

According to Barba, through long practice and continuous training, this inconsistency of movements from everyday life becomes a “second nature” (Barba, 1991; 1995) for the performer, in the same way that people do not think about the process of when they eat something and how they pick up the forks and knives and how they work with it; this is just automatically done in daily life. Therefore, for me, through a long period of practice, the unfamiliar ballet movement becomes “a new consistency, artificial but marked with *bios*” (Barba, 1995, p 26).

For historical reasons, ballet dancers’ postures are elegant and proud as their roots derive from the aristocracy, kings and royals. As this suggests, ballet is also a dance form that relies strongly on visual affirmation. Thus, the dancer’s entire back always lengthens and reaches up through the neck and head and even the hair, which makes the dancers look graceful and proud. I remember my teacher always telling me that I should dance as if I am a princess with arrogance and pride. Chin up, look up, straighten my spine and keep my shoulders down. According to Ashley:

The classical ballet genre has maintained the vertical spine as one of its characteristics from the fifteenth century. This relates back to its noble beginnings when correct deportment, how to walk, sit, stand were taught and denoted status and power. The nobility would perform dances in this manner, and later this tradition was taken on

by professionals to become ballet as we know it today. The style of the vertical torso gives ballet its distinctive ethereal lightness, and facilitates the execution of characteristic multiple pirouettes and soaring jumps with greater ease (Ashley, 2002, p 8).

The anatomy of human body is structured that even a very small movement of one individual part result in a kind of muscular echo in all the other part of human body (Barba, 1991). “Bodily co-ordination is the way the limbs and the torso and the head function together. If they work congruently then all the bits the body work as one. Nothing is left out of one concerted statement” (Preston-Dunlop, 1998, p 91). Therefore most dancers must perceive all the muscles at all times to maintain alignment, based on the body’s centre. The lumbar and deep pelvic muscles control the motion of the body, and “reach up into the upper part of the body even to the arms and head, and down into the legs” (Todd, 1937, p 238). In other words, in dancing, all the dancer’s movements, expression and feeling are melted into one physical thing: the human body.

The body is in functional, stable balance if the line of balance intersects the base of support at its centre. As the centre of the body, the spine is especially crucial to all movements. With all movements, actions start and can be kept by spine alignment. With the alignment, dancers are able not only to dance well but are also able to create their own style beyond the execution. According to Tufnell and Crickmay:

The spine is the power centre of the body, both a moving column of support connecting head, limbs, thorax and pelvis, and a protective

corridor for the spinal cord. Alignment of the spine therefore affects the entire functioning of the body (Tufnell and Crickmay, 2001, p 9).

Therefore, alignment is considered basic because it must be kept all the time and be applicable to all movements in that it is concerned with the internal support of the body as it develops into uprightness. In both types of dance – ballet and Korean dance – one of the important things that dancers must be aware of is the centre of weight and how it relates to the initiation of movements. Thus, it is concerned with centering; that is, “being able to connect with the source of the dancer’s strength and support even when the dancer is in motion so that balance can be maintained in all movements” (Bartenieff and Lewis, 1980, p 289). It is matter of “thinking *through* the body, not *along the outside of it*” (Todd, 1937, p 177).

There are interesting contrasting uses of the spine in the various genres of dance (Greskovic, 1998; Guest, 1996). Although it depends on the character of the particular piece of classical ballet dancers must always pull the shoulders down and tight, making a straight look. The shoulders must be held down and open – that is, not slouching forward, which is a traditional Korean dancer’s posture, – in ballet the breastbone and the chest should be expanded. This leads to the dancer trying to hold herself up with the neck and head. Generally, ballet dancers do not either slouch forward or lean back and therefore even though their shoulders are open, the shoulders are not behind the hip. If the shoulders are behind the hip, it causes a weakening of the stomach.

Whereas the ballet dancer stresses the spine in an upright position, in the traditional Korean dance “the basic alignment of the Korean dancer is not straightened erect” (Bae, 2004, p 15).



Figure 3.4 Planting rice seeds

In a similar way to these pictures Figure 3.4, a Korean dancer’s basic posture is the face and torso bent deep, almost touching the floor. Her chest is not open but turned in.

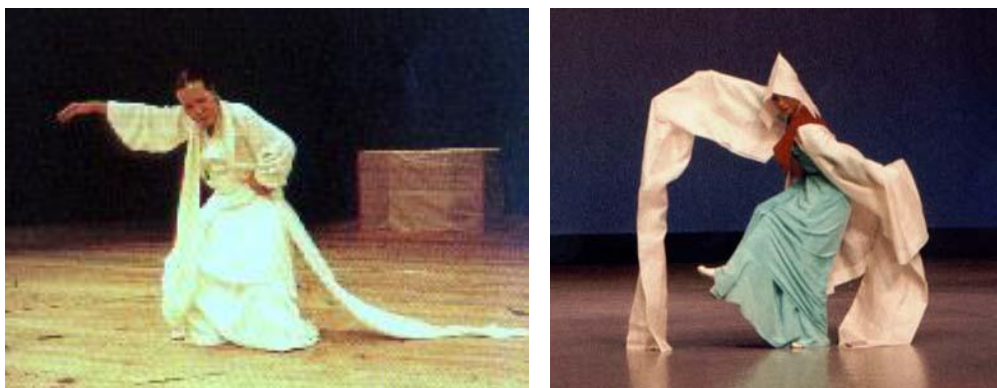


Figure 3.5 Traditional Korean dance posture

Here she is dancing ‘Salpuri’.
(See DVD 4.1)

Here she is dancing ‘SeongMu’.
(See DVD 4.2)

Therefore, traditionally, as most Korean dance movements have been created and inspired by Koreans' historical agricultural working life, even if people are not trained professionally, most Korean people can dance and enjoy it because Korean dance is not based on rigorous technique but people's emotion.

For me, the arrogant posture – chin up and look up in ballet, challenged how I was supposed to behave in my daily life. Influenced by Confucianism and my family upbringing, I was always told that I should behave with a courteous and obedient attitude and never let my anger erupt or betray what was held to be my femininity. However, when I learned ballet, every movement required power, and activity and energy. Ballet movements began to open up changes in my perception of myself, and how I presented myself to the world, subtle shifts from inscribed Korean female habits towards a less inhibited, more outward looking stance.

When I was a child, I was always told that I was a girl and that a girl should always be calm, silent, and well behaved. However, when I was in a ballet studio, I needed to be very strong, and even though a ballet dancer can look, as a moving image, elegant, soft, and tender, she must actually be very strong to manage all the movements as well as the hard training. My teacher often pointed out that I needed to push down the floor harder and jump higher, in order to achieve an effortless look. Pushing down the floor hard as well as developing a strong arm combination is also often demanded by the teacher; he says “your plié is too soft, your pirouette is not executed using your full strength and you

are too feminine. You need to push yourself harder to execute all the movements. You dance as if you are stepping on thin ice.”

When I was an elementary school student, my teacher told us that we must walk carefully on the balls of our feet so as not to make any noise when we are walking in the corridor. I was also told that a girl must always be aware of her behaviour in that there were lots of things she should not do, such as answering back to elders, or making a noise when she closes a door; I always needed to behave properly and to carry myself with grace, dignity and femininity. However, the deeper I learnt, practiced and explored ballet, the more differences from this habitual patten of my daily life arose. My body in ballet movements needed to be strong and purposeful, enabling the movement to be rich, and expansive.

This is a huge contrast, and challenge to my cultural upbringing, where I have been taught always to use my body and voice more softly, not yelling or screaming even when I was very small. Now these new ballet movements were demanding that I assert myself, every cell of my body seems alert, a reminder of Hay’s process and aims (Hay, 2000). The strong, punctuated and firm movements of my dancing body enabled me to assert myself, to feel that my body and movements have a power.

As a young dancer, when I was dancing ballet, I felt a separation between the space where my mother and teacher were standing and the space where I was dancing, and from the place where I was. I felt as if I was not the girl in daily

life but somebody else. When I was dancing, I felt some of energy pass through me and with the energy, an awareness of the interface between the world (a different world where I lived and was involved in) and my own individual subjectivity. There was no longer the need to identify myself, no need to follow the instruction which my environment (my family, education, and so on) continually gave.

When I danced, I focused only on the dancing, immersing myself in my physical and emotional state. In the moment of immersing myself in the movement, I felt as though the movement penetrated me as well. I forgot the external environment which gave me identity, and as I moved, the moment of forgetting swept through me.

After endless practice and training that bring rewards and frustrations, one day, I suddenly realise that my body is doing the ballet steps really well without my conscious attention to it. In a ballet class, the teacher gives new and different steps every time and dancers watch the teacher's demonstration once or twice before imitating it (see DVD 2, 13:36-17:36). I found that I was not only remembering the steps with the teacher's single demonstration but that I could also anticipate and predict causes and effects to control my body in a certain way, indicative of ballet.

In addition, even in allegro, which is composed of very fast and small movements and which normally does not give much time to think about each

one, my body can do it with precise ballet technique. The unfamiliar becomes familiar to my body. My body is physically coordinated with ballet and capable of “mobilising appropriate muscles with appropriate force, anticipating or sensing cause and effect, and synthesizing information from many sources, including sensory, emotional, and cultural” (Schrader, 2005, p 126).

When I rehearse alone in a big studio for a solo piece, my heart begins to pound, sending my blood pulsing to my temples; my breath is straining for release; my tendons tighten, my muscles contract, then explode with an intensity which propels me onto the studio floor. I know everybody in the studio is watching me. I am overtaken by an unconscious force that launches me into the choreography – arabesque, grand jeté, pirouette and so on. But then the moment of trust comes: trust that the phrase has some reason for being, trust that my body will know how to lead me, and trust that my body is doing it right.

It was the day of the last rehearsal for my first competition when I was twelve years old. I had been practising intensely, and, when another dance student was rehearsing I was always practicing, taking a corner of the big studio. I enjoyed dancing all the time. I was practicing the entire piece of the choreography from the beginning, and suddenly despite all the practice I had done, my mind went blank and I could not remember some parts of the movement. After the arabesque and before the turn, there had to be some movement for two counts but I could not remember what these were. When it was my turn, as the music started, I began to move with the choreography that I had practiced again and

again. Gradually it got near that point of forgetting, and I was nervous. My teacher was shouting to give me some instructions and the right count as usual, but I ignored him and blocked out all the thoughts which I always think about while I am dancing to try and get the instructions as correct as possible. After blocking out, I was transported. I allowed neural elements within my body to recall the feeling of the teacher's touch to correct my body, the sense of right alignment, the feeling of the combination of the movement as a whole body, the feeling of the smell, and I re-felt the sensation of when I had been dancing, to effect a release from the blockage. My body was remembering my experience. I was immersed in embodied memories of the choreography. I completed the piece without forgetting the phrase which I had forgotten just before the rehearsal. My body cannot lie.

Block and Kissell describe their dance experience as embodiment:

I not only think or know something cognitively, I also know it neurally. It is a complete memory – almost a complete re-enactment of it. I use this ability in my dance. Knowing, for me, is more than a mere linear verbal thinking process: it is a holistic process that involves an integrated power network that translates and interacts with life (Block and Kissell, 2001, p 6).

As soon as I had imbued the technique in my body, the thrill of pain became pleasure again as if I had just started ballet and I just enjoyed being in ballet shoes and costume and in movement. The pain was there, the effort to get the movement through my body as a holistic process, also real physical pain, but at

some point, I could feel myself dissolve and experience a kind of freedom – the pain became something else that was more than pleasure. It was the moment that I could call transcendence. Then I could express anything with the dance and everything was possible in my mind even with the strict technique. Once I have embodied it, the technique never bothers me, no matter how hard and rigorous the technique is. According to Hahn:

It is believed that regular practice of prescribed dance poses and movements reinforces artistic skills in the habitual body, and as movements become embodied, an experience of freedom and realization may occur. From highly disciplined and structured pedagogical foundation it is thought that the skills of an artist can flow “naturally” or effortlessly from the well-trained body (Hahn, 2007, p 43).

I am trying to enter a temple. A big temple that is closed with a huge, solid door. The door is securely closed, I need to push hard. I do not know what is in there, but I just know I need to push hard to open it. Pain runs through my body and it takes a tediously long time to open. When I attempt a new and difficult technique I always want to know what the right feeling of my body is to successfully execute it and what the feeling is like when I finally achieve the goal. To know the feelings, I have to practice in order to be able to open the door.

Before me, the temple is an empty space, shaped by walls and floor, by an open and high ceiling, by the door which is accompanied by continuous effort to open it. All of it, all of this emptiness, is a reflection of my potential experience of

emptiness within. I am invited through the temple to enter this emptiness as a dancer. Here the emptiness can be filled or left empty by me. I am the only one who can make the temple empty or full, pretty or ugly.

I kept practicing. At some point, for me, the rhythm, repetitive movement, their combination and synchronisation tended to induce some degree of catharsis when I opened the temple door. For me, when I was dancing, it was a kind of transgression. I had not known before I became a dancer that there was a repression by something going on inside that felt to me like the constraints of accepted moral human behaviour as constructed by culture. Dance was a transgression from everyday life, culture, upbringing, grandparents, parents, teachers and myself.

For me, dance is perceived as an escape from this constraint although it is common that dance brings with it its own set of restraints: the technique, the stylisation and so on. However, at least, dance movements are different from the movements of our routine living. When I dance, there is nothing to worry about, there is nothing to think about, there are only different levels of feeling from my normal life that I might term as transcendental consciousness. Claid also says:

I could feel myself dissolve through and transcend the pain to become something else. In ballet, the moment of performing provides the climax: the height of pleasure, the release of withheld desires, the loss of oneself into another form (Claid, 2006, p 45).

For me, in practicing over and over until I am brave enough to overcome my physical limits as well as crossing the divide between my traditional Korean upbringing and the demands of Western ballet, the dance becomes my own; at this point, dance has created the feeling of one large temple door opening, enabling me to look calmly and peacefully with a new perspective on the world, and enter into a joyous, sometimes painful, sense of the whole.

Historically in Korea, women had to keep their virginal purity. It became more important if the women were higher class such as Yangban class. Traditionally, women had to keep a dagger called an Eunjangdo. It was an ornament made from silver to display their social status but more importantly, it is also served as a tool to save women from humiliation or peril, mostly from men, not by attacking an assailant but by killing themselves, under the Confucian moral obligation for Korean women to remain faithful to their husband or future husband.

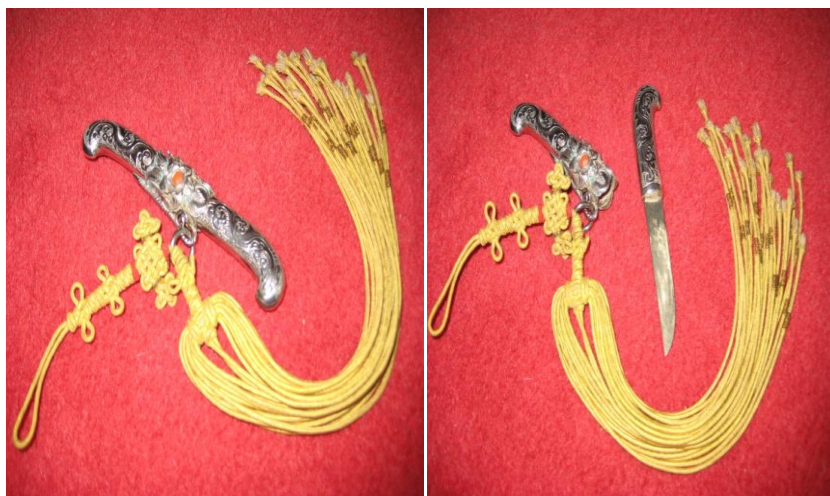


Figure 3.6. An Eunjangdo inherited from my great grandmother

One day, before I went to London, my mother gave me this Eunjangdo (see Figure 3.6) and she said “you do not need to carry this. But you must remember ‘it’ is important for a woman and for you”. As Western culture deeply affects Korean culture nowadays, this innocent girl is not really applicable to every girl in Korea. I also know I could do whatever I want. However, that culture and upbringing are always there with me. The repression of the virgin is always in me, pressing me hard to be a good girl. This is especially acute when I am in London, I feel as if I am living in a different world from others even though I am physically present in the city.

However, I am always struggling to free myself from these fetters whatever I do and wherever I go. This kind of transformative freedom is a critically reflexive experience that is hard to verbalise. What I can say is that I release my repressed self through dance. Since I became a dancer, I have become more conscious of my body than when I was not a dancer. When I learned ballet, the consciousness began at a mundane level; something was new, I knew it was new and if something was not right, I knew it. I was aware of subtle muscular pains because of the everyday training, and I gradually realised where they might be coming from and where they might lead. After I became a dancer, I was aware of how far I could go within my ability, and the flow movement of that ability. It also represented new capabilities acquired, old ones forgotten or remembered in this muscle memory. In this memory, something has happened for me.

Doing the new and strange movements (ballet movements) over and over,

gradually led to many encounters with my own judge, which was already – maybe when I was a child – set by my parents, family and cultural environment, in my inner mind. “You are a girl, you have to protect yourself”. Those inner voices were hovering around me as if I was fettered by an invisible thing.

As I learned to be more accepting with my urge to push and fight with the ability of my body and use the full strength of my body, I ended up with the feeling of a kind of a pleasure that arose with the feeling of freedom. Sometimes I did not know what I was doing, why I was doing it and where I was in the here and now, and I also did not understand why I kept these movements over and over again, ending up stuck as if I was out of breath after a long run. And something had happened to me.

Until I reached the age of twenty-four, I had not been in a relationship. I was scared. But I did not know what I was scared of. One day, I was practicing a solo piece in Giselle Act 1, in which I needed to portray a lovely and innocent country girl who is in love with a nobleman. I did not know how to express being in love. I was aware of the character and the fact that I was only acting, but I still experienced shame and disbelief. I could express the joy as I enjoy dancing but I did not know about the expression of love.

In Korea, Confucian values arguably still have an enormous influence on the minds of Korean people as I have previously mentioned. People who are in a relationship do not kiss in public, they do not hug in front of elders and they do

not even express their love in public. They could express it but they just do not. Korean ballet dancers are also affected by Confucianism and this is reflected in the dancer's act of expression. Most ballet stories are about love and the expression of undying love is an important matter for ballet. However, in Korean people's deeper mind, there are Confucian elements: Koreans are used to hiding and restraining their emotion all the time. Whenever I see a performance of the Korean National Ballet Company I find it hard to feel a deep emotion or feel touched by the dancers' power of expression.

For me, dance has helped me out from the repression whose origin or characteristics I did not even know. When I was dancing, I felt enormous freedom that I could push hard against the floor and I could jump higher than in the air, and there was nothing except myself. A tunnel, which helps me to breathe deeply, is made through ballet. For me, dance is a way of escaping from everyday life, from culture, from upbringing, and, in my case, from virginal modesty. In other words my dancing is both a way of losing control and of escaping controls, a powerful mix that opens up emotional and experiential territories unreachable by other means. In this case, I would argue that "Performance is a path towards knowledge" and "brings together the disparate experiences and sensations of one's life" in the sense of "making whole" (Steinman, 1986, p 234).

I feel liquid inside of my body. I can feel tears way down deep inside of me, moving just a little. They are not ready yet to come outside of my body, to

surface through my eyes. Within dance, I do not know how to control myself, I do not know how to make tears. The tears I would like to make represent my eagerness, an eagerness that always wants to come out from inside my body to the world. My tears have been in a box, a box that was sealed with solid glue, the glue that safeguards the cultivated side of myself. My tears are myself, even though it might be that nobody can see them, somewhere inside of my body. They could not move yet through my chest; it is too tight and dense, it will not let them through. But when I dance ballet, I can feel something that is a little movement in my heart that is a very familiar old feeling, an old memory, a sense of nostalgia coming alive again with ballet movements.

It is a completely new feeling that I had never felt before I became a dancer. However, it is a sense of nostalgia from my deep memory, the memory of the repression of the culture. What is different now (since I was a dancer) is that there is someone (the ballet dancer) who sees me and tells me what she experiences, imagines, and especially what she feels.

I am not afraid or ashamed or too shy to show my body to others and let them see how I am moving. I am not afraid to feel, see my body be surprised. I feel like I am awakening. I feel a warming inside, a melting going through my body. I finally open the temple and make it MY temple within MY dance. With the dance, there is no repression, there is only myself in MY temple. The movements offer me a safe environment to allow to blossom what is already inside me. I don't need to be afraid of my feeling and of who I am, preserving

my virginity. This is the other side of me, not the cultivated side but the raw.

Dance for me is deviance. Hahn also speaks of what role Japanese dance plays for Japanese women dancers:

Women in particular, powerful expressive means to transcend the boundaries that might confine them in daily life in Japan. Strict social rules and expectations within the society restraining women's behavior can create a high level of pressure. Dance provides an opportunity to act out a variety of roles. This can be a liberating and even playful activity – consider a daily practice of embodiment that includes transforming into warrior, monkey, lower-class character, [...] Dancers learn from a very early age how to express a diversity of character portrayals, and as a result a wide vocabulary of embodied cultural ideologies is transmitted (Hahn, 2007, p 162).

My arms are upwards, slowly coming down as I run from the back of the studio to the front corner of the studio. There is some explosion from inside me and something burning. It is catharsis. There is nothing except me, happy me with eternal freedom as long as I am dancing.



Figure 3.7 I am happy in dance

I could finally breathe from deep inside myself

I could finally think that I am here

I could finally feel myself

I could finally feel the freedom.

¹ The earliest founded and largest of the three, GoGuRye (37B.C–A.D668), which was the earliest founded and largest of the three, to the north which was in Manchuria and northern Korea and reached its zenith in the fifth century (Song, 2002). The Emperor expanded into almost all of Manchuria and part of inner Mongolia and took the Seoul region from BaekJae, making one of the great powers in East Asia. Between in 417–458, the Tree Kingdoms accepted Buddhism and this greatly developed their arts and culture (Pak, 2007).

² In 918, the Koryo Kingdom was founded and this is where the name, Korea, derived from (Pak, 2007). Buddhism became the official religion.

³ In 1392 the Koryo Kingdom was taken over by the ChoSun Dynasty who had a Confucian form of government.

⁴ In Korea, there used to be various class distinctions which were called, Yanban, Sangmin, Seumin, Chunmin and so on. Yangban were upper classes and a well educated scholarly class while the others included butchers, servants, traders, artists etc and were all treated as common people.

Chapter 4

Subjectivity

This chapter addresses the dancer's subjectivity and how this can go beyond the objectified body. I claim here that when a dancer reaches her technical requirement physically – as I have previously mentioned, she has embodied the movement and is ready to experience her subjectivity, which I would define as the individual intentionality of a dancer's unique qualities. These are shaped throughout her life and include her thought, culture, education, nationality, knowledge and personality as a personal signature with embodied knowledge that can be her “unique and uncopiable sensitivity and artistic intelligence and social persona” (Barba, 1995, p 10).

In this chapter, I discuss subjectivity as a topic and try to explore my personal subjectivity through the dance work titled *Mirror of Water, Still Sky* (Go, 2005) which is documented on DVD 3. In this chapter, I also go further into the technical differences between Korean dance and ballet, referring specifically to the application of energy through breath and the use of alignment. To give the reader a context, I include in this discussion, my reflection on my emotional

response to the sites in which the dance was rehearsed and filmed, linking landscape, sensation and creative site-based exploration.

Human dances are created forms as Press (2002), Fraleigh (2004), Graham and Lihs (2003) explain. Therefore, with this first case study, I try to explore the individual background of my whole life, an unusual mixture of Korean upbringing, Western dance training and performance experience both in Korea and the West. Added to this I could note that I am writing this thesis in English using Western methodology and in a confessional way that Koreans do not normally employ.

I agree with the proposition of Barba (1999) and Hahn (2007), who state that it is possible to go beyond the boundaries of our daily life identities and to reorient self through repetitive practice. With dance, my own experience transmits a sensibility of presence that changes my perspective. In this case study, I want to experience what will happen if I combine two dance practices – Korean dance and ballet – with a unique starting point as a Korean with traditional Korean dance, created through emotion and body and as a ballet dancer for more than twenty years with ballet movement already inscribed in my body. As Press (2002) suggests, subjectivity arises from the processes of each individual, and in this instance I particularly focus on different methods of using energy. The way of using different gravity and breath techniques will be explained because these disciplines work with energy.

A dancer's sense of personal growth is not something visible, observable and measured in any way. People see me experiencing the moment and they may know what it is when they see it. "Our bodies are the reflections of our lives; sitting, walking, standing, we absorb the impact of each day" (Tufnell and Crickmay, 1990, p 1). Thus, I try to make this dance represent myself; my thought, my culture, my knowledge, my embodiment and my life, as my body is the reflection of my life. I hope this dance will evolve to a place where it is not only for myself that I can suspend the moment but also for the people the whole time they are watching me. Therefore, the dance is my being here and now involving not only my past life but also the potential future; in the space, time and process of this dance is my entire life.

First of all, I try to find the exact use of my body, my voice and timing, which allows me to understand where my body is, then I can communicate with my body what I want to say and how I want to say it. Laban (1966) describes dance as bodily perspective, which is the physical experience of moving, not the view of that movement by an observer. All dancers should have their inner energy, which is executed in their own way, supporting the movement they are doing. As a dancer, I also have my own way of using energy to execute powerful movements and it is as if a fire spreads throughout my body.

Dance energy is "a how, not a what. How to move, how to remain immobile, how to make her/his own physical presence visible" (Barba, 1995, p 50), and in my work I combine two dances to find my own energy flow. I examine the two

different ways of using energy in dance that I have learned – Korean dance and ballet. This energy was available to me before but was latent, as I did not know how to tap into it. Taking this energy, I explore how this rare combination that I have in my background manifests itself. As Martin describes, “energy is much greater than that which is being used in performance, but which has huge latent potential” (2004, p 12).

In Korean dance, energy is defined using the term of “Eum Yang Ou Hang”, which means that every creation, symptom, phenomenon and destruction of the universe and nature is explained through Eum Yang and five elements. “Eum and Yang is an antithesis or mutual correlation in human perception of phenomena in the world” (Jung, 1995, p 45). The law of Eum and Yang is the natural order of the universe, the foundation of all things in that root of life and death. Eum is the perception of the male and Yang is the perception of the female, of which our universe and nature consist (Jung, 1995, p 48). In the universe, the pure Yang ascends and converges to Heaven while the turbid Eum descends to Earth (Jung, 1995).

Five elements constitute nature: tree, fire, earth (soil), gold and water. According to Eum Yang Ou Hang, intrinsic to the universe is Ki, which Kim (1998) explains is neither generated nor disappears, and which exists everywhere with no start point or end point. By the action of this Ki, everything gets accomplished through Eum Yang Ou Hang in the creation process of nature (Kim, 1998; Lee, 2000). As nature and everything is generated and consists of

the interplay of these five elements, the human body included. The body is understood as part of nature in that according to the Korean philosopher Bubjung (1999), the body is not an object to control or be dominated by the mind but a part of the extensive whole of nature. Tohei states:

Ki has no beginning and no end; its absolute value neither increases nor decreases. We are one with the universal, and our lives are part of the life of the universal (Tohei, 2001, p 21).

One of the key concepts of Bubjung's philosophy is "Musouyou", meaning "non-possession" as I have mentioned in Chapter 3, and this is applied in my work to Korean dance, with its technique of letting everything go with breath, yielding to the flow of nature in order to enter its pure, intrinsic harmony, and discovering effortless effort, the genuine source of power. Ki, which is the concept of energy in Korean dances, is often translated as spiritual energy, involving a living embodiment of Korean philosophy, stressing the ever-changing process of nature and the circularity of the life in which we are reincarnated in the wheel of birth and re-birth as Ki circulates throughout our body which is a microcosm of our nature. In a way this effortless effort is similar to ballet – as we see ballet dancers, their movements look effortless, but their use of energy and gravity is completely different to that of traditional Korean dancers. Korean dance, as I was often told by my Korean dance teacher, is "like the flow of water. Water seems to be weak and soft, and flow without effort but is able to defeat the strong and hard".

As Ki is the element that operates the creative process of nature, it is also the

element of energy that enables a dancer to perform traditional Korean dance. Generally speaking, traditional Korean dance does not stress rigorous technique; the dancers put emphasis on their feeling and their dancing is more likely to be improvised. However, there is a certain energy that the dancers have to feel and keep. In Korean dance, “Ki” is the energy that is a sort of invisible circulation generated by breathing inside the human body (Kim, 1999; Yeon, 2000; Bae, 2001). It is a form of life energy, which pervades everything and keeps all life processes going. If there is a lack of it, bodily functions are weakened and so a Korean dancer’s alignment is designed to keep this energy. According to Yeon:

Just as cleaning the body is important for our health, so too is the unblocking and cleaning of the ‘Ki’. Acupuncture and other pressure – point techniques, which have been used in Western medical circles for decades, influence the flow of ‘Ki’. The ‘Ki’ flows in subtle channels and these are connected to the pelvic area, while others originate in the inner organs and circulate throughout the body (Yeon, 2000, p 48).

It is related to the Korean traditional belief that the human body is a universe unto itself and that people’s ideal existence lies in harmony with heaven and earth like the harmony of Eum and Yang. It is also said that almost all traditional Korean dances embody the Korean philosophy of that universal energy. In other words, heaven, the ground and human being are always connected. Humanity is the medium by which heaven and the ground are connected. Indeed, it is part of the evidence that Korean dance is based on a dancer’s breathing (this is one of the important Korean dance techniques which I have used in my work and explained in this thesis) in that when the dancer steps, she should absorb the

energy of the ground through her spine and finally use it to reach heaven. Breathing can help radiate the energy from the ground to reach heaven. As Ki is the energy for a Korean dancer and breathing can help the dancer enhance the energy, I try to explain how I use breathing technique in my dance.

In Korean dance, the dancer keeps her weight and centre of gravity down as if her weight is sitting on the pelvis with the upper body tilted forward. All the dancer's movements are from the pelvic area, generating Ki energy, which is the powerhouse giving her energy and control. All the Korean dancer's movements are generated from this area, with breathing, in what Korean dancers call the "energy centre". The energy of the root influences both the pelvic area and legs and feet. Just as traditional Korean dance emphasises the flow of movements, this Ki energy can flow unobstructed and all barriers melt away (Bae, 2004).

When I learned traditional Korean dance, I was told that all movements start from breath and finish in breath. However, not only in dance but for people generally, breath is essential from the moment of birth to the moment of death. In Korea, it is said that the breath and the energy fill and empty the body of its own accord, circulating to each part of the body (Korean Foundation, 1997).

Breath, "the active way of charging our bodies, involves not only giving the oxygen needed but also developing the flow of inward and outward energy" (Martine, 2004, p.8) which gives the dancer's movement life and its rhythm in Korean dance. Traditional Korean dance is basically related to the Korean

dancer's breathing technique in that her heels and the soles of the feet absorb energy in the ground which ascends through her back with her breathing and the Korean spirit can radiate a certain equilibrium and gracefulness in her back shape. The energy can run from the dancer's breath, so breath technique is very important in Korean dance. According to Bae:

When a Korean dancer inhales, the energy from the ground is absorbed through her heels and, going up the energy centre, circulates the energy and it reaches the dancer's head and finally heaven. [...] When a Korean dancer exhales, the energy from the head goes down to the energy centres and circulates, then going down to her knees and heels (Bae, 2001, p 71).

Indeed, in Korean dance, the breathing not only begins a movement but can be a movement in itself, in that breathing and movement are tightly linked. The breath rises up through the inside of the body. With the central Ki, the arms, ribs, shoulders and legs hang like branches moving on the wind of the dancer's breath. In other words, every movement is a part of the whole rather than isolated and the dancer must keep the Ki strongly. Then all the other movements are achieved naturally like reeds swaying in the wind. The breath is the means by which the inside of the body knows the outside.

Thus, Korean dancers are told to feel their energy all the time, as the root of their movements. The spine is an important channel for Ki and is the true seat of the energy centre. Bartenieff and Lewis have mentioned that "in the skeleton, the flexibility of the spine is crucial to all torso movement" (1980, p 19). Likewise,

the more flexible we are on a physical level the more these Ki energies can flow and refuel the tissue (Cho, 1997). The most efficient support in Korean dance comes from the full use of energy through the pelvis. This also involves increasingly complex uses of the energy through the dancer's body and enables the dancer to execute all the variations with different combinations of effort such as time, space and energy.

Ki is one of the essential elements involved in finding my own energy flow in this research. Here I describe how I find this energy. During the rehearsal in this work I try, first of all, to feel my feet firmly on the floor as if I absorb Eum energy from the ground. Then I inhale with the feeling of my spine growing upwards as if it is the pleats of an accordion stretching gradually from the centre of the ground up to heaven. Then with an exhalation I try to make my spine roll slowly down like the accordion pleats folding again, each vertebra one by one. After this comes a slow inhalation and a slightly faster exhalation. I try to feel the pull up through the spine to the heavens and from the base of the spine down through the legs and feet into the earth to feel the connection so central to Korean philosophy. It is said that the Korean dancer's postures relate themselves to the ground and space in a particular way in that the human body and nature are inseparable from each other; they are the same substance. People can live by breathing and breathing is given by nature.

A Korean dancer's breathing – the movement of the diaphragm according to the circulation of Ki – increases the volume of the torso, creating movements

through the spine and affecting the rhythm of the dancer's movements. Ki encircles the dancer's body from the abdomen to the base of the spine. Martin states:

In the front and centre of the body is where the presence commences for activating the breathing; in the back is where the spine emerges from the pelvis, the focal and distribution point of the central spinal nerve (Martin, 2004, p 8).

Korean dancers dance through their breathing rhythm and the breathing is a useful barometer of the dancer's state of attention, or tension, and it also helps to keep the flow of her movements.

In Korean dance, this action of breathing can be displayed outwardly through the dancer's arms, legs, feet, shoulders, wrists and so on. In addition, exhalation allows the movement of the deepest inhalation, which is suspended very briefly, to help dissolve all the tension in her body. For instance, when the dancer inhales, the shoulders, elbows, arms and wrists go up, and then when she exhales, they are relaxed and go down with the knees bent.



Figure 4.1 The process of the breathing – inhalation

In Figure 4.1, I am concentrating on my feet, especially on the left, which is the supporting leg, to feel the energy absorbed from the ground. Most of my body parts are relaxed except the pelvic area and abdomen, where the Ki is generated, and my feet. In the second picture of Figure 4.1, I start taking a deep inhalation slowly with tension to get energy from the feet, causing the vertebrae to extend one by one. I try to sense where the centre of my body is and what I can feel there. I try to make that feeling penetrate into my consciousness. Then I try to feel my feet in the same way. Then through the leg, abdomen, heart and head, then above the head to feel the pathway of my body. The arms and shoulders get slightly raised following the raising of the chest area.



Figure 4.2 The process of the breathing – inhalation and the definite point

The tension in my body gradually grows through the spine to reach a definite point in Figure 4.2 from the first to second picture, whose process is totally individual to each dancer, then in the second picture I pause instantaneously. It is as if my spine is going up toward heaven but the feet are going downward to press down the earth, and the abdomen is also going downward to keep the energy in and circulate it. I try to feel the Ki, which Korean dancers are taught is latent energy in the body – ready to be awakened and channelled.



Figure 4.3 The process of the breathing – exhalation and relaxation

With exhalation my body – shoulders, arms, knees, wrists and chin – can be released. The thumb is always directly forward below the palm and is moved slightly more outward than in ballet finger position, and the wrist is relaxed and downwards, allowing the fingertips to make a counter-movement gently upwards automatically. This inhalation can be seen through my whole body but especially my shoulders, and finally when I exhale it is manifestly seen through my shoulders as they fall dramatically and relax. At the moment of the exhalation, the shoulders are relaxed but my knees are bent and relaxed at the same time, accentuating the breathing technique and making it visible to the others.

It is not just breath and the shoulders moving but also the dancer's inner energy

from the ground to the energy centre, involving the simple and slow movements that are essential characteristics of Korean dance, whereby the dancers press down to look and feel heavier. When the dancer reaches a definite point as in Figure 4.2, she suspends her breathing and maintains a static stabilisation before releasing the breath. In addition, at that moment, her suspended breathing itself becomes part of her movements that the audience can actually see.

All these elements contribute to an emphasis on ongoing motion rather than isolated position and I try to feel Ki, the alternation of the breath cycle in the body, and the circular pathway of the breath through the body, related with a curved shape and circular ongoing outer movements. There is also an important movement for Korean dance in which the wrist is flicked gently in conjunction with the breath. In other words, when a dancer inhales the air moves from the chest towards the fingertips through the shoulder and the wrist, these movements are all linked and together constitute the upper body movement (Cho, 1997). These movements are generated by the dancer's inner emotion rather than mechanical action of the shoulder.¹ Sometimes the dancers use these shoulder movements just to maintain the rhythm (see DVD 3, 04:43-04:55, 05:03-05:17).

All these movements are rhythmic interplays of qualities of movement, symbolizing and enacting in miniature the flux of eternal motion in the cosmos generated from the Ki energy as human beings are “a part of the extensive whole of nature” (Bubjung, 1999, p 19). Korean dance values people living in harmony with the universe and it appears in “Korean dance through stressing the process,

not the product; the passage, not the path; the motion, not the positions, in order to express the dancer's inner flow in their rhythm instead of putting the stress on outside movements" (Lee, 1993, p 25). According to Kim:

Korean dancers are more interested in spiritual rather than physical beauty. Generally Korean dancers move through the position rather than actually arriving at the position, making streamlined curvilinear and rounded shapes with the energy flow between the positions. It is an expression of a metaphysical philosophy in that Koreans believe that the human body is a universe unto itself and man's ideal existence lies in harmony with heaven and earth. It is more abstract than most western dance (Kim, 1996, p 40).

Generally speaking, Korean dance is a simply formed dance rather than a sophisticated technique. Throughout its history even though dance underwent fixed forms, the dances were essentially executed and emphasised in spontaneous simple steps through the dancer's feeling, without employing much in the way of learning exact techniques or choreography (Lee, 1993; Jung, 1995). Instead of complicated and fast movements, the technique is simple, static and subtle, though various meanings are implied in every movement (see DVD 4).

For example, although the Salpuri (see more below in this chapter) dance, a traditional Korean dance which particularly inspires me, usually lasts approximately ten minutes, there are not as many phrases of movements as there are in ballet in the same period of time. The Salpuri dancer sometimes remains in her place for almost nine beats, and then only rises onto the balls of her feet as if taking a deep breath before moving just one step. In one movement the dancer

gently throws the scarf (a Salpuri dancer dances with a white silk scarf, see DVD 4.1) and it wafts to the ground, after which, she lowers herself to kneel. These are only very simple movements just through the outer movement that the audience can see, in that she first throws the scarf and then kneels down; however, in this moment, are contained complicated Korean emotions including Han. As she throws the scarf, the dancer can finally release her Han (see also Chapter 3) which is an emotion similar to sorrow, bitterness or unsatisfied desire.

All the tiny movements, even her fingers, contain the Koreans' various emotions of Han. In addition, as with the meaning of the Salpuri which is "to expel evil spirits" (Lee, 1993, p133) the scarf signifies a spirit. Thus, the dancer throws the scarf, signifying that she understands the world after death is not earnest desire but could be another way of life or the process of the wheel of birth and rebirth.² Thus, in throwing the scarf, she finally "disarms the spirit's anger and caresses the scarf as if she is comforting the spirits" (Kim, 1996, p12).

With all the simple, subtle and slow movement, the dancer's breath technique is one of the essentials in Salpuri dance, as in Korean dances generally. Korean dancers not only get their energy from the breathing but also express their emotion through their breathing. Compared with ballet, with upper movement for both kinds of dancers, taking a breath is also one of the most important things to keep and enhance their energy even though the ways of doing this are different between the two styles.

Whereas Korean dancers overtly show their breathing, in ballet the dancer is supposed to breathe discreetly. Both dancers take a breath that gives power and initiates movements of the chest, back and head. In both dances, I feel that the power starts from the inhalation and that gives the power to move, and finally the energy flows from the centre through the body and all the way out to the extremities. In addition, ballet dancers, rhythms are the regular metric rhythms of classical music that “avoids breath rhythms or free rhythms or irregular metres” (Preston-Dunlop, 1998, p 78) while the way in which Korean dancers execute their movements depends on their individual emotion and breath rhythm.

In ballet, there is a breathing point for a body extension called *allongé* which is in between movements. It does not mean the dancer can only breathe with *allongé* but rather when the dancer is doing this movement, she can breathe with her whole body extension. Even though this is an in-between movement and not a complete movement alone, one of the important actions for a ballet dancer is how she emphasizes the elongation of her movements.

Allongé, which is defined as “longer, to lengthen or extend, stretched out” (Ryman, 1995, p 2), is a kind of lengthening action in which the back is released slightly forward and the eye line is along the front arm. For instance, in the barre, when a ballet dancer does class, she starts with the *plié*, and just before executing the *plié* movement, she extends her curved arm and takes a deep breath with lengthening movement. However, the deep breath is not something visible to others, such as a rising shoulder or the spread of her diaphragm when

she takes a breath. With the allongé, the dancer can obtain breath and energy through her body movement.



Figure 4.4. Allongé in Paquita solo

These are ongoing movements in three counts in Paquita solo. In the first picture

I was in a complete movement of fifth position relevé with fifth position of arms. I gradually extended through my body chest, arms, chin, and fingers and with this allongé, I breathed deeply through the body movement even though the audience could not see me breathing.

In contrast, According to Kim Young Hee (1997), who is a professor of Ewha University, in her book “Fundamental Breathing Technique for Dancer”, the basic movement for breathing is when dancers are breathing out, their spine is bending and when they are breathing in, their spine is stretching. When they are taking an exhalation, it must be very deep to release all the air from the lungs while pressing the abdomen and making their backs round. In other words, with breathing, the energy can converge into the abdomen, where Ki energy can be generated, and this pressing of the abdomen, bending back and slouching forward of the chest helps this energy converge. Therefore, ballet dancers radiate their energy outside their body and the movements help the dancers’ breath, which should be invisible to others, while Korean dancers converge their energy with their breathing technique and let it go through the dancer’s body that can be visible, especially when the shoulders’ moving.

Korean dancers practice their breathing as a technique. While ballet dancers start with a barre first in their everyday training, Korean dancers usually do their own breathing technique. As I have mentioned previously, Korean dance is not rigorously formed, therefore, in each dance school or company, the individual teacher sets her own method of training, including breath control. For example,

at Ewha University there is Kim Young Hee's style, at Kyung Hee University there is Kim Bak Bong's style and at Suk Myung University there is Jung Jae Man's style of breathing technique.

Paradoxically, one of the principle techniques in Korean dance is the attainment of great freedom through the discipline of the form. In fact, Korean dance has not been made as a formal production but has been developed throughout its history. For example, Salpuri being one of the most representative and oldest traditional Korean dances, it was originally a shaman's dance, and was developed and matured continuously over the centuries by the dancers to add artistic value, the so-called form came to be the prototype of Korean culture.

According to Lee:

Although many are said to trace their roots to earlier eras, as performed today the dances are believed to be akin to those performed during the ChoSun Dynasty (1392-1910) (Lee, 1997, p 21).

For example, although Salpuri dance was originally a Shaman's dance, the basis of the concert form of the dance seen today is generally attributed to Han Sung-Jun (1874-1942), who is said to have choreographed it in Seoul in the mid-1930s and to have named it after the rhythm and dance used in shaman rituals in Southern Junla province (Lee, 2000; Song, 2002). After him, the dance became artfully refined and the way was paved for a new choreography of dance. In addition, the dance has its own structures and technique.

Nowadays, Salpuri is largely divided into three different styles and techniques in the same way that each dance school has their own breathing technique; that of Han Young-Suk (daughter of Han Sung-Jun), and those of Kim Sung-Ja, and Lee Mae-Bang (see DVD 4.1 which is Lee Mae-Bang's film of dancing Salpuri) (Lee, 2000; Song, 2002). They share some basic structures, but differ in fundamental respects. Similarly, most Korean dance generates a form from which there is no form i.e. freedom, and this is the one of the disciplines in Korean dance. Indeed, Korean dancers still pursue movements executed through the dancer's inner emotion rather than rigorously accurate technique. It is said that their inner emotion leads to freer and more spontaneous movements through their own culture (Song, 2002).

For example, as I have previously stated there is a special emotion called Han in Korea, which often leads to feelings of sadness, mostly inculcated in Korean women through Confucianism, because of restraints on their behaviour and self-expression. Moreover, as I have mentioned, dancers were the lowest class in society at that time when Korean dance had started becoming more popular as a form of entertainment for the upper class, as I have detailed in the example of KiSang's life. Therefore, the emotion of Han was naturally imbued in most traditional Korean dance and it was and still is manifested through a particular breath technique from deep inside the dancer, generating a change in the dancer's outer appearance.

In a different way from ballet, a Korean dancer does not hide her breath,

preferably blowing it out as if she is making a deep sigh cause by the Han emotion, and this has become an important movement. Moreover, through each dancer's emotion and feeling in each moment, the rhythm will be different which makes for a specific Korean dance movement, whose mode of breathing depends on the dancer's feeling at that moment, freer and more spontaneous.

Most dancers wear the traditional Korean costume called Han Bok, covering their entire body. The men wear "Jegori" (jacket), "Baji" (trousers) and "Dulumagi" (overcoat), with a hat, belt and pair of shoes. The women wear "Jegori" (different from men's, with a shorter jacket) with two long ribbons which help to tie up the jacket, a full length, high waist wrap-around skirt called "Chima" (very long skirt), "Busun" (a pair of white cotton socks), and shoes with pointed toes (Bae, 2004). Because the dancer wears a full length skirt, the legs are hidden.

The kinds of movements with the long costumes are shown to the audience do not emphasis the full, athletic extension of limbs or fast, high jumps. Instead, the beauty of these dances depends on the subtlety and economy of gesture, smooth and uninterrupted movements and an unceasing spiritual intensity. Korean traditional dance is characterised by economy of movement; subtle, simple and suspended. The dancer usually moves with simple arm movements in constant tempo, which contributes to a meditative and highly ritualistic atmosphere.

Dancers follow their emotion and spiritual intensity and then improvise on basic

movements. It is said that the dancer's feeling leads to correct movements in traditional Korean dancers in that they tend not to stick to any specific actions.

On the other hand, the accuracy of my feet movements was the most important thing when I learnt ballet (this is only for the student, not for the professional dancer). When I was a university student and I first experienced traditional Korean dance, my teacher told me to "know your body" during the lesson. I was wearing a full length HanBok skirt which is the traditional Korean costume. For me, "know with your body" means to know my body alignment through the spine from my feet to my head.

I used to dance reclining upon the mirrors in the rehearsal room to check my correct alignment and this helped me to become aware of my body. Therefore, even when I learnt Korean dance, in which there aren't any rigorously correct positions, I looked in the mirror at what I was doing and compared this with my teacher's movement. I thought that my kinetic awareness corresponded to "know with your body" with accurate body articulation and coordination through training, and a kind of rhythm and phrasing of the movement. However, as I was wearing that long skirt, no one could actually see what I was doing with my legs. I did not need to make the movement of the feet precise. Whereas in ballet we are given a clear set of steps to make, in Korean dance the important thing is the dancer's emotion so I often felt unguided as to what steps to make.

Actually, since ballet was performed on proscenium stages, it has developed

hugely. Ballet dancers are watched from above and the audience sit on three sides. There is always a long distance between the dancers and audience, in that dancers are on the proscenium stage, which is always on a light, and the audience are captured in the darkness of the auditorium. Therefore, ballet was created considering the audience's view point using vertical line of individual dancer's body accompany with beautiful arms movement and turned out legs has investigated. The separation of stage from audience allowed for the creation of illusion and this helped in the development of its higher technique (see more about this in Greskovic, 1998; Guest, 1996; Lee, 2002).

In contrast to the above, traditional Korean dances performed for the king and upper classes were put on in the open air. Traditionally, Korean dances were performed outside. They used to be staged with no distinction between audience and dancers. They were performed on an improvised outside stage so the audience could feel all the enthusiasm, because there was no separation between performers and audience.

In addition, in ballet, due to the shorter skirts³ and influence of the overhead view, choreographers and dance masters became interested in the dancers' bodies' potential for uplift and other vertical movements with the use of jumping and various complicated feet movements. During the French Revolution the dancers' skirts were shorter and they could put emphasis on their leg work. Guest states that the, "evident was a trend towards simpler costumes that would favour a lighter, more aerial style and a more virtuosic vocabulary of steps"

(1996, p 26). However, Lee, states that the “shortened skirt showed her footwork which was still limited by heeled shoes” (2002, p 127). Thus, when the dancers came to wear flat shoes ballet made a huge development technically. During the Romantic era, with the supernatural scenes of the ballet, jumping or any quality of lightness such as cabriole,⁴ entrechat quatre,⁵ ballon,⁶ and so on in a dancer’s movements became popular with flat shoes. According to Lee:

Ballon or quality of lightness in a dancer’s movement, signified the epitome of her achievement as an interpreter of the ethereal. Jumping steps of all kinds were refined and perfected for the meaning they could impart to the characterisation of chilling specters. [...] The artistic incorporation of pointe works was the most important innovation in moulding the non-real scenes in Romantic ballet (Lee, 2002, p 141).

Of course, it depends on the character of the particular piece of classical ballet dancers are performing, but they usually dance with a haughty attitude, for historical reasons. The dancers must always pull the shoulders down and tight. The shoulders must be held open – that is, not slouching forward, which is a traditional Korean dancer’s posture, but in ballet the breastbone should be lifted and the chest expanded looking proud.

On the other hand, traditional Korean dances have always played a part in the people’s lives. Even though Korean dance is also performed on a stage by well-trained professional dancers nowadays, the basic movements and actions still exist in all Korean culture. The various types of traditional Korean dances, “whether originally supported by religious institutions or for entertainment or

part of ritual, and whether performed by highly-trained specialists or ordinary people, are all considered identifiable as Korean” (Seo, 2003, p 11). Therefore, it is said that almost all Korean people can do Korean dance simply, especially the shoulder dance in which their shoulders are moved up and down pleasantly and gently (Song, 2002).



Figure 4.5 Ballet posture



Figure 4.6 Traditional Korean dance posture

In Figure 4.5, my neck lengthens and the shoulders are aligned over the hips with the chest open, the neck stretches up, and the head is visible above the neck. In Figure 4.6, I am dancing a traditional Korean dance wearing the traditional HanBok costume and keeping my shoulders slouching forward with the head slightly lower. I also keep pressing the abdomen, bending my back and slouching my shoulders forward as this curved posture helps me keep the energy in. It also emphasises that the dancer's full skirt starts from her chest not her waist and there is a strip of cloth to wrap the skirt tightly and keep the diaphragm compressed to help the dancer's chest press inward. Essentially, a ballet dancer's upper body must always keep pulling up the entire back, lengthening and reaching up through the neck and head.



Figure 4.7 Ballet dancer's and Korean dancer's posture

In Figure 4.7 the ballet dancer's upper torso is lengthened, chest up and shoulders down. My arms curve softly, representing flow. In the picture on the right in Figure 4.7, the Korean dancer's upper body is slightly tilted and her shoulders are slightly inward. The ballet dancer in the first picture has her supporting leg in plié and the Korean dancer's supporting leg is also bent in a posture called Kulshin (see more in Chapter 5). However, the ballet dancer's energy is going upward and radiates outward around her body while the Korean dancer's energy is pressed down as well as kept inside her body to circulate. Although the ballet dancer must keep her shoulders firmly down with the chest open, the hands and wrists should be relaxed and naturally follow in line with the arm with space between the fingers. While my pelvis in ballet is always

centred, neither tipped back nor forward, my pelvis in Korean dance is tipped slightly back so that the centre of my weight is downward as well as slightly backward.

When I choreograph this piece of work *Mirror of Water, Still Sky* (Go, 2005), I try to connect with my body and act on impulse for movement as I then develop a sensitivity to and awareness of my body. As Press notes, all creativity involves a self that “embodies and expands self-delineation, self-cohesion, and self-development, and that is ultimately self-transformative” (2002, p 73). Fraleigh states:

As we create ourselves in dance, we draw upon the meanings we attach to our corporeality; we stylize our body and engender its forms. *When we choreograph*, we enter into a dialogue with ourselves: conversing with our movement, probing its possibilities and what we can *make* of them, extending what comes naturally and easily, what comes with effort, and what lies waiting to be discovered, converting such potentials into shapes and flows, contrasts and relationships. We shape the self of a moving message that eventually is returned to us, but not in a mirrored reflection, for we cannot separate from the image or the message; rather, we are shaped and moved by it – swelling into all of it. We plumb our biocultural reality and focus ourselves in the message: moving, we are moved through it; shaping, we are shaped by it – *being* this person in this time with these feelings, as we thicken into the dance (Fraleigh, 2004, p 50-51).

To find my energy flow, on the first day of this piece of work in the rehearsal room, what I try to do first is to commence learning the basis of traditional

Korean dance to adapt its breath technique to my own energy execution obtained from ballet training. I need to keep my body lower than I am used to with ballet postures. My body has been trained in ballet for a long time and the postures are completely different from Korean dance as I have previously stated. On account of being a ballet dancer, even though I learnt Korean dance, it was not easy to remove the upright posture.

Moreover, I always tried to make my movement look as light as possible, but Korean dance required me to pull my centre of gravity down with the knee permanently bent. During the rehearsal of the work, the Korean teacher kept telling me: “to do Korean dance well, it is necessary to press your feet firmly on the floor and even when you are jumping, you embrace the feeling of maintaining on the floor”. Indeed, it is said that when the Korean dancer’s feet are put on the floor, the internal energy can spread all around her body and then she can finally feel the flow of her natural movement. The teacher Seul also said:

The bending of your knee and lowering of your upper body are the beginning posture of the execution of all movements in Korean dance. This is not just a bending movement but interlinks a movement with the following movement, then makes the dancer execute what she is trying to express with her energy. These movements are not rigorously formed nor ruled but executed through the dancer’s breathing rhythm.

I try to keep concentrating on lowering my body and bending my back, pressing my abdomen as if I am doing contractions, which is Martha Graham’s Contraction and Release technique. As it happens, Korean dance posture gives a

more oppressive feeling than Graham's in that I need to push my body hard downward and inward. A ballet dancer breathes with spread chest that always makes the movement bigger and more open while a Korean keeps her movement inward and more contained.

Again, with the basis of Korean dance, the breathing technique, I also need to make my body lower, and move with a pulling down sensation. Consequently, I was told that the breath circulation inside my body should make a softly curved line rather than a straight line and this may reflect Koreans' general belief in life as a cycle. The breathing technique can help my body flow in lower centring and is shown several times in this choreography, particularly through my shoulders.

As previously stated, this piece of work is a solo piece that is choreographed, directed and danced by myself, and I try to find my own movement through previous experience both as a dancer and Korean. As Praagh and Brinson state: "the function of solo dances, except when used purely to display technical virtuosity, is to reveal interior conflicts, whereas pas de deux generally reveal exterior conflicts" (1963 cited in Preston-Dunlop, 1995, p 387). This is a solo that reveals my life not only through movement but also through narrative aspects reflecting my own philosophy of life.

Strangely enough, when I try to create some new steps, it usually takes me back to things such as styles, technique and habit which I have followed in the past that have already left an imprint through my body. Moreover, these movements

are revisited, continuations of paths that started from my childhood, or maybe even much earlier, and which repeat themselves in different forms. Choreography involves a distillation of the choreographer's cultural, intellectual and aesthetic background. Thus, through this piece of work, I try to combine two different dances which reflect both cultures and ingrain my way of thinking and way of life into a dance movement and story.

Creating dance, putting steps together and making patterns through the steps are all ways of showing my own philosophy. The subject of this piece is about life from birth to death. Obviously being Korean, I can automatically connect to Buddhism as it was Korea's state religion for a long part of its history. Moreover, most Koreans, even if they may not call themselves Buddhist, maintain a Buddhist view of life and the afterlife. Those who follow other religions keep many customs which are Buddhist in origin. Therefore, inspired by Buddhism, the intention of this work was to express my philosophy of human life; birth, death, and the afterlife. This piece will touch upon a person's further life through Buddhism.

Shamanism is the "ancient religion of animism and nature-spirit worship and is based on the belief that all things including human beings, natural forces and inanimate objects possess spirit" (Pak, 2007, p.87). Because of its inherent principle of not being in conflict with any other rites of nature worship, including Korean shamanism, Buddhism was able to blend well with Korean shamanism (Cho, 1997; Kim, 2005). The two religions blended to produce a

form of Buddhism that is uniquely Korean.

In fact, from a Buddhist point of view, life is suffering. Human existence is essentially painful from the moment of birth to the moment of death. Even death brings no relief, for the Buddha accepted the Hindu idea of life as cyclical, with death leading to further rebirth. Buddhists believe in a cyclical relation of cause and effect; one is rewarded for good deeds and punished for wrong-doing. What people are today is attributed to what people have done in previous lives (Pak, 2007; Shin, 2003). Therefore, people should hold in their temper, anger, greed, thirst, and selfishness. Patience and restraint help them to let go of their greed, anger and so on.

In Buddhism, nobody can deny the transitoriness of life. Life is considered the most important perfection for the negation of the self (Pak, 2007, p2). Life starts from nothing and ends in nothingness. This is what powers the endless cyclical motion of the “Wheel of Life” (Jang, 2005; Pak, 2007; Shin, 2003). Everything depends on the mind and attained enlightenment. Today, many Koreans are still learning self-discipline, and self-control even though they are not Buddhist (Kim, 2005, p 275). In addition, Korean dance relates not only to shamanism, but also to the typical Korean sense of restraint, in that the dancer is in almost constant motion but makes small, controlled and restrained movements. My work focuses widely on this, as the culture of restraint has strongly affected Korean dance.

One of my challenges in this work was to reveal the figuration and make it easy

for the viewer to understand. I assumed that revealing the narrative distinctly would be the best way to make the viewer understand what the choreographer is trying to express. Even though I believed that the music, dance and background could bring my intention to the viewer, I decided to put texts at the beginning of each scene because language is one of the most convenient ways for communication. Early silent film used images as a language that communicated to people all over the world. With the addition of sound, film became a more literary, storytelling medium. However, I was not sure if a viewer in Western culture could understand the oriental phenomenon which is the main subject of my work.

Dance intrinsically involves a dancer showing all about herself through movement. Dance can be consciously projected toward other people for conversation through movements or it can also be more personally absorbed. I think my dialogue through my dance and its aesthetic qualities, and my purpose and intention are one of the most important elements of my choreography. Now, the major subject in my life at the moment is about “life”, of where my life is going, how to construct my life, etc, so the major subject of this work will be about “life”.

This piece can be divided into four parts that refer to the Korean words “Saeng, No, Byung, Sa” which mean “Life, Old, Illness, and Death” (see Appendix 2). Traditionally, Korean people were told that the other three are inherent in life. However, my intention was to show that life is never - ending in the same way

the Buddhists thought of the “Wheel of life”. I use a doll which resembles me; it appears around the beginning of the film and in the last scene appears again. Through the doll the viewer can notice that it expresses the whole of life (see DVD 3, 00:30-00:58 and 05:55-06:12).



Figure 4.8 The doll and me

For the Illness scene (see DVD 3, 04:15-05:36), when people get ill and face death, they may be frightened. I try to express this fear, and the scene shows my mental state. Therefore, I do not want the background to be real, but something with a strong impact. I am inspired by the traditional Korean four royal guards in a Buddhist temple. Just behind the main gate of all Buddhist

temples in Korea, there are four giants holding weapons with intensely vivid colour. The four royal guards, called “SaChunWang”, defend Buddhism from anything that could harm it. Each king guards one direction of the Buddhist heaven (North, West, South, and East). Each also carries something in its hands: “North holds a pagoda, West holds a dragon and thunderbolt, South holds a sword and East holds a lute” (Pak, 2007, p.43). Lee states:

It is said that the North king appears as a guardian of the Buddha’s teachings and protector of the world. The West king has got divine eyesight and discerns evil, and punishes evildoers. The South king appears to protect the world. Lastly, the East king uses music to subdue evil forces (Lee, 1993, p 67).

When I first went to a temple, as soon as I saw the giants I was in panic because I had not expected something scary in a calm temple. The fierce colour was unforgettable, and made me feel as if I was getting smaller and shrinking. These statues are huge, two or three times bigger than real people and their facial expression made me really scared. I have felt intimidated and over-awed by the SachunWang, ever since I was child.



Figure 4.9 SachunWang

According to Lee:

SachunWang are called guardians of the world and their respective functions are to protect the world; to discern and punish evil and encourage the aspiration for enlightenment; to listen to the Buddhist teachings and protect the place where the Buddha expounds them; and to relieve people of their sufferings (Lee, 2001, p 21).





Figure 4.10 Four guards inspired by SachunWang

In the same way as in my work, where I try to infuse traditional Korean dance movement into my ballet-based body, nowadays the boundary between ballet and contemporary dance is ambiguous, as the two are often merged. While various types of dancers trained in very different ways during the early twentieth century, nowadays dance students are trained in many dance styles producing technically strong and versatile dancers. For example, London Contemporary Dance School offers ballet classes to their contemporary dance students. A large number of contemporary dance companies' auditions require ballet-trained dancers and their training includes classical ballet classes.

To give another example, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre Company and

Netherlands Dance Theatre classes are largely ballet. Moreover, the most renowned international ballet competitions in the world such as Prix de Lausanne in Switzerland, Jackson International Ballet Competition in the United States and Prague International Ballet Competition in the Czech Republic, all require not only classical ballet but also contemporary dance pieces. It depends on the competition, as the rules are different in each, but usually in Round one the dancer is required to perform classical ballet and in Round two, the semi final, she must perform a contemporary dance which has been choreographed during the last ten years. The form for the Jackson International Ballet Competition held in June 2006 states, “Finalists must perform a contemporary solo or duet choreographed after 1998”. These cross-influences between modern dance and ballet actually began quite early in the twentieth century. According to Lihs:

Exchanges began during the time of the second generation of modern dancers, and since then a great deal of cross-pollination has been happening. For example, in 1959 Martha Graham⁷ and George Balanchine⁸ collaborated to produce ‘Episodes’, which was performed by both their companies together. [...] Graham also choreographed works for Rudolf Nureyev⁹ and Margot Fonteyn.¹⁰ [...] Merce Cunningham also set two works on the New York City Ballet, The season in 1947 and Summerspace in 1966, and choreographed Duets (1949), a blend of classical technique and modern movement, for American Ballet Theatre dancers (Lihs, 2003, p 85-86).

Nowadays the intertwining of dance styles is increasing, and becoming more popular. A large number of choreographers seek ballet-trained dancers such as

Michael Clark, who was trained at the Royal Ballet School and then danced with the Ballet Rambert. He became a choreographer and started to create contemporary dance with ballet trained dancers and contemporary music. Another popular choreographer, Jirí Kylián, is also a choreographer of Nederlands Dans Theatre, and trained at both the Royal Ballet and Martha Graham School and creates contemporary works that are a combination of ballet and modern dance.

One of the prominent characteristics in classical ballet, the female dancer's pointe shoes, is not a defining characteristic any more. The Joffrey ballet *Billboards* (1980), which was created to the music of Prince in four sections by four choreographers, and in which the dancers are not wearing pointe shoes except in the first section, and the Opera National de Lyon's *Romeo and Juliette* (1992) which also has no dancer wearing pointe shoes, are examples of this. In addition, this cross-influence is not only applied between modern dance and ballet but also culturally globalised. For example, the spectacular multimedia ballets of the Marseilles-born Frenchman, Maurice Béjart, are imbued with Eastern spiritual phenomena. According to Reynold and McCornick:

His free association of ideas from East and West accorded with their notions of enlightenment through meditation, catharsis through ritual, and the emotional release of primal experience. [...] 'Masse pour le temps present (Mass for today., 1967)' combined Biblical and Buddhist texts as they embraced the spirit of man from primeval times (Reynold and McCornick, 2003, p 435-436).

Moreover, Jirí Kylián collaborated with the Japanese composer Maki Ishii to create *Kaguyahime* (Moonprincess), which is one of Japan's oldest fairytales. In his work, the ballet-based dancers are performing with music that is played with Western percussion instruments and Japanese drums. The work combines both occidental and oriental elements such as a woodwind instrument, which appears occasionally, extending the oriental feeling, and the ballet-based dancer's impulsive movements to extend the Western feeling.



Figure 4.11 Japanese musician on the stage in *Moonprincess*

As I was a ballet dancer, I have always rehearsed in a ballet studio with a proper floor and a big opera house theatre. When I filmed SC 3 in Act 1 (see DVD 3, 00:59-02:31), it was the first time I had danced on sand and not a steady flat floor. It was completely different from where I have always danced. For a dancer, the actual floor construction is an important matter, especially for a ballet dancer. I could not even make small jumps and balance even for just two seconds

because the sand had already been ruined by my footsteps and the surface had become bumpy. Frankly, it is essential to have an appropriate floor on which to work, especially for a ballet dancer.

Whatever movements I wanted to make, I had to move very carefully in order to avoid injury. If a studio or a stage has a lack of spring many injuries can be caused, such as foot problems, spinal damage, and problems in the muscles which are associated with take off and landing on the bones and muscles. However, I think the floor in dance film could have a very different effect from that in a live performance, for example, dancing in the sea to use the splashing of the water and dancing on a piece of glass with various coloured lights in it. All options and circumstances need to be considered.



Figure 4.12 Dancing on the sand

In my work, because it was performed in the open air, whenever the sun went behind the clouds we had to wait until the clouds had cleared away. In the meantime, my bare feet became painful and sore through rubbing on the rough sand. To make matters worse, it was freezing. Most ballet dancers get used to dancing in warm places after warming up. Even though I had done my warm up it was useless in cold weather in a summer costume and on the very cold sand. On the other hand, dancing in the open air was something new and an adventure for me. I had not had such an experience of dancing with the natural environment such as strong wind, clouds and cold temperature bothering me, and forcing me to consider whether to keep moving or stop dancing. Usually on the stage, apparatus such as strong lighting, wires under the floor and artificial smoke sometimes present a challenge to my dancing, even though they also help to create an exciting atmosphere that gives me the impression that I am on the stage dancing (This will be further explained in Chapter 5).

My hair is blowing in the wind

I am alone on sand in the playground

I am alone

Maybe there is nothing there but the air

The air, brushing my elbows, knees, chin, hair and eyes

Though I am sure the sky must be made more,

More than I can think of

More than I can talk to

I am under the sky dancing with gentle breeze.

Generally speaking, dancers are aware of the directions whereby upright is regarded as being above the dancer's head. Generally, "up" is implied as towards the ceiling, and the vertical line of gravity in a space is especially very important to the ballet dancer. "Down" is also in relation to the floor. Therefore, in view of these facts, it is important to note that the dancer's body can never be described without space.

Space and the dancer are bound up with each other, creating an interface interconnecting with each other. It is important that the cohesion of dancer and space creates a performance in which the dancer is always in contact with space. Dance is actually created where and when the bodies meet the space. Pavis (2003) proposes that spatial experience can be divided into Gestural Space, Dramatic Space/Stage Space and Objective/External Space. The first of these, Gestural space, is the one created by the dancer's movements. Pavis states:

Gestural space is the space created by the presence, stage position, and movements of the performers: a space 'projected' and outlined by actors, induced through their corporeality, an evolving space that can be expanded or reduced (Pavis, 2003, p 152).

Moreover, Newlove and Dalby state, "our bodies displace space, move in space, and motion in space exists within us" (2004, p 112). Here, as I have stated previously in Chapter 3, the concept of the space around the dancer, the kinesphere can be applied. In other words, the dancer's perception of her own movement through her body awareness and gravitational axis can create outward

dance movement and make her own space which can then be shown to the audience by her movements. In kinesphere, the dancer can sense and make her space in her perception of her own movements, however, I thought I could expand my maximum space with strokes inspired by Korean dance. In Act 1 of the film *Mirror of Water, Still Sky* (Go, 2005), I tried to explore the expanded space using ‘strokes’ around me (see DVD 3, 01:28-02:31).

Inspired by the Korean dance costume HanSam, (below Figure 5.13), I use strokes – SC in Act 1 (see DVD 3, 01:28-02:31) creating my own kinetic space and time which are visible as I move. I want to emphasise my own space because human orientation comes about by people engaging with the space they are in (Bartenieff and Lewis, 1980). It is a relation between the body and the space. The conjunction of body and space is important because it is through the body being in contact with space that people perceive the world around them and their relation to the world. This relationship between the body and the world can be grouped into three general areas under the general term proprioceptive sensations. Kinesthesia is the feeling of movement in the skeletal and muscular structures, organs in the inner ear give the feeling of position in space and are known as labyrinthine, and finally various internal organs play a role and are classed as visceral sensations (Todd, 1937, p 27).



Figure 4.13 Korean dancers with ‘HanSam’
(See DVD 4.2 SeoungMu)

The dancer wears ‘HanSam’ with extended sleeves. Inside she is holding sticks so that when she spreads the long sleeves with a flourish the stick can help the sleeves to flutter more and create a bigger shape. I think the extended sleeves would make her space bigger than it would be if she used only her arms.

In Figure 4.13, when the sleeves blow widely and high the shape is not only making the space but also creating the dancer’s own time. In other words, the flow of the long sleeves inscribes the wake in space and makes the flow of time apparent as space and time are always related through the dancer’s body. Pavis also sees “space, action, and time to be more tangible elements of a performance, but the difficulty lies, not in describing them separately, but in observing how they interact” (2003, p 148).

In fact, a dancer is always in motion, and therefore the audience sees the flow of

a dancer's movements which are left in the space in her wake. Moreover, the audience sees the process of the wake rather than distinct movements. Referring to Korean dance, Figure 4.13, with the extended sleeves, we can see obviously expanded space through the wake. I thought the strokes would be able to extend out from my body – especially from my extremities – to the outside, in that my body is extended overtly through my movements and, using filmic apparatus, the strokes.



Figure 4.14 Act 1 'Life' in *Mirror of Water, Still Sky*

Through the strokes, the space around me is more expanded than I could make with my own body. The strokes not only accentuated and amplify my movement and the space, but also the volume of my movement to be visualised. In Figure 4.14, in the right hand picture, due to the stroke, which obscures the starting point on the screen, the space can be hugely expanded through the illusion created by the film, as if the dancer had started her movement somewhere

beyond our view and it caused the space to be more expanded than we actually see from a fixed camera angle.

In addition, referring to the second aspect of spatial experience, Pavis (2003) shows: “Dramatic space, Stage Space” does not belong to objective and gestural space, but fictional narrative location. For instance, in my film, the first part, “Life” scene (see DVD 3, 01:05-01:22), has been filmed at a high school playground and it shows beads on the ground as if children have been playing with them, which gives the illusion of childhood.



Figure 4.15 Act 1 ‘Life’ in *Mirror of Water, Still Sky*

The picture on the right, the trace of children’s drawing on the ground suggests the dramatic space of being in childhood. Moreover, the text “sweet dreams, sweet days” helps the audience to see with the “mind’s eye” (Hamlet’s phrase cited in Pavis, 2003, p 153).

As I was dancing outside in the open air, when I was being filmed in Act 1, Scene 4 (see DVD 3, 02:54-02:43) at the sandbank, I had re-realised my body alignment and energy. Being in a dance studio surrounded by mirrors in every direction, the awareness of my body was usually helped by the mirrors. I could check not only my position but also the right alignment, directions and balance. Moreover, when I am on a stage, I can receive help from each corner of the stage, lights, props and any signs on the wall in front of the stage.

For example, when I dance on a stage I can know where the centre of the stage is by the lights of each exit, the lights and objects hanging on the wall in front of me and behind or above the audience. However, dancing at the seashore, there was nothing to represent such a mark. I could not know the exact border upon which I had agreed approximately with the cameraman. In addition, as a ballet dancer is required to use their body direction related to the ballet numbering (see more in the Appendix 3),⁷ I wanted to know exactly where the front, back, right corner and left corner were, then I could dance with a favourable camera angle identical to that of the audience.

I will give as an example, the moment when I executed the movement referred to in Figure 4.16 below in the first two sections from the left. If I dance in a rectangular-shaped theatre as in the far right picture in Figure 4.16, I know exactly where the number eight will be (referring to the Royal Academy of Dancing System, see more in Appendix 3) where the working leg is supposed to

be pointed out, and fully stretched to reach the point. I am used to reaching my extremities toward each corner in a rectangular-shaped space, which is usually a stage or a studio, then I can finally become aware of my body and of my alignment. This stage orientation was easier for me than the body orientation. Therefore, at the very beginning of the filming, without any fixed artificial direction for the corner and centre mark, it was not easy for me to get my own body alignment without these external markers.

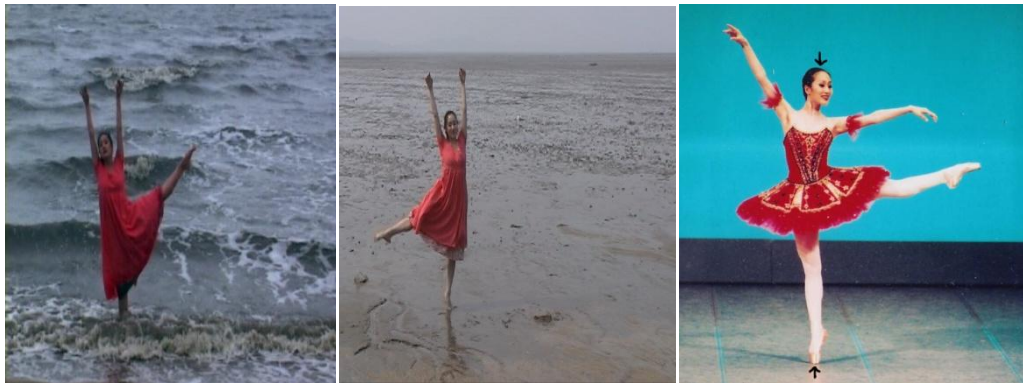


Figure 4.16 á la second in the open air and on the stage

However, in fact, the kinesphere can apply to the dancer's own body. Although space can help a ballet dancer in particular, and help them feel the kinesphere more easily, with the direction according to the dancer's own body-front, the dancer can imagine herself inhabiting the kinesphere. Therefore, I tried to be aware of the orientation of my own body, which is where the front, back, side, down and in-between are, and this helped when filming in nature, without axis points.

As a result, my body awareness was gradually expanded. In other words, I became aware of my centre as I was staying in a place even in the sea, and finally became aware of the connection between my body and space in nature. I could know where my body was and what it was doing without mirrors or numbered parts of a stage. I felt as if I was very light and free even though I was dancing in a huge natural environment, which people are not able to dominate, I did not feel tiny because of my basic body awareness.

Consequently, I was able to receive more energy through my own awareness, and it helped me dance more freely wherever I danced, even in the waves of the sea. On the bumpy, muddy surface and sea waves, it needed more accurate body awareness, knowing where my arms and legs would go with a well-balanced body. Therefore, eventually, the body orientation helped me to get my own body alignment without rectangular space and my understanding of the surrounding space was able to enrich my movements. Preston-Dunlop states: “For kinaesthetic perception, there exists no comparable range of words, only sense, feel, appreciate, be aware of. But the dancer has to use a variety, unnamed as they are” (Preston-Dunlop, 1998, p 46).



Figure 4.17 Rehearsal at the sandbank

Personally, my favourite scene is the long shot of the sea. I think it goes without saying that live dance performance does not mean totally controlling the audience's taste, and neither does film. In the theatre, the audience can watch not only the dancer's movement but also detect her and the choreographer's belief, intention and philosophy. They feel them individually. There has to be breathing room for everyone. Equally, if some scenery shows in the frame of a film, the viewer can sense that what they see is part of a larger world. I assumed and hope that from the long shot of the sea in my film, the viewer can see and feel more expanded boundless nature and landscapes.



Figure 4.18 Dancing in boundless nature

Furthermore, as a Korean, I can see a piece of a traditional Korean painting which primarily emphasises “beauty of emptiness” with Figure 4.18. Traditional Korean painting was actually strongly influenced by China over a long period of time, but Korean artists chose elements according to their own aesthetic sense and used these to develop their own unique artistic tradition (Lee, 1993). The most well documented characteristic of traditional Korean painting is “beauty of emptiness”, meaning that, compared with Western painting, the paintings are somewhat empty. In the emptiness, there is no form, boundary or rule and it is not tangible. In Korea, it is a kind of “passage of exterior and interior, past, present and future, and centre and environs that continuously expand” (Song, 2002, p.21) (see Figure 4.22).

Even though it is empty and from the Western point of view it is probably seen as an uncompleted work, “it does not mean a lack of full use of the space but rather an enhancement of the space” (Pak, 2007, p 19). It is not an absence of something but in “its simplicity it reveals a fullness of essence” (Kim, 1999, p 54). I had not noticed that there was such a strong Korean cultural heritage in my work that is not from my deliberate intention, until I captured Figure 4.18 to put in this chapter as a favourite scene. Quite apart from my intentional use of Korean cultural heritage such as using traditional Korean dance technique, filming in Korea, showing a traditional Korean cultural heritage called SautDae, using Korean ink as a special effect and a doll wearing traditional Korean paper (see Figure 4.19 and 4.20), there were hidden elements of traditional Korean culture which influenced me subconsciously.

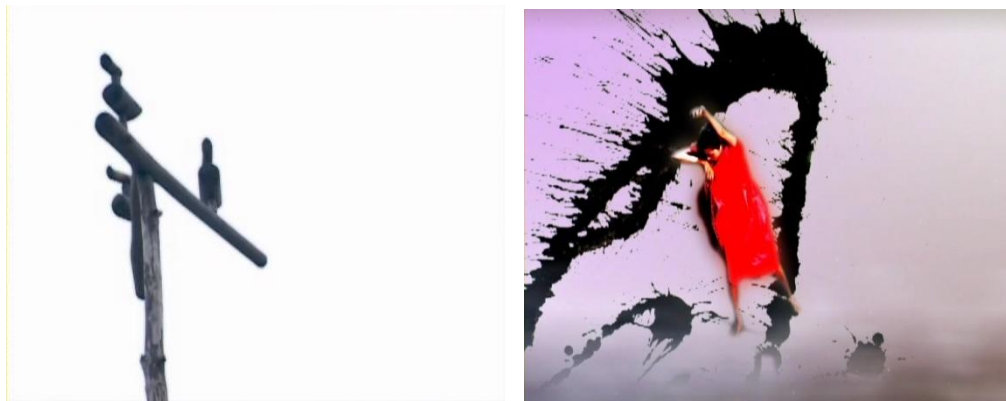


Figure 4.19 SautDae and special effect with Korean Ink



Figure 4.20 Four dolls wearing traditional Korean paper inspired by SachunWang

Bauman also sees performance as a means “for the encoding and presentation of information about oneself in order to construct a personal and social image” (1984, p 21). As I have previously stated in this chapter, humanity is just a part of nature in traditional Korean painting, and this emptiness reflects the traditional philosophy. Humanity does not overwhelm but rather is part of nature and humans can be enlightened by it.



Figure 4.21. Landscape with Fishermen by Kim Hong Do (1745-1806)



Figure 4.22. Landscape called Gahakjung by Kim Hong Do (1745-1806)



Figure 4.23 Dancing in boundless nature

In a similar way to traditional Korean painting my film shows the epic landscape and tiny figure that reflects how Korean philosophy sees humanity as just a part of nature. There are few things to look at, only a landscape that shows the Korean philosophy of emptiness applied in my work. When I see the captured picture in Figure 4.23, I feel and see much more fullness than any other captured picture of my work because in that empty space, with the viewpoint of the Korean aesthetic, I can enjoy my deep breath, feeling the breeze and listening to the sounds of nature. Furthermore, it gives room for the viewer to think and create their own perception in that, because it is empty, people can fill it with their own interpretation.

I would argue that it is central to Korean philosophy and Buddhist thought that

we should not deny individual differences because we are all connected and we are all part of nature. There is emptiness and fullness at the same time because nature and I as the dancer coexist in perfect harmony. It was my intention that most of the camera angles on the dance were as if the view had been on a stage with the audience in the best seats in the theatre. The cameraman tried to keep as still as he could, especially for long shots. Moreover, from the point of view of dance film, as it is a genre in dance nowadays, my work is not highly technological because it is my intention that I use the camera to record my dance rather than make a sophisticated dance film. Nevertheless, my work has been shown in several countries at the International Dance Film Festivals.

This film was shown at the FIVU 04 International Film Festival in Montevideo, Uruguay, October 2004; Incheon International University Design Exhibition, October 2005; VideoDance 2005 Thessaloniki International Film Festival in Athens, Greece, November 2005; Festival International de VideoDanza de Buenos Aires in Buenos Aires, Argentina, November 2005; 14th Moving Pictures Festival of Dance on Film and Video in Toronto, Canada, December 2005; Dance Film Day in London, UK, March 2006 and VideoFormes 2006 in France. In addition, *Mirror of Water, Still Sky* (Go, 2005) is presented in The Place Video Library in London and Vidéothèque Ephémère (Video Multimedia Library) in Paris.

People are taught by their culture and dance is learnt through practice. Fraleigh states:

Movement develops in the relationship between inborn natural potential and learning, whether acquired thoughtfully as skill, or assumed uncritically as habit. Dance thrives on this assumed and therefore hidden relation, extending the innate potentials and learned behaviours of human movement (Fraleigh, 2004, p 56).

When I learnt ballet, I was told that ballet prioritises a particular coordination of the body and I needed to do repetitive training for it. The legwork is independent of the rest of the body and limited to named steps as I learnt first how to execute accurate turn-out and basic five leg positions. My head has particularly favoured tilts and turns in order to do the port de bras depending on where I am facing. My hands and fingers are also held in stylised balletic ways, and are not really stretched or clenched. My legs are always turned out and extended, never contracted or loose. In ballet, I choose certain spatial directions to go in, and the energy radiates to peripheral pathways rather than being absorbed in the centre as in Korean dance. Avoiding fragmented and broken lines, spirals and twisted forms, the alignment is always straight and in an extended line.

However, it is more than just awareness of my body movement with outer appearance. I was dancing with my feeling – the feeling of lightening, the feeling of what I am doing, the feeling of where I am, the feeling of my weight, my movement, my standing, my body, my dancing, my breathing and the feeling of nature. Preston-Dunlop says “Feeling give rise to movement. Movement gives rise to feeling. This in-out and out-in duality, is the daily experience of dance” (Preston-Dunlop, 1995, p 49).

¹ The dancer's emotion in ballet is also very important. However, while the ballet dancer obviously shows off her emotion through the story, the Korean dancer's emotion is understood as subtly expressed, suggested rather than portrayed.

² This is a Buddhist philosophy for death and this will be explained more through my practical works.

³ According to Minden (2005), in the 1730s, ballet costume changed. Marie-Anne Cupis de Camargo shortened her skirts and took the heels off her shoes so that she could perform a greater variety of steps. She was able to dance 'men's step such as the cabriole and entrechat quatre.

⁴ A grand allegro jump in which one leg beats against the other either in front of, to the side of, or behind the body. The working leg may be extended devant to 2nd pr berriere between 45 degrees and 90 degrees or above for men, depending on the musical tempo and context (Raman, 1997, p 17).

⁵ A jump in which the feet beat rapidly, one against the other, [...] the feet cross and the legs change to the beat, and return to land with the same leg devant (Ryman, 1997, p 35).

⁶ Resilience in jumping actions, resulting in a buoyant quality (Ryman, 1997, p 8).

⁷ All the ballet movements are based on the directions. There are three different numbering systems mostly frequently used in the world, which are the Soviet System, the Checchetti System and the Royal Ballet Academy System.

Chapter 5

Emptiness

Throughout this research, I have tried to explore the dancer's state of mind during the dance. I am a dancer who has undertaken long-term practice in order to embody the dance, but this corporeal experience also contains the subjectivity which defines my individual life, constructed as it is from my life with others which I recognise as my culture, education, ballet, and Korean dance itself. My body has been the instrument and the subject of my research. Todd states, "The whole body, enlivened as it is by muscular memory, becomes a sensitive instrument responding with a wisdom far outrunning that of man's reasoning or conscious control" (1937, p 3). The body as object can be *known*, in the sense that the body itself can become the object of our attention, but according to Fraleigh's theory, the body as a subject can only be *lived*. It is this critical distinction and the implications that flow from it, that informs my whole thesis.

What happens if I focus on myself deeply when I am dancing and explore what I feel when I concentrate on the sense of movement of my own body? Do I call this state a different level of transcendence? To support this exploration, I

address what I experience as self-knowledge through the dance, the dancer's invisible experience of what I really feel as I dance. What is the actual origin, experience and nature of the transcendental moments which I feel as a dancer, moments which throughout my life, have placed dance for me beyond mere movement.

Experience of the world is not only constructed culturally but also determined differently from person to person as the body is the "subject of the will" (Husserl, 1960, p 67). Therefore, through knowledge, which is the individual process of knowing, can also reveal the knower – that is, myself.

With continuous practice a dancer reaches a certain point where her movement is stronger and becomes part of her bodily knowledge. She then becomes capable of a special sensation, or an awareness in the moment of dancing. As a dancer, when I perform, I feel the space around me through my body, that is a kinaesthetic sense. As Preston-Dunlop (1998) says, the body is equipped with senses because the nervous system is there to be used to enable us to experience and to help us distinguish between different experiences.

Therefore, in this chapter, I discuss this sensation after which, I address what bodily knowledge is and how it is acquired in my body as a dancer. Finally, I examine what I feel during the practical work where I am alone and try to find what my potential energy is. This is documented as a video filmed in the studio.

I argue that practice both arises from and can enhance my bodily knowledge. I also propose that there is potential body knowledge that I was not aware of to the extent that I can ignore potential sensation because I developed a sense of my body through my cultural milieu, where I lived, and was educated. My body has been trained for a long time, and throughout this research, I have mentioned that I learn, practice and know dance through my body. Therefore, one of the aims in this chapter is to address bodily activity and to clarify what I really do and what I really understand when I dance. I will address what actually constitutes my bodily knowledge, borrowing Fraleigh's notion of the body. To take this exploration into a further personal and original context, I will draw on the Korean Buddhist Bubjung's notion of emptiness.

Dance, which is composed of the dancer's processed movement, is a source of knowledge about ourselves and human development. In fact, when people first start to acquire their knowledge of the world, it is not from books or through language but through physical movement. We know that a baby's first mode of knowledge is through such movement. They learn the world with their bodies and employ language through their bodies when they begin to communicate with other people. Sheets-Johnstone emphasises the notion that movement is foundational in that:

We come to know the world through movement [...] precisely in the way we intuitively knew as infants on the basis of our tactile-kinesthetic experiences, and knew without the aid of scare quotes, of qualitative happenings and vitality affects. Such knowing is a manner – or perhaps better, a style – of cognition that may be

difficult for some adults to acknowledge since it is non-linguistic and nonpropositional and, just as significantly, has no solid object on which it fastens (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, p 270).

Thus, in this sense of knowing the world through movement, I suggest that human movement carries significance in that it is part of how I enact who I am in the world. Fraleigh (1987; 1999) suggests such dancing moments provide the basis for a certain kind of self-knowledge that can be described as something known by the dancer through experience. More importantly, in dance, according to Hanna:

Power is exercised through interaction – the exchange of messages between individuals, such as between dancers, dancers and spectators, and either of the latter with other individuals in society (Hanna, 1979, p 86).

Fraleigh states: “I take pleasure in my dance for myself, but I am not engaged in dance as art until my dance is expressed for others and its aesthetic values are realized between us” (1997, p 57). Kealiinohomoku also suggests dance can define both the observing group and the performer:

Dance occurs through purposefully selected and controlled rhythmic movements; the resulting phenomenon is recognized as dance both by the performer and the observing members of a given group (Kealiinohomoku, 1983, p 541).

Similarly, many of those who write about dance have attempted to explain how dance rewards the viewer by considering the processes by which dance

communicates (Anderson, 1974; Smyth, 1984). Can the audience see and feel what the dancer is really doing and trying to express? In dance, the audience generally watches dancers who have created the movement and the scene to fit on the proscenium precisely for the viewer's eyes. The movements, which are gazed by the audience, are specially choreographed to attract their attention. It is clearly apparent in many cases – especially in ballet – that each visual detail is displayed by dancers and all the stage settings are designed for a specific effect for the performance. What the audience may see in the event through the dancers is that the rigorous rules preside over how dancers express their skills and artistry in performance: the dancers may pay close attention to physical appearance, posture, behaviour, and most importantly, choreographed dance movements. What then, are the dancer's invisible qualities that the audience cannot see?

Dance is not the only visual factor at the moment of moving, there is more to it than skills, technique and beautiful movement. Rather, it involves “knowing how to express the aesthetic intent of the movement and how to create aesthetic movement imagery. All these forms of knowing are forms of bodily lived knowledge. As such, they are avenues for self-knowledge” (Frleigh, 1987, p 26). If dance is not only a visual thing, there may be a special sense for which dance can provide aesthetic satisfaction (Smyth, 1984).

Anderson said, “dance is not simply a visual art, it is kinaesthetic as well; it appeals to our inherent sense of motion” (1974, p 9). According to Smyth (1984)

the work kinesthesia was coined to refer to the sense of movement of one's own body, which is derived from movement information provided by receptors in joints, muscles, tendons and skin. In this context it means "sense of one's own movement" (Smyth, 1984, p 19) and the receptors which provide the information can be indicated. Moreover, Benedetto (2007) argues that we are genetically programmed to respond to the visual, aural, tactile, and aromatic. As Tuan Yi-Fu describes:

The senses, under the aegis and direction of the mind, give us a world. Some are 'proximate,' others 'distant.' The proximate senses yield the world closest to us, including our own bodies. The position and movements of our bodies produce proprioception or kinaesthesia, somatic awareness of the basic dimensions of space. The other proximate senses are touch, sensitivity to changes in temperature, taste and smell. Hearing and sight are considered the senses that make the world 'out there' truly accessible (Yi-Fu, 1993, p 35).

Sherrington (1906) describes three different receptors that sense the world. Firstly, the orthodox five senses of seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting that give us information about objects and events in the world, and for this reason he calls them "exteroceptors" to indicate that they are the source of external information.¹

Secondly, Sherrington (1906) uses "interoceptors" to refer to receptors which are engaged with the internal state of the organism, such as pain, and pressure receptors in each organ. For example, we know that we are able to maintain our

balance through the cochlea which is situated in the vestibule of the inner ear, so we do not attribute the sensations of tilt and sway to the activity of the system of the ears which we usually think of as the auditory sense. My heart, brain and liver function whether I am aware of them or not. The same is true of the retina or the iris, of whose functioning under normal circumstances we are unaware, but which are always there in our eyes.

Finally, there is the term “proprioceptor” to refer to the receptors in the joints, muscles and tendons that indicates whether or not the body is moving with required effort and where the various parts of the body are located in relation with each other (Sherrington, 1906). However, this division, which is based on the position and nature of receptors, has been challenged by those who are concerned with the function of the system of perception rather than its location (Johnson, 1987; Smyth, 1984; Weiss, 1999). Therefore, the term “sense” in dance not only represents the traditional five senses, but suggests that we have to go beyond that categorisation – to a place hinted at by a word like “subliminal” – whatever it may be called, I want to know what the sense of movement is in my own body that I have been unaware of until now. As a process that links theoretical understanding, personal observation and my own artistic practice, I do not see these receptors as a separate means with which to sense the world but as inter-active elements that constitute what I call my body. All the information I can get from the environment of myself via ear, skin and nose becomes an active agent in the creation of the movement of that body.

Nagatomo (1992) speaks of knowledge gained *through the body* and not knowledge of the body. She also discusses somatic knowledge:

Such knowledge may be contrasted with ‘intellectual’ knowledge. Intellectual knowledge is that mode of cognition which results from objectifying a given object, which propositionally takes a subject-predicate form, and which divorces the somaticity of the knower from ‘the mind’ of the knower. For these reasons, intellectual knowledge circumscribes its object; it is incapable of becoming one with the object. Somatic knowledge in its immediate, everyday occurrence lacks this objectification. There is a ‘feeling-judgement’ operative in somatic knowledge. In feeling-judgement, ‘knowing that’ and ‘feeling that’ are one and the same in the constitutive momentum of forming a judgement. In this experience, there is an attunement of mind and body, of ‘I’ and other, and of human nature qua microcosm and physical nature qua macrocosm (Nagatomo, 1992, p 63)

Knowledge is the product of human beings (Parviainen, 2002). We are situated – historically, culturally, socially, spatially, temporally, kinaesthetically – in our own life history and perception as we interact with the world. Generally speaking, people tend to assume that we know whether some information reaches us through a particular exteroceptor such as our ears or eyes, but this does not apply in every case. According to Husserl our kinaesthetic sensations under the heading or the constitution of the living body are the “subject of the will” (1960, p 67). Thus, in this sense, we have individual constructive perception.

Parviainen states, “the living body as executor of my choices and decisions is

experienced in kinaesthetic sensations” (2002, p 16). This implies that “knowledge is always self-referential and reveals something about the knower” (Parviainen, 2002, p 12). Polanyi (1966) emphasises that a human being’s activity can be known as “indwelling”. Polanyi sees knowledge not as a static entity but as a process of knowing. Thus, through a persons’ individual life the movement of one’s making may be constructed and it follows that movement may be able to reveal who they are.

Polanyi argues that in any activity there are two different levels of acquiring or using knowledge which are: “focal knowledge” and “tacit knowledge”. The former knowledge is about an object or phenomenon in focus and the latter functions as a background to what is in focus, which is similar to my notion of embodiment as I have discussed in Chapter 3, in that it assists “in accomplishing a task that is in focus” (Parviainen, 2007, p 17). He suggests that we switch between tacit knowing and focal knowing every second of our lives. Thus, according to him, it is a fundamental human ability that blends the old, which is already in one’s body, and the new, and then we are finally able to develop our potential with this blended knowledge.

Dancers struggle with sensations, images of movement, its accuracy (this is especially the case for ballet dancers), shapes and quality. Dancing is said to be hardly less rational than conceptual thinking (Parviainen, 2002; Smyth, 1984; Weiss, 1999) in that most dancers are educated and trained for long periods to acquire the movement expertise and that means they all have knowledge of the

movements (although some are more talented than others). However, the attainment of expertise in diverse fields requires more than nascent talent; it also involves personal initiative, diligence and most importantly – I would argue throughout this research – practice.

To make dancers expert, practice is required as a fundamental element but this is not a matter of simple repetition. Rather it contains the dancer's endeavour with conscious purposeful undertaking for remarkable dance performance and her concentration and the specific training task to acquire the goal through endless feedback from the teacher. This involves error correction while continuing the repetition. Then finally the dancer is able to overcome prior habit and acquire the new habit which supposes the right position to be embodied. Dancers require excellent training from their teacher as well as their own practice to improve their skill but only the latter is only they can control themselves. When I took the ballet class given by Mark Silver (former Royal Ballet Company soloist and current ballet teacher), I noted that he often said after giving the correction "you have got to sort it out as you are the only person who knows your body and controls your body".

Hayes (1989) examines the career development of expertise in several fields such as classical music, painting and poetry and calculated the time to become a master. He found that masterpieces were produced only after approximately ten years into the individual's career. On the other hand, Sternberg (1996) argues that talent is more important than practice and he gives the example of Mozart's

extraordinary early achievements. However, Weisberg found that even Mozart was subject to Hayes's "Ten-Year Rule", whereby he developed his skill over those years and the quality of his composition increased over the years, which means he was honing his skill. In addition, it is well known that he practiced over the years under the direction of his father, a professional musician of some repute, then trained with professional teachers.

In addition, a famous violinist Vanessa May appeared on the BBC on 7th August 2008 to find out whether her excellent ability was due to nature or nurture. At the beginning of this programme, she is strongly convinced that she is naturally talented because she believed that emotion and burning passion for the music are never taught by a mother or teacher. However, through several scientific and psychological exams, she ends up saying on the programme how important nurture is. Many scholars' (Dunagan, 2005; Foster, 2005; Johnson, 1987; Langer, 1953; Smyth, 1984) investigations into semiotic analysis allow for the recognition that particular bodily movement is not just naturally evoked but rather it occurs through constructed one that is constantly immersed in the life experience.

Langer (1953) speaks of the process of learning dance that when a dancer first does dance, the activity brings a comprehension through predetermining the specific attributes of the work. Within dance, she describes this activity as the production of "virtual power", which she equates with an abstraction of human agency. As a dancer, I can suggest that I experience this agency as the first

perception of the dance, and this sense of agency comes at the most fundamental level of comprehension.

Similarly, Schrader (2005) speaks of the process of learning dance, which he divides into three terms: “dive-right-in” (p 38), “creative movement approach” (p 39) and “technical approach” (p 39). He suggests dancers first learn to dance not by reading about it or asking a set of technical questions but by imitation and experimenting with what they have seen. This is the “dive-right-in” (p 38) approach to learning dance and there maybe no predetermining as Langer said but rather, passion and abstract agency.

Secondly, Langer (1953) claims after the initial experience dancers start to interpret the work through practice and this is similar to Schrader’s second term, “creative movement approach” (p 39) that this time is “not a free-for-all; it is structured to encourage personal investigation into some particular aspect of movement” (2005, p 39). The dancer is now able to gain new movement and expand her knowledge with her already constructed ability.

My body is shaped as a ballet dancer when I am dancing. When I dance, my body is automatically in the right position in terms of ballet technique. I automatically have turn-out legs and balletic arm even though, as I have previously presented, I do not keep thinking of technique when I am dancing. However, that does not mean that I am mindless, but rather that through the training, I have acquired a highly complex structure that is used consciously to

represent and give a structure to what I am doing. That enables me to remember and to make effective movements in each practice without thinking and exercise is a conscious adaptive process. It also indicates that, I already have indwelling knowledge which is the old – borrowing Parviainen’s theory. On the other hand, there must somewhere be the ability to receive the new potential knowledge for me so that I can go beyond that level.

For example, as I practice new pieces, I gradually move from fumbling incompetence toward fluency and then, finally at some point, I can extend and stretch my old technique. I do not think about the basics of my body posture such as turn-out, pointed feet and smooth landing; they are already there, dwelling in my body. When I execute some new or difficult movements, I extend my body to try to include the movement and incorporate it into my body so that the movement can dwell there. Weisberg (2006) proposes that expertise facilitates creative thinking because deliberate practice enables us to develop new techniques or skills, which allow us to go beyond what has previously been accomplished. Polanyi’s concept of “indwelling” (see p 193-194) seems to correspond to my notion of embodiment, where a tacit knowledge is built up inside the body and allows the body to incorporate new movements and blend them with the old.

How our body acquires knowledge is through doing, moving and also practicing socially and culturally shaped skills. Knowledge of executing movement is accumulated in the body which “chooses an appropriate movement in a situation

not automatically but ‘reflexively;’ by negotiation with the environment the body if necessary modifies the movement” (Parviainen, 2002, p 20). When I practice the same dance repertoire, my body tends to move differently, for example, depending on the surface of the floor and whether it is slippery or sticky, hard or soft and wooden or rubber (see chapter 4 p165-166 and p 173-174 I discuss how I adjust the use of my bodily knowledge when I am dancing not in a ballet studio but in nature such as at the sea or a sandbank), and I also move differently depending on whether the pointe shoes are new or old or a different brand from what I usually wear. If the pointe shoes are harder than I am used to wearing or if the floor is slippery I must concentrate on each step of my movement which means there is a reflexivity between focal awareness and tacit awareness of dancing even though the dance movement normally relies on my tacit knowing as it is embodied in my body.

The body is constructed by its surrounding environment such as culture, politics and education. However, in Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology he suggests that one’s perception is not pristine and clear of outside influence but is in fact full of memories, anticipation of the future. Banes and Lepecki state “the modernist fragmentation of artistic practices into self-contained and autonomous genres would correspond to a fragmentation of the senses into self-contained and autonomous ‘perception’” (2007, p 4).

Each human must have huge potential that we just do not entirely know, and there are many reasons for this such as cultural construction and education

(Pearce, 2002). Throughout this research and my dancing life, I have also found that I have missed a lot of opportunities to experience because I pre-selected movement through the long-term training which I always pay attention to. I ignored my potential sensation because I stuck within what I had learned so far, always making myself do the “right position” from the point of view of the rule. I thought I had to make sense of my body in the environment where I lived and learned. Therefore, in this work, to make use of the opportunities to perceive my own dancing it is essential for me to attend to the “entire being” (Martha Graham), what can really be felt during the dance. Martha Graham (1991; 1998) suggests that conventional wisdom has always neglected that experience involves not only the mind but also the nervous system and body, and something like art requires one’s entire being for understanding.

On 3rd August of this year, I danced in a studio and I tried to sense my body in a new way so as to develop my body knowledge further, as in Polanyi’s theory. When concentrating on the dance, my mind was cleared to such an extent that I felt emptiness. Nothing was there but everything was there too. Ironically it seems that transcendence becomes possible when the search for such an experience disappears, or becomes redundant to the dancing.

As a dancer, I have usually created outer stimuli to be watched by people but in this work, I am primarily focused on my inner experience. To do this I place myself in a studio with no one else there. I work alone to open up a new part of me.

In this third work, I search for an experience of being in the present in and through my body: the sensations, the slight movement, the feeling of my legs, arm, shoulders, wrists, feet and breathing etc. I also try to listen for what wants to happen in my body now – at that very moment of dancing – just to allow the sensations and any slight movement or any minute swaying (see DVD 1, 00:00-01:20). I allow myself to be with my breath, not trying to change it but just being with my breath as it is (see DVD 1, 02:30-02:57, 07:25-08:05).

I dwell on myself to become aware of my body and how I feel. Parts of my body become particular nodes for sensation: I try to notice my legs, arms, chest, neck, fingers and toes, and then to sense my body as a connected whole. It may not be a visible process but because I am moving I can feel my whole body; my toes are moving and feeling the floor, my fingers feel the air, my thighs feel the touch of my fingers (see DVD 1, 03:30-04:07) and these are all happening in my body as a whole (see DVD 1, 04:14-04:48). I do not try to do anything about it, just breathe and focus on my body. I give myself plenty of time to become aware of myself and my experience (see the third work, which has several moments of stillness). I just wait to feel and stay with the feeling, however vague, and then gradually begin to turn that feeling into movement. Preston-Dunlop, who speaks of kinaesthetic awareness, articulates a similar process:

Dancing feels different,
and looks different,
as we operate each channel of perception.
Dance a sequence of movements,

with your visual perception actively attending
to what you do, to where you are,
to the partial vision of your own moving body.

Dance it again
with the aural channel attending,
listening for your own footfall and your own breath
as well as to the sounds of the room.

Dance it
with the tactile channel attending
feeling your feet, your weight bearing,
the air on your face, the swish of your hair,
the clothes on your body.

Dance it
with the articular channel active
with awareness of the placement of your bones,
the angle of their joints,
now with the muscular channel functioning
feeling the tensing and releasing of your legs,
of your back,
even of your eyelids

Now dance it attending to the vestibular channel,
sensing your shifts from balanced to off-balance (Preston-Dunlop,
1998, p 44-45).

Because I dance what I feel, I can try to listen to my body and what is on offer
right now and try to feel, see and hear new dance material as I bring it to life. I
feel the pressure of my feet, I feel the light air in between my fingers and on my
palms as I am moving, as well as feeling my body as a whole and fuller than just
one individual part of the body. I feel I am moving myself (see DVD 1, 06:32-

07:00, 07:21-07:24 and 08:06-08:48).



Figure 5.1 Feeling the air on my palm and between my fingers



Figure 5.2 Feeling the pressure of the feet

Pallaro states:

When we say paying attention we mean noticing the feelings, images, thoughts, bodily sensations, lapses, compulsions, remembrances, sequences and emotional charges of everything that we are conscious of as we move (or we do not move). [...] Noticing means something more like entertaining, being receptive to whatever stands out in our consciousness. Most interesting are the questions we might pose to ourselves during the process – who is noticing? who is moving? who is engaging in this flow of experience? (Pallaro, 2007, p 183).

According to Wyman-McGinty (2007), imagery which focuses on one's internal experience of the body, such as digestion, breath, bones, muscles, and specific organs can also provoke many associations with one's own lived experience. Thus, I try to focus on my breathing, a core element, to feel deep inside me as it circulates round my body (the reader can see noticeable breathing often with movement throughout DVD 1). Deep breathing can be a way of helping to focus the attention inward (Pallaro, 2007). Through the breath, I can expand the ability of listening from the bottom of my kinaesthetic feeling, which can respond to my sensation, to my whole energy. My devotion to feeling this energy creates movement that may be visible or invisible to others. Hawkins writes that wholeness as a human being involves the ability to listen to what she calls the "inner voice" (1991, p 114), and that:

When one discovers that inner spirit and the inner voice is free to make its own unique statement, then something magical happens to the creator. Suddenly there is a new sense of trust, a confidence in self, and willingness to take greater risk as one reaches toward new goals (Hawkins, 1991, p 115).

Feel the blood carrying the fresh oxygen, which is brought through my mouth to my body with each breath, everywhere; through the soles of my feet, my arms, around my scalp and in the palms of my hands. In Korean dance, it is said that the breathing enters from the soles of the feet and rises up through the body as it circulates. When dancers breathe out, it should be felt through the top of the head and back to the soles of their feet. My Korean teacher says, "your arms are hanging like branches moving with the wind as you breathe. Let go of your arms

to let them move wherever they go through your breath. Imagine the body permeable to air". Sensitising the surface of my body to the particles of air surrounding it, I concentrate on my breath, on the infinitesimal movements of the spine as one breathes, feeling each vertebra lengthening and then feeling the fresh oxygen lifting me, standing and moving. I see the breath as a candle that may fill my body as it brightens, as well as emptying my body as it burns itself, travelling through each cell.

As I concentrate on the breathing, I also feel the space around my body – under, behind, inward and outward, under the feet, above the head and the arms. I find new space and move into it. Consequently, in this constantly changing space, I can feel my body as if it is empty. Deborah Hay states: "standing is a state of consciousness that is emptiness" (1987, p 129). Gill states, "everywhere and nowhere, which does everything and nothing, these are the wonderful qualities of empty space" (1971, p 1). Noël believes there must be "an invisible substance in the top of the tube to hold the mercury up" (1971, p 4) and writes about the notion of empty space:

This space, which is neither God nor creature, neither body nor spirit, neither substance nor accident, which transmits light without being transparent, which resists without resistance, which is moveless, and carried with the tube, which is everywhere and nowhere, which does everything and nothing, these are the wonderful qualities of empty space. As space, it is and does marvels. As empty, it isn't and does nothing. As space, it is long, wide, and deep. As empty, it excludes length, width, and depth. If necessary, I will show all these beautiful properties as consequences of empty

space (cited in Gill, 1971, p 1).

This statement of “Form is emptiness” (Rinpoche, 1995, p 65) signifies that whatever we perceive now, whatever seems to be solid form, is merely empty form, empty of any inherent being. The Buddha said “emptiness is also form” (Pak, 2007, p 33) (meaning that although all things are empty, still they appear as form. All things are already empty. Rinpoche writes:

In the ultimate sense, they do not come into being, they do not remain anywhere, and therefore they do not cease – that is to say, all things are beyond arising, dwelling and ceasing [...] All outer perceived objects are actually space that neither arises, remains nor ceases. At the same time, the perceiving mind is beyond arising, dwelling and ceasing as well (Rinpoche, 1995, p 65).

In Korean Buddhism, what liberation or enlightenment symbolises is essentially the insight into the emptiness of transcendence (Pak, 2007; Shin, 2003). Bujung (1999) talks about the transcendence of transcendence, which implies in turn that there is no transcendence at all. This is his notion of *Non-possession*. His point is that true transcendence “leaves no conceptual trace – no trace of what has been transcended, what has been transcended toward, nor any trace of the experience itself” (Nordstrom, 1981, p 88). It leads us to understand that transcendence starts or achieves neither. The former, because it cannot trace any relative things, the latter because it is empty. Nordstrom points out that transcendence, as the term usually used in Zen:

Would refer to something relative; but the Zen insistence is on the

radically absolute character of transcendence. And it is the insistence which requires that one say that true transcendence is in effect self-emptying, or transcendence-without-transcendence (Nordstrom, 1981, p 89).

I used to be wedded to the mirror going around in the studio thinking how do I look? Am I in the right position? Are my feet fully pointed and turned out? How high is my leg? And my inner world at that moment might be ignored. I was the kind of dancer who used the mirror indiscriminately to deny herself the opportunity to develop essential skills and habits of attending to her own kinaesthetic wealth. However, in this work described here, I try to feel myself as not just the outer movement but the inner. Adler speaks of what happens when one can listen to their inner self:

As the mover in this practice you will step into the emptiness not knowing, not knowing what you will actually do, how you will move. There is no way that either of us can know what you should be doing. Remember, there is no right or wrong way to move. When you are ready, intend toward listening inwardly (Adler, 2002, p 9).

The door changes

It is empty

I understand new world that I am not who I used to imagine

In that moment of emptiness after the door has changed,

I am not

I see beyond the boundary where I taste

I exist.

I touch where 'I' am

I see myself differently

I begin to see my inner.

According to Banes (1987) Deborah Hay speaks of feeling her body moving toward a state of health and preparing itself for emptiness, of becoming intensely conscious, through her identification of herself as her breath. Deborah Hay writes:

i dance for love

i dance for awareness

i dance for the moment

i dance to see

i dance like a deer

i dance to feel the ground

i dance to be free

i dance to grow

i dance to disappear

i dance for life

i am dancing breath (cited in Hay and Rogers, 1974, p 21).

Suzuki states:

The monk is "trying to understand" when in fact he ought to try to look. The mysterious and cryptic sayings of Zen become much simpler when we see them in the whole context of Buddhist 'mindfulness' or awareness, which in its most elementary form consists in that 'bare attention,' which simply sees what is right there and does not add any comment, any interpretation, any judgment, any conclusion. It just sees (cited in Adler, 2002, p 65).

In Buddhist thought “the concept of emptiness refers to the way in which we would experience the world if such experiences were free from all trace of conceptualisation” (Nordstrom, 1981, p 90). I try to see myself in a different way. I think these movements in the third work are aspects of my self that are ready now to become visible in their own way – this is part of the longing for wholeness – an aspect of the self that is taking enormous potential and invisible energy to maintain. And so by bringing it into the body with consciousness, going in and through it, that energy can be released and circulated throughout my body and know what the task is now. This is the moment where I face the biggest challenge, when I go into my body and feel emptiness. This is one of the main reasons why I have researched this feeling of difference even though I cannot say exactly what it is, though I can say that transcendence is always a self-transcendence. As said earlier, it leaves no conceptual trace, no trace of what has been transcended, nor any trace of the experience itself is left behind. Transcendence is in effect self-emptying, or transcendence without transcendence (Pak, 2007) (see my earlier remarks regarding Korean philosophy, p 207-208 of this chapter).

Sartre says freedom is the nothingness at the heart of being. Morris explains Sartre’s idea, stating that, “the first procedure of philosophy ought to be to expel things from consciousness and to re-establish its true connection with the world” (1985, p 183). Sartre states:

Transcendental consciousness is an impersonal spontaneity. It determines itself to exist at every instant, without us being able to

conceive of anything *before it*. Thus every instant of our conscious lives reveals to us a creation *ex nihilo* (Sartre, 2004, p 46).

In some way similar to Sartre's thinking, the self-transcendence I have felt as and through a sense of emptiness, is also the experience of possibilities, in other words of freedom. Nordstrom claims, "the concept of emptiness refers to the way in which we would experience the world if such experience were free from all traces of conceptualisation" (1981, p 90). A Korean monk Manhae also says that need to empty our mind from all the trace of perception to obtain true transcendence. His view is that if we simply and unostentatiously remained faithful to our original mind – through meditation practice – a mind which is from the beginning free from conceptualisation and hence free from any need to transcend such conceptualisation, we would not need anything. He claims that every desire, greed, act of selfishness, and dispute can be overcome through "the (zen-buddhistic) enlightenment that makes us 'free from categorisation'" (Kim, 1998, p 194). Therefore, the removal of our minds' confusion and the elimination of the need for transcendence, can be true transcendence.

After my space has been cleared, I am the one who goes into the emptiness. The emptiness can make people see all things as the centre of the whole reality, because there is no self-centredness at all. Kim states: "from the standpoint of the absolute nothingness, everything is just the centre of the whole. The reality is a circle without boundary" (1998, p 202). After preparing the space, I am the one who is lost and finds no movement that feels my own. There is all time, all space, suddenly in this moment I am whole, as well as at the same time, suddenly being

nothingness. As I can feel emptiness when I am dancing, I know where I am, what is happening to me during the dance and giving me a voice of my own, my own grammar. Emptiness helps me to perceive what is outside as well as inside myself. I can embrace the environment on visual, aural and tactile levels, to look for what can be seen, to listen for what can be heard, to feel for what is touching me. Adler says that when the mover stands and turns toward the emptiness she may be able:

to see what I am ready to see,
to hear what I am ready to hear,
to know what I am ready to know,
and to be as I am (Adler, 2002, p 11).

I see that the human being is its own nothingness, that is, the free being is always negating self, negating what it is in order to become what it is not. Therefore, we are always projecting ourselves, choosing ourselves, transcending ourselves (Whal, 1948, p 546). With the true transcendence that frees us from any need to transcend such conceptualisation, there is no need for anything, as illustrated by Bujung's empty hand, a wonderful metaphor for the sense in which non-attainment is the best attainment (see p 207-208). "What is needed is simply to unite with whatever is happening, to remove completely any trace of separation from the contents of experience and its conceptualisation" (Nordstrom, 1981, p 95). Conze (1964) suggests:

It is called perfect wisdom because it is neither produced nor stopped. And it is so because it is calmly quiet from the very

beginning, because there is escape, because there is nothing to be accomplished and finally, because of its non-existence. For what is non-existence, that is perfect wisdom (Conze, 1964, p 151).

A book of Korean Buddhism called *KumKangSamMaeKyung*, which was originally published during the ShinLa Dynasty (BC 57 ~ AD 935), explains transcendence in this way:

Buddha said,
Nothingness does not abide in nothingness, nor in being, the world which is not being cannot abide in nothingness, conception which is not nothingness cannot remain in being, and truth cannot be explained as nothingness and being. Buddhist saint, conception without name and meaning cannot think rightful truth, why is that? Because, a name which cannot attach a term does not mean nameless and a thing which cannot think the rightful truth which does not have meaning (Shin, 2003, p 276-277).

Through this empty-transcendence, I find myself in my movement. Transcendence is a state of personal liberation where I am released from the restrictions that constrain my life. Transcendence is a personal transformative moment, a journey beyond the illusion of personal limitation and self-imposed restrictions. Images, associations and memories merge with my movement, I become the movement.

¹ In fact, theatre has traditionally focused on engaging an audience through their eyes and ears. However, recently, in the field of dance some choreographers use smell as a part of mise-en-scene such as in *Carmen* (1992), choreographed by Mats Ek, where the dancers dance with a real cigar on the stage. I was a member of the audience and the smell of the smoke aroused in me an image of fascination, corruption, allurements and seduction and it actually enhanced my perception of the character of Carmen, which means that this sense of smell obviously gave me more information about the event.

Conclusion

Throughout this research, my aim has been to cast light on the dancer's state, via the term "transcendence"; not as some kind of mystical experience but as a vehicle for the consideration of bodily knowledge and its relation to the aesthetic, cultural and socio-political constructs of self and the experience of self. Transcendence is not a natural or absolute given but is used as a gateway to an understanding of the dancer's experience. Long-term practice is a crucial element in a dancer's life, and is one of the core elements to experience what I will term transcendence. It is widely known that almost all dancers practice hard to be a dancer. Even in improvisation, it may appear that dancers' choices have already been made before they present themselves, resulting in an unconscious recurring pattern which the dancers fall back into and their movements appear as the inescapable fruition of their long-term practice. Nowadays, some choreographers create dance pieces with a combination of dancers and non-dancers. For example, professional choreographers such as Hofesh Shechter, Russell Maliphant, and Adam Benjamin created a dance called *Destino* in March 2009 performed at Sadler's Wells in London with professional dancers and non-dancers. Over a hundred and twenty performers were on the stage, a diverse group from young people to those over sixty, people with learning difficulties, and experienced dancers. In other examples, in 2008 one of the leading young

British choreographers and dancers Akram Khan danced with the well-known French actress Juliette Binoche, while the Korean National Ballet Company invited non-dancers such as a doctor, lawyer, musician, and teacher in their annual performance of a classical ballet piece called *Le Corsaire*. The non-dancers attended the company's rehearsals and they also learned very basic ballet technique such as how to walk, how to stand, how to listen to the music and how to act as ballet dancers. These examples of performance clearly do not rely on technical expertise as a dancer but rather illuminate dance as a wonderfully enriching and transformative experience in people's lives. However, I could see how hard they had practiced to perform the dance, and how continuously they had rehearsed to be on the stage. I do not argue that dance requires perfect technique and that technique is the most essential element to judge the performance. Rather, I assert that almost all genres of dance have their own technique to be acquired, no matter how difficult and complex or easy and simple it is to dance properly in order to meet the specific requirements of the choreographer. Thus, this research is an investigation into the potential bodily knowledge which lies beyond my current knowledge, beyond my perceived limits.

Critical to my approach is a discussion of how the body builds and stores knowledge, which is then accessible to me as well as an audience, and how this knowledge is a means to understanding myself in the world. In the process of my own personal journey through life I have learned to interact with the world around me through the information I gain, not simply from language, but in my

particular case by means of bodily practices and sensory input. Polanyi said “we know more than we can tell” (Polanyi, 1966, p 4). I have seen the validity of this statement for myself. However, the aim of this research is also, through the medium of dance and the writing of an auto-ethnographic text, to communicate these insights to others.

Transcendence is to be understood in terms of the experience I have accumulated as embodied knowledge, which I can only know when I am actually dancing. I have therefore tried to explore how my body and experience in dance can be theorised, and what methodological tools are most useful in the attempt to better understand the embodied work and invisible inner experience of the dancer. To do this, I have chosen to use auto-ethnography as a method. In this method my own feeling, thought, and intuitions are articulated not as dance but as written text, a text which becomes what I might call an embodied writing. The totality of the documenting process is therefore composed of three inter-dependent elements or processes: embodied writing, embodied dancing and, in a specially made recording, embodied speaking.

Many scholars argue (Green and Stinson, 1999; McNamara, 1999; Richardson, 1988; Richardson, 2000) that the act of writing for any kind of research, (even science writing is included as it uses certain conventions), necessarily involves the researcher’s subjectivity, such as the process of interpretation based on cultural construction, and the researcher’s preconceived assumptions about what it means to do the research. Richardson (1988) argues that all writing is

inscribed by our values and reflects metaphors with which we usually communicate how we see the world. Therefore, since writing is inscribed by the researcher's experience and constructions, no data can be neutral. Thus, according to this perspective, I argue that it is legitimate to make one's subjectivity visible and display how one's voice as a researcher enters the text.

This research is not based on quantifiable data and conventional third person accounts because I want to reveal my presence in a different way to that of most scholarly texts. Rather, it aims to bring a sense of reflexivity to the process of writing. This account allows me to reflect on my own perspective and expose myself, and how I am subjectively inscribed by my experience and culture and to extend understanding of how people see and interpret the world differently. I am the core subject of my research, as my body and bodily knowledge are the basis of my consciousness and perception. It is through my body that I perceive myself and others and the world. It is through my body that I am able to move and feel. Dance is the material I work with to explore something beyond me, to see myself as a bodily being, as an entity in its own right but one that also belongs to a shared humanity.

Though I explore transcendence using myself and my own experience, it is important to stress that this is not just about the self; rather the methodology and content of this thesis is based on the proposition that experience goes beyond the self through ontological thought of relative truth and through dance. This is integral to my thesis. Translating the lived intersections of self and all the

experience I have and what I have felt into an auto-ethnography of dance has allowed me to understand myself and the world and learn how we see and live in the world in multiple ways, and to investigate the distinction, if any, between my personal and professional voice. Embodying my self into the dance and the texts allows me analyse the dancer's bodily knowledge as a means to see, experience and interpret the world differently. This research interrogates my own dance practice, seen in terms of artistry and the ways in which I accept and also resist cultural categories, via the written practice of an auto-ethnographic method.

Generally speaking, dance, especially ballet, can be judged in its aesthetic formulation, its performance and its choreographer's or dancer's intention, because it is objectively constituted. This means simply that it is an object that can be appraised; it appears before the dancer as a phenomenon with visible structures and the role's characteristic qualities. At the beginning of most dances, the dancer tries to fit into the dance's objective rule, as Eugenio Barba describes:

Every performer who has chosen this type of theatre must conform to it and begins her/his apprenticeship by depersonalizing her/himself. S/he accepts a model of a scenic *person* which has been established by a tradition. The personalization of this model will be the first sign of her/his artistic maturity (Barba, 1995, p 13).

This concurs with my experience as a dancer and therefore, in this research, I describe how I as a dancer can be the object of the dance and how important the objective rule is for a dancer. So, drawing on Barba and Fraleigh's notions, I assume that this depersonalisation is an indispensable element for reaching the

non-practical quality of transcendence. Furthermore, once the dancer objectifies into the dance, a process that I also call the embodiment of the dance, she is required to go beyond technical objectivity and to express with her own embodied experience. Another way of putting this is to say that the objectified dance is finally subjectively realised in the dancer. There is a point where the dancer no longer has to focus on technique but goes beyond that stage and becomes one with the dance. At that moment she can embrace her subjectivity. I agree with Barba's that in terms of creative stages then personalisation is the next and vital step beyond the stage of depersonalisation.

In this study I reflect on how I as a dancer go beyond the objective requirement of technique and use my flow of energy to reach my presence and infuse emotion and feeling into my dance movement. As the body retains its subjectivity, even when it is objectified in dance, the experience of body knowledge and memory through the dancer's individual body, can never exist without the dancer's own personal subjectivity. As Fraleigh states: "In dance, human movement is objectified, shaped, or defined. However, once it is defined, there is the dancer's challenge and this is that I call 'transcend'" (1987, p 35).

Undertaking that challenge in terms of my own personal pursuit of transcendence, I have explored what I feel during the dance, what I sense more deeply inside myself. I argue that knowledge is gained through the senses of the body, related to the universal human process of kinaesthesia (Todd, 1937) but in my case experienced and translated through the cultural difference that I embody

as a singular dancer and researcher. The elaboration of transcendence in this research, both as a concept and an embodied practice, is an important example of this. Knowledge is the process of knowing, and I explore this process drawing on Michael Polanyi's theory of "personal knowing" divided into focal and tacit knowledge, where the former is the largely cognitive moment of when people focus on the new material to be acquired. Over time, however, this focal awareness becomes embodied, and this knowledge acts as subsidiary knowledge, which is integrated and made tacit knowledge. This is the second part of the process where the knower comes to dwell within the framework and has become the knower's "second nature" (Barba, 1995). I also borrow the Korean philosopher Bubjung's notion of non-attainment to explore how I experience the final stage of transcendence as a dancer with the second practical work called emptiness.

This investigation is also underpinned by the relationship between self-reflexive experience and the process of transcendence in dance. "Self-reflexive experience can be understood as one of the primary instruments of auto-ethnographic research" (Jeweet, 2006, p 3). The auto-ethnographical method is used in this research to examine the dancer's experiential perspective of "transcendence". It looks specifically at the moment of transcendence and the process by which this can be achieved in dance.

In my case, transcendence is the mysterious experience of the feeling of what happens to me during a dance. Transcendence itself is paradoxical, containing

seemingly opposing notions of fulfilment and emptiness, freedom gained from within the limitation of the rule, and so on. Furthermore, according to Korean philosophy, especially that of Bubjung, “true” (sic) transcendence leaves no conceptual trace – no trace of what has been transcended, what it has been transcended toward, nor any trace of the experience itself. Paradoxically, with transcendence, there is no need for anything, non-attainment is the best attainment.

Several paradoxical moments are to be found throughout this research as such as the coexistence of feelings of calm and turbulence in my inner self. These paradoxical experiences form part of the essential ingredients of the bodily knowledge that I have tried to explore and record throughout the research. Pearce describes transcendence in paradoxical terms as a movement into the unknown, where forms of transcendence are “concrete and abstract, material and ethereal, earthly and unearthly” (2002, p 223).

Inspired by Bubjung’s philosophy to investigate “emptiness” as the ultimate stage of transcendence, I then found converting my profound personal experience of transcendence into objective text as a facsimile of my experience to be a difficult task. To deal with this difficulty, my account of transcendence is described not only through written text but also through performance text, harnessing the pioneering methodology of auto-ethnography to move from the academic to the practical. The term transcendence as used here then, is not a key to be acquired, nor a tangible fact but rather, is a certain level of mysterious and

non-logical experience.

In addition, I have explored not only how the body becomes inscribed through cultural practices and training, but also how this body can operate over a much broader range, in that it is always waiting for potential development, buried beneath the inscribed disciplines of cultural, educational and technical restrictions. In my case, those rigorous rules of dance, again paradoxically, allow me to feel freedom. The technique, once internalised, provides the framework within which I can flourish.

What is more, when I am dancing there is a further paradox in that alongside the freedom enabled by adherence to rules, comes an impulsiveness that I can tap into. This energy potential, which lies hidden underneath all the rules I have to retain and with which I have been inscribed, finds expression in both the interior feeling of myself as a dancer and in my outward appearance. In other words, once I reach the level of freedom that comes only after acquiring the rule, then I can execute the movement in a more powerful and exuberant way than before. With that fundamental element – rigorously formed technique – the body is finally able to discover new and original modes of action, that rare capability to access the primal energy and bring it into fruition. Through this restriction I can amplify my body's power, endowing it with the capacity to blast through pre-existing frames of both thought and technique.

When at this level of dancing, it is as if I am not on stage, but a lion roaring

freely in a wild state across a vast open field. Throughout not only long-term practice but also with each moment of practice, the movement gradually gets stronger and accumulates in my body. When the movement reaches a certain level of strength and joins forces with a specific moment of presence, I finally feel the paradox of conformity at the same time as impulsiveness throughout my body. Without embodiment, which can be acquired through continuous practice and endeavour, I cannot feel that impulsiveness which is buried beneath the rules that I need to go beyond. Because, at that level, I am certainly aware of my bodily capacity to execute the movement and I feel free and comfortable enough with the movement that I can access my potential power, which is something I did not know until it actually appeared with my outer movement.

In this research, I interrogate my own dance practice within the broader frameworks of embodiment and the politics of culture. To explore this I also situate myself literally as being the “body of” my own “research”, challenging the conventional dualism of mind/body. The dance experience I analyse is my own, and within this subjective framework I attempt to verbalise my unspoken creative processes.

While I feel both freedom and impulsiveness through my body with dance, there is also another feeling I experience. Inscribed in me are all the restrictions, cultural and social (even though these are not legally enforced nowadays) that I have had to follow throughout my whole life, not only as a dancer but as a Korean woman. These are embedded in my upbringing as a member of the

YangBan Class. All of these seem to disappear when I am dancing and this is the moment of going beyond to a different level, and the moment of personal fulfilment.

In the tension inherent in the paradox of restriction and fulfilment that characterises my own creative project, lies the temptation to regard my response as a transgressive act, as a rebellious reaction to some culturally imposed limitation. For me, dance is my passion and love and also an exploration of my inner mind, arising from the desire for and exploration of movement. Dance pushes me beyond the possible limits of movement, movements which surround my body, space and time framed within the intensity of desire. Beyond these limits, dance exposes what is deep inside of myself, something that I did not think I would ever allow to be revealed. In this way, transcendence becomes a transgression of the cultivated side of myself, shifting the sensual limits of the social and cultural being that is Hyeon Jeong towards a different “raw” self.

For me, therefore, transcendence becomes the personal journey I take in order to reach this transformative moment of liberation from personal limitation, a place where I am free from all those concerns which are always inside me and burden me in everyday life. I still dance within a framework of rules, but on the other hand, paradoxically, I can feel freedom. It is freedom from the restrictive Korean woman’s life, from the rules I have to keep, from my level of self-esteem and it is freedom from myself in that my individual subjectivity is ingrained into the movement. For me, dancing is a freedom as well as a transgression away from

the straitjacket of a cultural repression and my own perception of a body politic that is part of this particular Korean female dancer's self reflection and image. Transcendence for me then, constitutes a breaking free that means going beyond everyday life, not to a place of excess, but on the contrary, to reach somewhere called emptiness.

When in this feeling of emptiness, I am in synchronicity with my inner state, and my outer movement represents my inner. When I feel emptiness, my fear about having to be flawless, and all the rules I need to follow as a dancer as well as a Korean woman, temporarily abate with the outer movement. It gives me concrete, personal knowledge of a level of my self that lies beyond my everyday physical and inner awareness. When I am dancing I feel emptiness but at the same time experience fulfilment – there is nothing I need to get from anywhere because there is no room for it. This again is a paradox: this feeling of fullness together with emptiness. I recognise that this is a contradiction, but it reveals that paradox, the ineffable or insoluble, is a key creative force at the heart of my practice and my project here, situated as it is in this dancer's complex experience.

At a more pragmatic level, transcendence is characterised by the contradictions and differences inherent in language. I explore here how to tackle this difficulty. How can I document this feeling of personal experience? How can dance, which is a composite of the moving body, be captured and further theorised about in a written text? What are the forms of writing that allow me to express the dancer's feeling as closely as possible? This written thesis and its accompanying

materials are my answer to the crucial research question that arises when one attempts to document ephemeral experience.

In this thesis I also explore how cultural memory is evoked and erased, confirmed and transgressed, through my own bodily knowledge and practice, intimately linked to my life as lived, including the indispensable factors of my gender as a woman and nationality as a Korean. This embodied experience shapes my cultural identity not only as a dancer but also as a Korean woman, and my deepest emotions are therefore in some part constructed by cultural milieu, value, and aesthetics.

Dance is created not only through its technical practice but also within the material contexts of its economic, cultural and political conditions that are constituted through power, perception and discourse. However, dance, although a cultural phenomenon, involves the instinctive emotions of pleasure, happiness, and sadness. Through dance, I recognise my body, feel my body not only as a cultivated entity, but also as an organic raw vehicle which gives me pleasure, a pleasure that is not experienced in everyday life. The way to transcendence is through a technical mastery gained over years of continuous practice and rigorous training. What I am arguing for here is that such transcendence in dance experienced and gained in this way can enable a dancer to go beyond the ultimately limited constructs of culture and gender. This is based on the new perspective on my individual inter-face with gender, culture and nationality, that I have discovered during the course of this research.

Ethnography has been criticised (Reed-Danahay, 1997; Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2000) on the grounds that none of the activities for the fieldwork such as watching, listening, asking or collecting data is neutral nor exists beyond the researcher's and the participant's own culture. Ellis (2004) argues that with the hidden author's own voice in the text it is dishonest to pretend that it is invisible and that instead people leave traces of their convictions all over a text.

Through my writing, the reader will be able to identify my outlook and convictions as well as following an account of my life. As this research is a qualitative study in which the researcher's own voice is involved in the texts, my own voice in this research produces an account that reveals more fully part of how we know what we know about the social world through my experience. I also argue that it cannot be judged with precise measurement as it is based on one dancer's expression of her experience. We also need to see each different genre of research with diverse eyes which can allow "reflective judgement" (Melrose, 2002, p 21). Using auto-ethnography, I have employed different aspects, written texts and performance texts including dance and speaking, of myself as "semblance" to record this subjective personal experience. Each method plays a different role in illuminating my experience but they are all interconnected and interrelated. With this synthesis, I am able to communicate with others – reader, viewer and listener – about my feeling of what really happens when I dance.

It is a premise of this project that my body movement contains what I cannot

express through written language and facts that I do not need to describe such as my gender, race, physical characteristics, etc. As Pillow argues: “bodies can speak, without necessarily talking, because they become coded and as signs they speak social codes. They become intextuated, narrativized; simultaneously, social codes, laws, norms, and ideas become incarnated” (2006, p 216). Dance is an art form, which has been with me longer than I have been without it. It has had a powerful impact on me and has been important for my life, not only as a dancer, but also as a person. Every movement I create, contains the personal process of my whole past, present and future; of my intentions, hopes, tenacity and passion, and many other things that illustrate these in a different way from my ability to describe them as a writer.

My spoken voice is included here as it conveys a complex nuance that cannot be gained through written texts. This nuance captures my feeling more than the text, and the viewer is able to connect with me and my words more empathetically. However, such knowledge emerging from this research process is described in this thesis in the form of theory, borrowing written language. In this research, theory has invaluable descriptive power by virtue of its capacity to describe the phenomena of my almost indescribable experience, serving to account not only for my experience but also existing theory to support my findings. This thesis conveys history, philosophy, personal account and its reflections, descriptions of performance and dance, and cultural context, which my dance also contains but which is too abstruse to express them on its own. Theory is one of the products along with dance, of this research and contribution of new knowledge, which

describes and communicates to others my experience of bodily knowledge. Thus, through performance texts I have shown what it is, while through written texts I have described what it is. Both texts document, record and analyse my bodily knowledge of what happens during the dance, which is an almost indescribable and undefined moment that only I can know first-hand.

In addition, from professional obligation this research is aimed not only at helping the reader to understand dance in general but also at making a contribution to people who are interested in dance, dancers, choreographers, ethnographers and especially people who are struggling with writing down their seemingly ineffable experience of dance. Furthermore, Ellis describes life itself as a dance: “the dance is the basis of all the arts that find their origin in the human body” (1914, p 184). In my case, I am writing about how dance is a reflection of my entire life; through my experience thus, it is not only about myself, but much more about the broader range of human experience that we are all part of and all we are interconnected with. What we do affects the world around us for good or for bad.

As my description of dance depends on my own experience, this research utilises self-evidence to develop dance as embodied practice, embodied experience, embodied knowledge, and embodied training. My auto-ethnographical approach also seeks to describe what is basic to every dancer. Even though I emphasise self this is not only about my own experience; it also ensures the crucial mutuality of influence between experiences of self, others

and the cultural milieu. Although writing is usually performed individually and often in solitude, it is performed by the author's sense of self which is necessarily accomplished in relation to his cultural milieu. As Coffey states, "Texts are written, crafted, shaped and authored by a knowing subject who has experienced the field" (1999, p 119).

To further contribute to a deeper understanding of the value of dance, which largely consists of the dancer's body movements as well as their individual invisible experience, it is important to be aware of what self is in order to know the primary instrument I have as a dancer – what I might call my body and my self: my nature, my body, myself, my emotional core, my spiritual core, my subjectivity, my experience and my life. The self as a locus of subjectivity is both individual, (formed by genetics, nurture and culture) and a human universal. The whole person, as understood in and constituted by a particular cultural and historical context, can be modified from culture to culture. As Press suggests, each one of us is a "social animal" (2002, p 46), born to live in relation with others.

I argue that the word transcendence is only a word that people invent like any other word. In this research, I have explored transcendence in my own way and I am not saying that there is a definitive state of transcendence that every dancer must experience in the same way. However, I can say for certain that it is a different level from my normal state when I am dancing. Other dancers may experience this in a similar way or in a completely different way or not

experience it at all even though some processes I mention are fundamental elements for a dancer. I would say transcendence is a gateway – with a different colour for each dancer – for experiencing infinite possibilities of dance and our development. My individual journey through this gateway, which only I can know, is what I have written about throughout this thesis. To write, to describe, and to stay within the experiential is a challenge and I use the autoethnographical method as a tool to describe this subjective experience.

I would argue that dance should not be judged on whether it is valuable, evaluated, or appraised. It is not a study about something urgent and indispensable to supporting life like food, water, air and so on. However, it exists all over the world, even in animal's lives, so much so that I would argue it is basic expressiveness. Charles Darwin supposed that lower evolution was carried out by art and he writes of the important part that “sexual selection plays in the ‘artistic activities’ of animals, including movements and the dance” (Darwin, 1899, p.410). Also in relation to humans, when children are really happy, they naturally hop. Even though my dance is slightly more sophisticated and cultivated than a child's instinctive hopping, through training, it is still part of dance which is everywhere in human existence.

This is an investigation of a dancer's bodily knowing of the specific moment, and to write about this experience compels me to reflect on what was happening during the dance experience rather than experiencing what is happening. In other words, even though I am honest about myself and my experience with the texts,

there is still the barrier of time and detachment that is always there. Depending on the moment in which I am writing, the texts might take a different shape. Thus, everything I want to say and I have explored and investigated is in my creative work as performance text and the auto-ethnographical written text then enhance the reader's (also viewer's and listener's) understanding of my research.

McFee (1992) points out how self is important in writing, giving the example of colour. He argues that if we say "it is red", which should be a means of stating something objective it can still be filtered by the listener's experience of colour. Also if someone colour-blind says, "it is red to me" and the other says, "it is green to me", neither of them contradict the other. They are both, as it were, describing their own perspective. Therefore, I would hope that the reader of my thesis responds not in terms of logic and semantics but on the level of feeling as I have done in this research because the subjective "I" is the essential element to explore and analyse the almost indescribable feeling of what happens to me when I dance.

I am not saying it is right or wrong but rather it involves my subjectivity, and I also hope the judgement is another subjectivity in this sense, that this research tends to "leave everything as it is [...], that while the judgement we make of particular dance may remain as they were, our understanding of them (and hence our self-understanding) is modified" (McFee, 1992, p 11). Thus, we need diverse eyes of "reflective judgement" (p 21) as suggested by Melrose (2002) to see our universality without blaming people for individual differences. As a

neuroaesthetic analysis of dance does not deny the cultural context within which specific dance forms emerge, but acknowledges that neural mechanisms are the same in all human beings, we should not deny the differences of individuality. I would argue that this is the way we should live in this world and reinforce the idea that non-attainment is the best attainment. This is how I see the world as a Korean, as a dancer, researcher, woman and daughter. Through this exploration of myself, I hope the reader can see how important it is to recognise how the visible is defined by the invisible through one's hidden knowledge, experience and one's life. My research is intended to contribute to the understanding of how people see the world differently and how we interpret differently through the particular discipline of a dancer's experience. I want the reader to see how I know where I am, what is happening to me when I am dancing, giving myself a voice of my own and how I open myself to sense from the outside when I dance from inside myself. However, the research goes beyond a merely personal account. The reader and viewer are invited to see how in broader ways a dancer acquires bodily knowledge, reflects cultural inscription in a dance, disentangles cultural yarns through dance and historical movement, and goes beyond all the prescribed rules a dancer embodies in the quest to become a unique and individual dancer.

My hope and intention is that the reader can understand how lived experience relates to the (in this instance) danced expression of feeling and emotion, and furthermore how this leads to the conclusion that lies at the heart of much creative enterprise, namely that invisible experience defines and ultimately

creates what is visible.

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Appendix 1

DVD 1.

The Creative Making Process:

Mirror of Water, Still Sky

This research analyses and documents the process of creating experience, as I reshape ballet and Korean dance through my body. This is illuminated by two pieces of dance titled *Mirror of Water*, *Still Sky* and *Emptiness*. These are accompanied by an address to camera titled *I Speak* given by myself with a view to creating “semblance” (Langer, 1953) in respect to the documenting process.

The first work is presented in the form of a dance film with a length of seven minutes and fifty two seconds, conceived, choreographed, directed and danced by myself, and produced by Park Sung-Hyun. The original music is composed by Kim Su-Chul and edited by Lee Mi-Ree. The film was recorded in Korea by the producer and edited by Kim Young-Jin and Lee Mi-Young. Kim Young-Bum was entrusted with the task of lighting in the studio and in the open air while Kook Chan was responsible for photography.

The second work, a fifteen-minute piece, was created and performed by myself in the MacMillan Studio of the Royal Opera House in London with a camera running and no operator.

The monologue *I speak* was filmed in Brunel University with the technical assistance of Graeme Shaw.

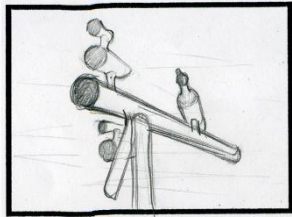
These three pieces of work, which can be regarded as performance text, function as primary data in this study alongside the written text. The dance works are therefore not only finished product but also serve as repositories of the creative

process involving training, practice, and rehearsal. The first piece *Mirror of Water, Still Sky* can be seen as stepping stones towards my second work, *Emptiness*, which represents my most condensed exploration of a transcendent experience. While these dance movements concern the voicing of myself through my body as a dancer, the monologue *I speak* is my personal voice as a Korean woman.

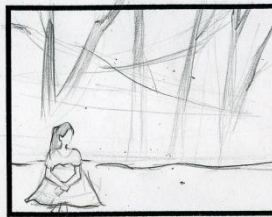
Appendix 2

A storyboard and Time Table for *Mirror of Water, Still Sky*

Prologue / SC 1~SC 2 at the school



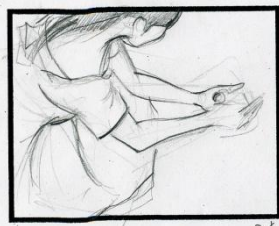
cut to medium shot of the pole



cut to dancer sitting on the ground



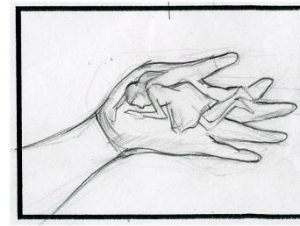
cut to close-up shot of the doll



Cut to dancer picking the doll up

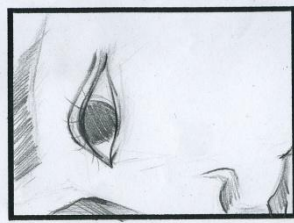


cut to dancer seeing the doll on her palm

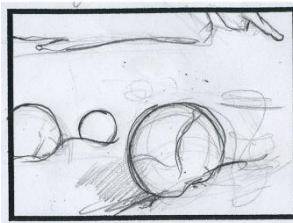


gradual close-up to her palm and the doll becoming the dancer

ACT 1/SC 3 LIFE at the school



Continuing close-up slowly up to her eye



cut to medium shot of the beads on the ground



texts and start of the dancing

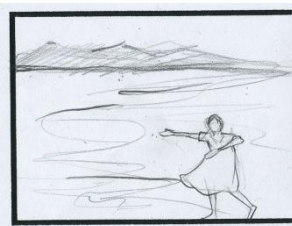
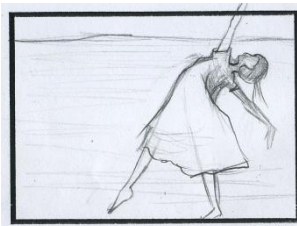


Dancing with strokes

ACT 1 / SC 4 LIFE at the sea – sandbank



Cut to close-up shot of the dancer



Cut to medium shot of the dancer

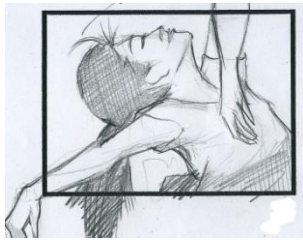
cut to long shot of the dancer at the sandbank

ACT 2 / SC 5 OLD at the sea



Cut to medium shot of the dancer walking into the sea

dancer dances in the sea



Gradual zoom-in of the dancer



Gradually zoom-out of the dancer

ACT 3 / SC 6 ~ ILLNESS at the studio with blue screen



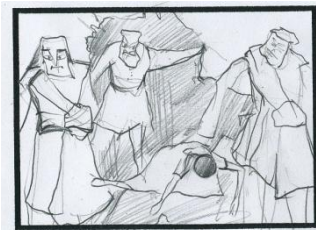
Computer editing



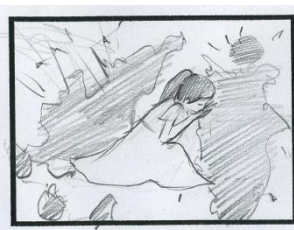
paper character



dancer suffering from death
computerised background



Cut to medium shot of the
dancer and characters



dancer facing life-
threatening illness



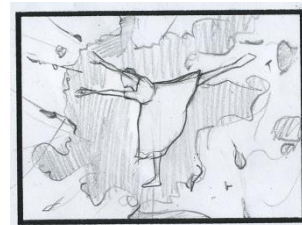
frightened by death



Medium shot of the
dancer without characters



the dancer and characters
appear again



the characters disappear

ACT 4 / SC 7 DEATH

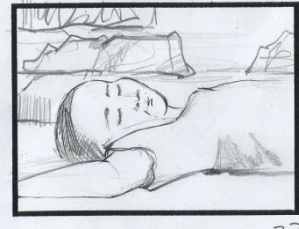


Texts

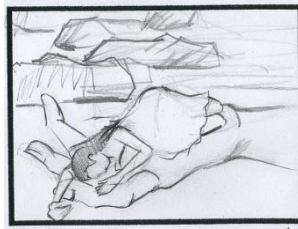


the characters gradually get bigger

Epilogue / SC 8



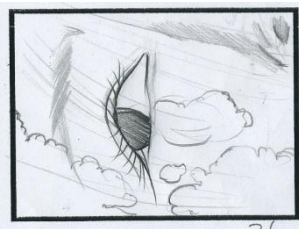
the dancer lying in front
of an oriental
landscape painting



close-up shot of the doll
on her palm



the dancer opens her
eyes



Gradual close-up to her
opened eye and the blue
sky dissolved



blue sky

Timetable for Mirror of Water, Still Sky

PROLOGUE and ACT 1 LIFE

	BEG	END	LENGTH	DESCRIPTION	ACTION	
SC 1	00.00	00.06	:06	Calmness	Pole, a bird's chirping	
	00.07	00.13	:06		Title, a bird	
	00.13	00.16	:03		Mud flat and sea	
	00.16	00.20	:04		A rock	
PLEASE NOTE: Dissolve the rock to scene 2. No sound music						
SC 2	00.20	00.29	:09	Quite	A dancer sits on sand	
	00.29	00.33	:04		A doll	
	00.33	00.42	:09		The dancer finds the doll and moves slowly to the doll	
	00.42	00.50	:07		Pick it up and stare	
	00.50	00.52	:02		Close-up the doll	
	00.52	00.59	:07		The doll becomes the dancer	
PLEASE NOTE: Motion Graphic Text. Dissolve the dancer to her face close-up						
SC 3	00.59	01.05	:06		Close-up up to her eye	
	01.05	01.11	:06		Beads	
	01.11	01.22	:11		Sits on sand, camera moves	
	PLEASE NOTE:					
	01.22	01.28	:06		Sitting on the sand	
	01.28	01.31	:03		Dancing with strokes	
PLEASE NOTE:						
	02.31	02.39	:08	Softness	Moving arms gently, softly	
	02.39	02.48	:09		Dancer's torso	
	02.48	03.14	:26		Dancer dance in full shot	
	03.14	03.43	:29		Wide shot	
TOTAL LENGTH 03.40						

ACT 2 OLD

	BEG	END	LENGTH	DESCRIPTION	ACTION
SC 2	PLEASE NOTE: Motion Graphic 03.40-03.47				
	03.43	03.48	:05		Moving slowly into the sea
	03.48	04.09	:21		Dancing inside the sea
	PLEASE NOTE: Motion Graphic 03.58-04.05				
	04.09	04.15	:16		Close-up dancer's face
	TOTAL LENGTH: 00.42				

ACT3 ILLNEDD

	BEG	END	LENGTH	DESCRIPTION	ACTION
SC 6	04.15	04.17	:02	Fear	
	PLEASE NOTE: Motion Graphic Text 04.17- 04.21				
	04.17	04.21	:04	Chaotic	
	04.21	04.35	:14		Paper character
	04.35	04.42	:07	Panic	Mental state
	04.42	04.46	:04		Thirst for life
	04.46	04.55	:09		Paper character + dancer
	04.55	05.01	:06		Dancer shivered with fear
	05.01	05.12	:11		Paper character + dancer
	05.12	05.19	:07		Dancer with fear
	05.19	05.31	:12		Paper character + dancer
	05.31	05.36	:05		Dancer thirst for life
TOTAL LENGTH: 01:16					

ACT 4 DEATH

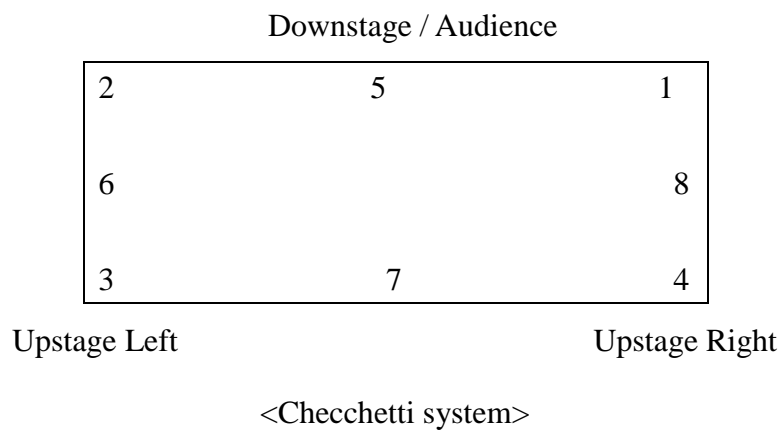
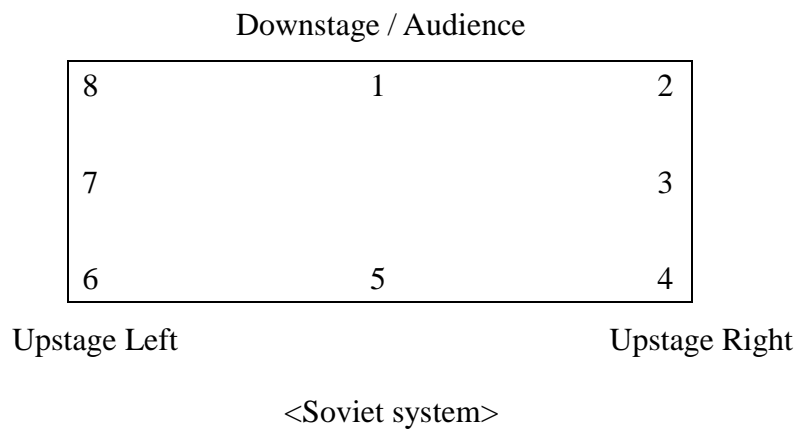
	BEG	END	LENGTH	DESCRIPTION	ACTION
SC	05.36	05.42	:06		Close-up dancer's face
1	PLEASE NOTE: Motion Graphic Text 05.36				
	05.42	05.45	:03		Jump, fall down
	05.45	05.49	:03		The dancer surrounded by character paper
					TOTAL LENGTH: 00:13

EPILOGUE

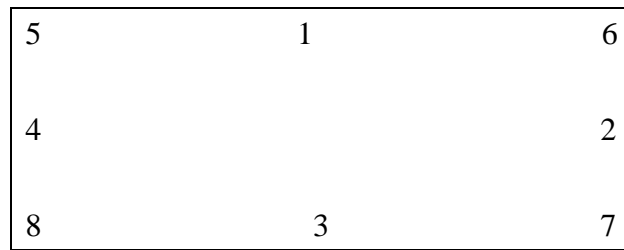
	BEG	END	LENGTH	DESCRIPTION	ACTION
SC	05.49	05.50	:01		Blank
8	05.50	05.58	:08		Dancer lies on her back
	05.58	06.11	:03		Doll on her hand
	06.11	06.14	:03		Camera moves slowly toward the dancer's face
	08.14	06.22	:08		Open her eyes slowly
					PLEASE NOTE: Dissolve her eye to sky
					TOTAL LENGTH: 00:33

Appendix 3

Ballet Directions and Numbering



Downstage / Audience



Upstage Left

Upstage Right

<Royal Academy of Dancing system>

Directions in ballet

Movement Direction	Static Equivalent
En avant (travelling forward)	Devant (in front)
En arriere (travelling backward)	Derrière (in back)
De côté (travelling sideways)	À la seconde (to the side)