

## DOCTORAL THESIS

### Maya Deren's screendances a formalist approach

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*Award date:*  
2009

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**MAYA DEREN'S SCREENDANCES:**

**A FORMALIST APPROACH**

**By**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

**PhD**

**School of Arts**

**Roehampton University**

**University of Surrey**

**2009**

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis establishes Maya Deren (1917 – 1961) as a screendance theorist and practitioner based on the formal attributes of her work. Acknowledging Deren’s multi-faceted persona as an activist, poet, dance enthusiast and photographer before starting to make films and as a documentarist, anthropologist and advocate of Haitian Vodou, the thesis focuses on the under-researched screendance qualities of Deren’s filmmaking practice. Accordingly, Deren’s six completed screenworks from the period 1943 to 1955 are analysed alongside her related publications.

The study aims to identify the distinctiveness of Deren’s theoretical viewpoints with a dual dance and cinema methodology that is primarily concerned with the formal parameters of the artist’s work; a formalist screendance perspective that addresses terminological and methodological issues related to screendance as an artistic genre. Furthermore, the study develops a formal model of screendance analysis that introduces new concepts and a vocabulary for the examination of screendance artistry. Through close investigation of the production stages of screendance, the kinetic and choreographic capacity emerging from the synthesis of dance with the cinematic medium is identified and analytically discussed in both visual and audio terms. The application of this model to Deren’s completed screenworks provides a new reading of her work which highlights its innovative screendance qualities. Overall, the originality and consistency of Deren’s theory and practice and its affiliation to screendance art in the 1940s and 1950s establish Deren as one of the earliest and most significant screendance theorists and practitioners.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

These are many, many people who deserve my utmost gratitude; my family, my friends my colleagues, my teachers. I am particularly indebted to my PhD supervisors Stacey Prickett, and Catherine Lupton, for their constant guidance, support, inspiration and criticism in every stage of this work. I also wish to thank the staff of Roehampton Learning Resources Centre, English Language Unit, Roehampton Educational Development Centre, British Library, Tate Library, and National Resource Centre for Dance, as well as the lecturers of MA Cinema Studies 2002 – 2004 in Roehampton University for allowing me to attend their classes. John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and George Thomas Tanselle deserve special note for providing me with copies of Deren's applications and correspondence with the foundation. This research would not have been realized without the financial support of the State Scholarships Foundation of Greece (IKY), Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation and Sofia and Lazaros-Panagiotis Tsafraridis. I am deeply grateful to Katia Savrami for sharing her knowledge with me by sensitive reading and commenting on different versions of my work. I am also indebted to the insight of Maria Tsouvala, who provided considerable impact for the preliminary formulation of this work. Furthermore, I would like to express gratitude, in no particular order, to those people who have helped me in any respect during the completion of my PhD: Jane Davies, Claire Parfitt, Janis Campbell Daly, Filio Lazana, Graham Welch, Giannandrea Poesio, Moira Sullivan, Christiana Galanopoulou, Konstantinos Veropoulos, Petros Tsafaridis, Konstantinos Pagiatis, Nikolas Tsafaridis, Berbolos. My parents Sofia and Lazaros, my brother Petros and my friends Luis De Abreu, Rafael Espinosa, Bazil and Beba deserve my deepest thanks and love, for patience and understanding as well as flashes of insight. This project would not have been feasible without the love and support of my partner and wife-to-be Evdokia Veropoulou who got me through the hardest moments.

## INTRODUCTION

### **The Focus – The Rationale**

This thesis discusses the artist and theorist Maya Deren (1917-1961) and attempts to formally describe and examine the screendance attributes of her film theory and practice. Based on the hypothesis that Deren is a screendance artist and that her theory is screendance art orientated, the research focuses on her six completed screenworks from the period 1943 – 1955 and her published writings related to these works. Aiming to identify the distinctiveness of Deren’s aesthetic approach to screendance, a dual dance and cinema approach is employed, that is primarily concerned with the formal parameters of the artist’s work.

‘Movement’ has always been my main interest and what first led me to the arts of music and dance, and finally to cinema. It was in my search for knowledge of movement that I came across Deren’s film works through the four part video series The History of Dance on Film and Video (Deren et al., 1996 – 1998), part of which was devoted solely to Deren. Having already completed six years of rigorous dance training when I embarked on postgraduate studies, my unexpected reaction to Deren’s work came as something of a revelation and what I have come to call a ‘Derenian shock’: a personal, artistic culture shock and the beginning of a lifelong interest.

This initial ‘shock’ raised a wide range of questions. Seeking more knowledge on the ‘Deren’ phenomenon, I found that there was a virtual lack of textbooks focusing on her work, especially on the choreographic qualities inherent in her film works. While my MA dissertation provided an opportunity to investigate Deren’s work and how my initial shock reaction was based on Deren’s uniquely innovative and complex approach to filmmaking, it became clear that this could not be fully explored within the limited time span and scope of MA study. Given my continuing fascination with Deren’s screenworks, I decided to pursue further research of the topic in this thesis. Further reading revealed that she was a much valued cinematic figure who worked in a male-dominated environment with

clear financial constraints and whose multi-faceted achievements and diverse interests included left-wing activism, poetry and Haitian Vodou rituals.

Regardless of the significance of Deren's literary and socio-political activities which have already been discussed, as is demonstrated in chapter two, my particular interest focused on investigating the reasons for my initial 'Derenian shock', how the formal parameters projected through her screenworks 'activated' me as a spectator, and how these relate to 'movement' and possibly to dance. While Deren's screenworks suggest her significant contribution to the realm of screendance, her work is nevertheless under-researched.

### **Maya Deren...**

Maya Deren (1917-1961) lived a brief but stormy life and had an artistically prolific career. She was an activist, poet, dance enthusiast and photographer even before starting to make films and in the last years of her life and work developed her anthropological interest in documenting Haitian Vodou culture.

The following section introduces Deren's multi-faceted persona, including brief biographical details. She was born as Eleonora Derenkowsky in Kiev, then part of the Soviet Union, on 29 April 1917, before emigrating with her parents to the United States in 1922 because of the pogroms against Russian Jews. There, her father, the psychiatrist Solomon Derenkowsky, changed the family name to Deren. Still as Eleonora, Deren completed the secondary school in Geneva, Switzerland and then pursued studies in journalism and political science in the University of Syracuse in the United States. There, she became an activist in the Trotskyist Young People's Socialist League where she met her first husband, Gregory Bardacke. They moved to New York where she completed her Bachelor of Arts in New York University in 1936, and separated soon after. In New York, Deren started producing art in the form of poetry, but, she admits, with no satisfactory results (Deren and Kulturaadmin, 2007 [online]). In the meantime, she studied English Literature at the New School for Social Research, a Master's degree that she completed at Smith College in 1939.

After her graduation, Deren returned to Greenwich Village in New York. While developing an interest in dance, in 1941 she approached the African-American choreographer and dance ethnologist Katherine Mary Dunham (1909 – 2006), who employed her as a personal assistant, general helper, secretary and promoter of the company. While in Hollywood with Dunham, Deren met her second husband, the filmmaker Alexander Hackenschmied (1907 – 2004), better known in the profession as Sasha Hammid. His surname change was prompted by Deren because she thought Hackenschmied sounded very Jewish. Notably, Hammid was also an emigrant who fled his home country, Czechoslovakia, because of Hitler. They got married in 1942 and it was he who suggested Eleonora's name change to 'Maya' after the Hindu goddess of illusion.

Thanks to Hammid, Deren was introduced to the art of filmmaking. Together, they created the celebrated Meshes of the Afternoon, in 1943. About one year later she finished her second screenwork, At Land (1944), but it was not before her third, A Study in Choreography for the Camera in 1945, that Deren attracted comments that identified the unique attributes of her work. These comments also applied to the rest of her completed screenworks: Ritual in Transfigured Time (1946), Meditation on Violence (1948), and The Very Eye of Night (1952 – 1955), and implied that the artist resisted classification. As the author, poet, and film critic Parker Tyler (Harrison Parker Tyler) (1904 – 1974) notes, Deren's "films take excellent strides toward a type of personal expression in cinema analogous to the lyric poem [...] and deserve the careful study of those who consider that movies can be art" (cited in Guggenheim and Deren, 1946<sup>1</sup>).

The poet, novelist, screenwriter and film scholar Robert Gessner (1907 – 1968) notes that Deren's work surpasses the already identified cinematic frameworks:

... I am struck by the unique quality of her work in this medium. Although it is simple enough to point out historically that she is in the tradition of the Avant-Garde school of the early twenties in Paris, she is so much further advanced technically and psychologically that historical allusions are for scholastic values only.

cited in Clark et al., 1988, 401

And finally, the dance critic John Martin (1893 – 1985), makes perhaps the boldest argument by identifying Deren’s particularity as affiliated with dance and what he names as the new art of ‘choreocinema’.

Deren’s approach to the dance film has long been awaiting discovery by some such sensitive artist. Heretofore, the dance has either been filmed unimaginatively as a straight record of a stage performance, or, on the other hand, has been cut up and distorted to make a cameraman’s holiday. In her approach, we have the beginning of a virtually new art of “choreocinema” in which the dance and the camera collaborate on the creation of a single work of art

cited in Clark et al., 1988, 286

### **The Aim**

Interestingly, Deren’s choreocinematic or screendance attributes, which Martin drew attention to as early as the 1940s, are still an under-researched area. Instead, it was other aspects of Deren’s multi-faceted persona, and her multi-angle screen artistry that attracted the attention of scholars. Her past affiliation with poetry prompted a poetic reading of her works, and led critics to assume a link with Imagism. Her personal acquaintance with major surrealist figures, like the author André Breton (1896 – 1966), and Marcel Duchamp (1887 – 1968), with whom she collaborated on a film that was never completed<sup>2</sup>, as well as the fact that her father was a psychiatrist, were some of the factors that prompted a psychoanalytic approach to her works. The mere fact that she was a woman creating art in a male-dominated artistic environment, attracted feminist and gender scholars. Finally, her anthropological work on Haitian culture, her audio recordings, the 18,000 feet of film on Haitian Vodou shot in the period 1947-1954, and her book Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti (1953) have drawn the interest both of anthropological studies and documentary making. Overall, there are only three brief studies that examine her work in relation to dance, and not one that examines all her screenworks, and her theoretical aspects through a formalist perspective that focuses on the unique screendance attributes. It is exactly this identified scholarly gap that the current thesis seeks to critically address and investigate, in order to contribute to a better understanding of Derenian theory and practice. Finally, the current approach, underpinned by screendance art, discusses and expands upon certain typological, terminological

and methodological issues raised, drawing on Derenian research, but also dance, cinematic and screendance scholarship.

### **The Method – The Structure**

To properly assess the hypothesis that Deren is a screendance artist and that her theory is affiliated with screendance art, it is essential first to identify the formal parameters of the art form. On these grounds, based on the dance documentarist and theorist Allegra Fuller Snyder (1965) and the film scholar, archivist and dance documentarist Virginia Brooks (2002), chapter one engages with dance on screen categorisation, identifying the formal parameters of the different types of dance-related screenworks, while clarifying certain related terminological issues.

Consistent with the initial line of argument of a dual screendance approach, chapter two investigates Deren's theoretical perspectives through cinematic and dance frameworks, concluding with a screendance discussion of her theory. The chapter begins with a review of the scholarly literature on Deren, and then engages with Deren's contextualisation within cinematic, dance apparatuses.

In the absence of any screendance methodological tool that focuses on the formal parameters of screendance, and with the aim of investigating further the properties of Deren's screendances, chapter three expands on the dance artist and seminal movement theoretician Rudolf von Laban (1879 – 1958), and his spherical approach and 'choreutics' to investigate dance as an art form and its reconstruction through the multi-layer cinematic processes. The identified screendance attributes are then assessed as to their screen-choreographic capacity, establishing at the end of the chapter a multi-layer formal model of screendance analysis appropriate for the investigation of screendance art.

Chapter four analyses Deren's six completed films through the screendance formalist methodological framework identified in chapter three. In this way, it offers a new reading of Deren's screenworks while at the same time, the applicability of the methodological framework identified in chapter three is assessed. Finally, chapter four provides the information necessary for assessing to what extent the screendance theoretical links established in chapter two are

verified through Deren's screenworks; consequently, the extent of her screendance artistry is identified, according to the typological parameters of screendance, as established in chapter one.

The results of the screendance formalist analysis of Deren's screenworks, along with the findings of the rest of the chapters, will be synthesised in the concluding chapter of this thesis to provide a better understanding of Derenian theory and practice, in particular, Deren's contribution to screendance. These concluding remarks will also include discussion of the way the contribution made by the current thesis could form a basis for advancing the research on Deren, but also screendance in general.

# 1 SCREENDANCE TYPOLOGY

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Maya Deren states in a ‘Cinema 16’<sup>3</sup> symposium in 1953,

I think [distinctions] are important in the sense that they give an audience or any potential audience, a preparation, an approach, to what they’re going to see ...  
Labelling things is not a matter of defining them so much as a matter of giving a clue to the frame of mind you bring to them.

Deren et al., 1970, 173

With a view to identifying the formal parameters of screendance art, this chapter provides a taxonomic classification of the characteristics that constitute the different types of dance on screen. It starts by outlining the screendance umbrella as defined by Allegra Fuller Snyder (1965) and revisited by Virginia Brooks (2002), who propose a three part typology. Discussing further this categorisation, the research engages with the terminological issues surrounding the screendance typology. Firstly the notion of factual as opposed to fictional filmmaking is identified, followed by what constitutes ‘dance’. Re-engaging with the Snyder and Brooks three-kind typologies, it is then developed a more detailed analysis of both the factual and the fictional dance on screen kinds. The investigation concludes by proposing a five part typological continuum that identifies the characteristics of each dance on screenwork, including screendance art which is the thesis’s focus.

## 1.2 TWO ENDS – THREE TYPES: SNYDER (1965) TO BROOKS (2002)

There are two broad types of dance on screen products, the factual and the fictional. The former refers to screendance products that are constructed with reference to the ‘historical world’ and that seek to mediate a certain aspect of this



world, whereas the latter refers to products that mediate an ‘imaginative world’, designed and constructed specifically for the creation of screendance art. Within these, scholars have identified several sub-categories.

Snyder is arguably the earliest scholar who discusses the ontological parameters of screendance in a detailed and concise manner. Her interest in the “wedding of dance and film” (1965, 34) explores the nature of screendance, the way its practice is related to the dance world, meaning staged/live dance, and how the latter can best benefit from the screendance realm. By criticising the trend of simply filming dance, which she notes as mainly being the definition of a dance film, and the misconception that no other kinds of dance films exist, Snyder concludes that not one but three kinds of film, which are diverse in nature, can be identified within screendance products. Upon providing the first systematic analysis of screendance mapping, the categories that Snyder proposes are the ‘notation film’, the ‘documentary’, and the ‘choreo-cinema’.

Regarding the ‘notation film’, Snyder notes that, as cinema was considered to be the most precise way of recording and reproducing an event, it was immediately “recognised as an accurate means of dance notation...” (Snyder, 1965, 34). She goes on to specify the purpose of the category and states that its focus is to produce a “record for study and partial reconstruction”, arguing that the ‘notation film’, along with music, “score notation, and (ideally) written dance notation, combined with indications of directorial emphasis on such matters as emotional and character portrayal, will give the performer materials for accurate reconstruction of a given work” (1965, 34). The ‘documentary’ dance film category, aims at “record[ing] the experience of seeing a dance on stage, using the natural selection of focusing and editing which the viewer’s brain and eye emotions do in a live performance” (1965, 35). In other words, it is a dance film mostly concerned with recreating the viewing experience of a dance event. Finally, ‘choreo-cinema’, a term attributed by Snyder to John Martin – a pioneer in the field of dance criticism and an advocate of modern dance in America – refers to the dance films where “film-maker and choreographer work together to create something which could not exist without a fusion of the two arts” (Snyder, 1965, 34).

Brooks, after having cited Snyder's three kinds of films, proposes three similar categories of dance on screen products. Unlike Snyder, Brooks approaches screendance typology as being a continuum rather than a matter of three separate categories.

Accordingly, record notation films are presented as one end of the continuum,

Produced with simple methods of filming, these motion pictures may be used for movement analysis in industry or medicine, for anthropological study of dance as ritual, or as records to supplement written notation for restaging and study purposes.

Brooks, 2002, 57-58

At the other end is situated what Snyder calls the 'choreo-cinema' category, "the creative interactions between film technique and dance: cinedance, choreocinema, or videodance. The purpose here is to allow filmmakers or video artists to express themselves in films or tapes that use dance as raw material" (Brooks, 2002, 58).

In between these there are what both Brooks (2002) and Snyder (1965) call the

... documentary films or translation films, which attempt to preserve the feeling of the performance. The purpose of these films is to present the dance as it was choreographed for live performance, maintaining and enhancing as far as possible the values intended by the choreographer, as expressed by the dancers, and as experienced by the audience in the theatre. The choreographer's art and the dancer's performance are being portrayed and presented.

Brooks, 2002, 58

The benefit of Brooks's continuum, as opposed to Snyder's categorisation, is the inclusion of works that cannot be easily classified as either of the aforementioned three categories, either because they may serve more than one purpose, for instance in different contexts, or because they incorporate elements that belong to more than one category. In addition, it demonstrates the fact that these

categories are related and interlinked, one being the continuation of the other. The diagram below is produced according to the above mentioned categories proposed by Snyder and Brooks, and in reference to the two broad categories of ‘factual’ and ‘fictional’ that the research proposes:



**Figure 1-1: Dance on Screen; 3-Part Typology**

Engaging critically in the above mentioned continuum, the discussion will now turn to other scholarship relevant to screendance classification. Prior to that, a clarification of terminology used will be undertaken.

### **1.3 ISSUES OF TERMINOLOGY**

Because of the fact that the terms used in the current text are open to debate and multiple interpretations, it is important to clarify how they will be used in the thesis. To start with, the ‘historical world’ as opposed to the ‘imaginative world’ is a key concept that should be specified so that the two ends of the continuum, namely ‘factual’ and ‘fictional’ are clarified as far as their attributes with reference to the cinematic apparatus. In addition, dance-related terminology, ‘dance’, ‘dance event’, ‘dance work’, ‘dance movement’ as well as the terms ‘choreographic’ and ‘kinetic’ will be discussed.

#### **1.3.1 Historical and Imaginative, Fact and Fiction in Film**

Film scholar and author Jacques Aumont (1992) argues that the concept of “factual” applied to film is fundamentally wrong, since the represented material is both spatially and temporally absent. What is perceived through screen is purely a spatiotemporal illusion that does not in fact exist in tangible terms and consequently, whatever is projected is actually fictional. On these grounds,

fiction film, according to Aumont (1992), is doubly unreal in that both the representer/signifier, meaning the actors and the *mise-en-scene*, as well as the represented/signified, namely the story/message conveyed through the performance, are fictional.

Although Aumont's claim that "every film is a fiction film" (1992, 77) is a valid argument, the way this thesis uses the term 'factual' as opposed to 'fictional', concerns purely the origin of that represented. Accordingly, while acknowledging that cinema is fundamentally unrealistic as to its tangible nature, by "factual film", the current text refers to films that are interlinked with the 'historical world', meaning that the totality of precedent events, whose existence is independent of filming (Nichols, 2001). 'Fictional' are films that portray an 'imaginative world' which is made up of events created through mental processes. These events may or may not include aspects of the historical world in a subordinate role to the fiction but overall constitute a constructed 'world' created for and by the cinematic medium.

Accordingly, in screendance terms, factual filmmaking corresponds to dance events that are part of the historical world of theatrical/live dance. In contrast, the fictional end of screendance products are projects on screen, with dance material that may resemble, be interlinked or have references to a certain dance event but that never existed outside the cinematic realm. The following discussion on dance terminology clarifies further the above mentioned.

### **1.3.2 Dance-related Terminology Explained**

Defining firstly what is arguably the broader of the dance-related terms, 'kinetic' is a term that describes "of or produced by movement" (Crowther, 1993, 497), a generic term that can be applied to anything that incorporates movement and that consequently is an inherent cinematic quality. The way this term is used by screendance scholars and within this thesis often draws attention to the cinema's capacity of reproducing movement as well as creating movement through the spatiotemporal manipulations available to the cinematic medium during the

creative process, formalistic attributes that are discussed in detail in chapter three. Similarly, dance, among all artistic expressions, is arguably the most movement orientated and therefore the most kinetic. However, whereas all dance is kinetic, not all kinetic instances can be considered dance.

Delineating the ontological parameters of dance is a daunting endeavour primarily for two reasons. Firstly, dance's historical and cultural attachment prevents it from acquiring a very specific and static identity: "Dance grows out of culture and feeds back into it" (Fraleigh and Hanstein, 1999, 6). Secondly, dance is a multifaceted term used in a number of diverse contexts, like ritual, recreational, therapeutic, and/or theatrical, among other things (Adshead and Layson, 1994). It is due to the aforementioned that there is no definition that cannot be challenged as to its inclusion, as well as its exclusion parameters. No one can argue with certainty that the exact same notion of dance applies cross-culturally as well as trans-historically, or even between two individuals of the same cultural and historical origin. What the research argues instead is that, beyond every complexity, there are fundamental elements that constitute an overarching definition of dance.

Demarcating dance from the other human expressions, John Martin writes that "all dance is essentially one in so far as it is the externalization of the inner, emotional force of some kind in terms of bodily movement" (1965a, 26). On the same grounds, the philosopher and art theoretician Suzanne Langer (1895 – 1985) claims in 1955 that dance "creates a world of powers, made visible by the unbroken fabric of gesture" (1957, 10). The philosophy educator and theorist Graham McFee (1992), stresses the issue of contextualisation of human movement, acknowledging that, beyond gesture, the definition of dance is mostly a notion based on the presented and received parameters. As he states, "Any movement sequence put forward as dance and accepted by others is indeed dance" (1992, 72) "whether or not movement sequence X is indeed dance depends, roughly, on whether or not it is called dance by the society which gives rise to it" (1992, 287). The dance professor and author Sondra Horton Fraleigh, narrows down the notion of dance to "qualitative movement intentionally given special forms" (Fraleigh and Hanstein, 1999, 16), emphasising the intended

aesthetic dimension that every movement should acquire in order to be defined as dance. As she argues, “Dance is not just any movement, but movement that has been created for some particular purpose... all dance is the product of human invention.” (Fraleigh and Hanstein, 1999, 6), stating that “...dance is movement that is primarily marked by its aesthetic character (its qualitative dimensions)” (Fraleigh and Hanstein, 1999, 7)<sup>4</sup>.

Unifying the above standpoints on the nature of dance, two main elements emerge as being inherent to dance’s identity. First and foremost, dance comprises human activity, which is specifically externalised through human body movement. However, not all human movement activity is considered dance. As suggested by the aforementioned scholars, the movement should be accompanied by an intended aestheticism in the sense of an intended quality (Fraleigh and Hanstein, 1999). Thus, the second key element for recognising dance is that the activity is not performed merely for functional and/or exercising reasons but also for aesthetic/qualitative reasons that are expressing inner thoughts and emotions or simply to communicate an idea or a format as will be extensively analysed in the next chapter. Consequently, dance is defined as the form of human expression that uses primarily, if not exclusively, human body movement as its channel of communication. Whereas dance movement is the primary component of a dance work, it is not the only one. Other observable elements are the general visual setting – scenographic elements, as well as the aural environment, often in the form of music. The above mentioned dance components, along with a discussion of the dancer’s physiology, constitute the four strands of every dance performance as originally proposed by the practical dance scholar and lecturer Valerie Preston-Dunlop (1986), and developed by dance professor and theoretician Janet Adshead-Lansdale (1988); the model will be extensively discussed in chapter three.

In addition to all the foregoing, ‘choreography’, a term often misinterpreted within screendance scholarship, also needs clarification. Looking at the etymology of the word, one realizes that it is a word modelled on the Greek words *χορός* (choros) ‘dance’ and *γραφία* (graphie) ‘writing’. Literally meaning

‘dance-writing’, it is mostly used to refer to dance composition, in other words, creation of dance, as will be later discussed.

## **1.4 FACTUAL SCREENDANCE**

### **1.4.1 Dance-Notation Films: definition**

The dance-notation film, which is situated at the factual end of the proposed factual-fictional screendance continuum, is the least problematic to define. Being a factual dance film, constructed with regard to the historical world of dance, its purpose is to document audio-visually a specific dance work or, to be more exact, a particular performance or performances of a specific dance work. The difference between the two is, as professor of dance ethnology and notation Judy Van Zile (1985) notes, that the dance work refers to the dance composition as intended and conceived by the choreographer, while the dance performance refers to the way this conception is performed by the dancers, which includes at least the idiosyncrasies of individual performers, if not any mistakes that may occur during the performance; although the latter may be corrected with the re-filming of the problematic dance sections. However, this is not to say that a dance work can only exist in the creator’s abstract conceptual terms, a dance work is not a product, unless it is manifested through a performance. What is noted instead is that performance is, in essence, a recreation of the choreographer’s creation. As the choreographer Carl Wolz notes, being a ‘former’ “one who “forms” (creates), and the dancer a “performer,” i.e., based on “per-,” meaning “through,” one who creates through the work or idea of another” (cited in Zile 1985, 43). Thus, acknowledging the limitations of the dance-notation film process which utilises the supposed reproductive fidelity that the cinematic medium can provide with reference to audio-visual text, the dance-notation film is a product that seeks to preserve a certain dance work through registration of dance performance of that work, for reasons that can vary from archival, informative, research to other purposes.

### 1.4.2 Dance-Notation Films: technique/style

Being fundamentally a scientific tool of audio-visual registration, it is essential that certain stylistic parameters are appropriately employed to fulfil the dance-notation film's purpose; Brooks refers to them, rather vaguely, as "simple methods of filming" (2002, 57-58). Specifying these, one realises that they are in fact, as complicated as any other filming style or method. Overall, it is argued that dance-notation film should aim towards the detailed registration of all four strands of a dance work – namely the movement, the dancers, the visual setting, as well as the aural elements – that constitute the dance (Preston-Dunlop, 1986). Personal study and experimentation have resulted in the following methods of audio-visual registration as the most appropriate for the dance-notation film's aims.

Concerning the visual parameter, it is firstly proposed that a wide depth of field – the distance in front of and beyond the subject that appears to be in focus – be employed. Through the technique of deep focus, sharp images of foreground and background action as well as the scenographic elements are registered in great detail, regardless of the distance of the depicted object from the camera<sup>5</sup>. Along with deep focus, the angle of the lens used approximates naked eye vision as much as possible in order that spatial arrangement and size ratios resemble real space and depth ratios. The use of 'normal lenses' is proposed as being the most appropriate, because they generate images whose perspective appears closer to reality than one of lenses with longer or shorter focal lengths – telephoto and wide-angle lenses correspondingly (Monaco, 2000, 78-86). In addition, it is significant that the colour balance – the adjustment of the relative amounts of red, green, and blue – registered by the camera is adjusted so that the displayed image reproduces colour accurately; in that way the colours on screen will correspond to the naked eye colour tonalities. Also in relation to external lighting, consideration can be placed on the correct luminance values of these colours – the brightness intensity "the reflected light of the visual image on the screen" (Bognár, 2000, 148). In addition, attention can be drawn to the contrast values – the "ratio of two brightness levels" (Bognár, 2000, 59), of the notated dance



work to approximate the ones existing in reality during the performance. In other words, it is significant to pay attention to the related dynamic ranges between the actions and/or the objects of the registered image, so that both the darker and the lighter areas are adequately and accurately registered.

Thus, in reference to the visual parameter of the registration of a dance, the use of normal lenses along with the technique of deep focus and the attention to contrast – namely brightness and colour values – that approximates reality, can provide a maximum and accurate registration of the visual detail of the dance work.

Having taken into account all of the above technical parameters, the framing of the shots is another area worthy of discussion. The dance-notation film should aim at full body capturing, meaning framing that includes the whole body for maximum visibility and comprehension of the movement performed. It is also fundamental to include the shots that frame all the participating bodies simultaneously, so that the spatial relation between the performers is established. Finally, in registering the performing environment in its totality, framing all the visual strands of the dance work ideally from all four sides of the work – front, back, right and left – and with an additional film registration from above, provides useful information as to the floor pattern inscribed by the performers.

To conclude with the visual parameter of dance-notation film registration, in terms of shot duration and edition of the captured material, all cameras should be able to cover the whole dance in a single take, equivalent to the duration of the dance. In turn, all of these takes should be accessible for study, without having been cut during post-production of the film. Arguably this would apply only in an ideal situation where the resources are unlimited; nevertheless as technology gets more cost effective, these projects seem more feasible.

Regarding the audio dimension registered through dance-notation film, there are also a number of parameters of significance. Firstly, it should be synchronous to the image, thus temporally interlinked with the visual registration. Secondly, it should be of high fidelity, a parameter which refers to the clarity and accuracy of

sound with the highest range of frequencies, and corresponding amplitude values, namely sound volume. Thirdly, the totality of sound should be registered – pre-recorded sound, human sound (e.g. breath, voice), activity sound (e.g. footfalls), and any other environmental sound. The fourth parameter concerns the placing and proximity of sound, registration and reproduction so that the dance-notation film will duplicate the sound's orientation, so in addition to synchronicity of sound, there is also a precise spatial correspondence between the visual and the audio strands of the dance. Finally, as with the visual parameter, audio registration and duplication should be continuous and equal in duration with the corresponding, notated dance work.

Apart from the aforementioned methods/techniques of audio-visual registration that have been discussed and proposed that focus on the maximum registration of information about the visual and audio strands of the dance work, it is considered fundamental that the dance-notation film benefits from an accessible and flexible format. Ideally, the researcher, in addition to being able to revisit any image or sound that constitutes the performance, s/he would preferably have the ability of instantly shifting between the materials provided through the registration process. Accordingly, in visual terms, s/he could view any camera angle required, zoom in and out of the image as well as change the speed of the image projection. In audio terms, it means that s/he could access the sounds as registered through the different microphones and, specifying clearly their source, could amplify or reduce them according to the research needs as well as change the rate of reproduction – decreasing or increasing the speed. A highly demanding and most probably unaffordable project for most dance productions, it is nevertheless possible due to today's computer technology, DVD authoring and playback software advancement.

### **1.4.3 The Multifaceted Dance Documentary**

Moving towards the fictional end of the continuum and the more creative approaches, the discussion is concerned with what Snyder (1965) calls 'documentary' and Brooks (2002) 'documentary or translation' film. Being a

factual film category, which records and projects a specific dance event, dance documentary seeks, instead of simply registering a dance work, to preserve the spectatorship experience of the staged performance. Thus, the focus shifts from purely descriptive and objective dance notation film, to experiential – dance documentary. However, in contrast to ‘notation film’, the term ‘documentary’ used by both Snyder (1965) and Brooks (2002) among others is problematic as to its definition in reference to screendance, because of the inherent attributes it acquires from film documentary in general.

Examples of factual filmmaking can be traced back to the advent of cinema in the 1890s. Among the earliest documentaries were travelogues, newsreels, instructional filmworks and general recordings of the world, like *L'arrivée d'un Train À la Ciotat* (trans. Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat) by The Lumière Brothers, premiered in 1895. However, it was not until 1926 that ‘documentary’ as a term acquired its present attributes. John Grierson (1898 – 1972), who is considered one of the founders of British documentary<sup>6</sup>, seems to have appropriated the word to apply to Robert Flaherty’s *Moana* (1926). Accordingly, documentary films are the screenworks that are constructed by scenes not acted but taken/recorded from the historical world<sup>7</sup>.

In a more analytical mode, recent scholarship views documentary as a multi-function and multi-mode domain. The historian and theoretician of documentary film Bill Nichols (2001) identifies six primary modes: poetic, expository, observational, participatory, reflexive and performative<sup>8</sup>. However, as Nichols (2001) also notes, these are not watertight categories but rather certain modes of filmmaking that demonstrate the wide array of structural and aesthetic possibilities provided by documentary filmmaking. What is also emphasised through this categorisation is the common axis among all documentary modes in their association with the historical world. Overall, if the “sound and images have their origin in the historical world we share [... meaning] they were not conceived and produced exclusively for the film [imaginative world]” (Nichols, 2001, 35), then the film can be characterised as documentary; what film and television theorist Stella Bruzzi identifies as “...a negotiation between filmmaker and reality...” (2000, 154). In other words, a film that speaks, through the

historical world, about the historical world (Nichols, 1991). On the above grounds, and by definition, dance documentaries refer to, observe, address, examine and or comment on the world of dance as manifested within the historical-factual world. While the boundaries of the factual world for wildlife documentary are clear and the raw material of the film could be primarily scenes of the life of an animal group in the Amazon River, in the case of dance, the boundaries of the factual are hard to define, especially when the case under discussion is theatrical staged dance.

Revisiting Aumont (1992) and his discussion on representer and represented, it has been proposed that, in screendance terms, factual corresponds to a dance event. Whereas this seemingly conflicts with the notion of natural/un-acted material (Grierson, 1998), it is argued that, in a dance event, the represented staged, fictional material is factual filmic material. It is performed at a specific time and place; – experienced by the sum of people involved in the performance as well as the spectators; – it has an ephemeral existence; bound by spatiotemporal actuality; – and it is part of the cultural history of the world, therefore legitimate material for documentary making.

Therefore, the parameters between the factual and the fictional in screendance terms do not rely upon whether the recorded material is staged or not but whether the dance material recorded is staged for live theatrical purposes or for cinematic ones, thus it depends on the relation between the dance material and the film process. The less the former is constructed for or influenced by the process of cinematic registration, the more it can be considered to be ‘natural material’, and vice versa. It is on these grounds that the filming of a performance, which has an autonomous and independent existence from the cinematic apparatus, acquires factuality and is considered a dance documentary by Snyder (1965) and Brooks (2002). What remains to be further established is the difference between the ‘dance documentary’ and ‘dance-notation film’, which is also a factual film that registers dance material, but it is practised for different purposes and therefore within different parameters.

#### 1.4.3.1 Dance Documentation and Documentary Defined

Snyder defines dance documentary as the recording of a dance work with the intention of reproducing the “experience of seeing a dance on stage” (Snyder, 1965, 35), in other words “The documentary dance film is... the experience of dance itself.” (1965, 39); meaning the creation of a screenwork which has a specific, recorded dance event as its sole material and which, furthermore, seeks to preserve it both in formal and aesthetic parameters as well as in terms of experience.

Expanding further on the principles, Snyder proposes,

The good documentary dance film-maker adds without adding, for in transformation from actual theatre to film, the dance goes from a three-dimensional medium into a two-dimensional medium. The film-maker makes up for the loss of that dimension. He does not add a new dimension of his own, but rather he puts back through his cinematic resources the dimension that was lost in the transfer.

Snyder, 1965, 36

It is upon these lines that Snyder considers Fred Astaire as one of the “greatest documentary dance film-makers” (1965, 36); meaning not that Astaire was in fact a dance documentary maker, neither that his films were dance documentaries as such. Instead, she argues that the directorial decisions Astaire applied to his filmed dance numbers were actually the best filmmaking approach if one wanted to recreate the experience of seeing Astaire dancing live.

As the art and film historian Richard Griffith (1912 – 1969) notes, among Astaire’s innovatory directorial principles are

... that the camera keep his whole figure in frame virtually through a dance number. Close-ups and long- shots do appear in the dances when strictly appropriate, but since, like [Charlie] Chaplin, his dance miming consists of a range of movements and gestures of the whole body, close-ups or extreme angles would miss much of what he projected.

cited in Snyder, 1965, 36

Brooks's (2002) definition of documentary film or translation film also emphasises that the purpose of dance documentaries is the preservation of a dance performance. The only difference between the two should be that "The dance is on screen instead of on stage" (2002, 58). In addition to that, she emphasises that, what should be recreated on screen is, apart from the work, the experience it conveys, the "feeling of the performance" (Brooks, 2002, 58).

As both Snyder and Brooks agree, it is fundamental that a dance documentary is made up of the recording of a specific dance event and for the purposes of preserving this performance's effect. It is therefore essential that not only the raw material filmed originates from a performance that has its own entity as an artwork, but in addition to that, this material should be cinematically manipulated according to the aesthetic parameters, the compositional strategies, and the artistic intentions the staged performance acquires, to the greatest possible extent. Issues like the flattening of the depth dimension, the fact that the spatiotemporality is not anymore shared between the viewer and the performance and that the screen receiver experiences the dance work through a different viewing structure to the stage dance receiver, are only some of the parameters that should be taken into account.

Ed Emshwiller, a filmmaker best known for his practice as a painter, called this kind of documentation a "dance film" (Emshwiller, 1967, 25), a recording of a dance which he compared with the process of sound recording of a musical performance, which aims at preserving the performance as experienced in reality. That is not to diminish the aesthetics involved in either the work of the director or the music producer respectively. They are after all responsible for transforming while preserving the aura of an ephemeral artistic act. However,

their aesthetic approach should comply with the intentions of the creator of the original work.

The only problem raised by Snyder and Brooks's terminology is that their dance documentary definitions cannot be applied to documentaries that, despite being dance-related, do not deal with the exclusive documentation of a specific dance event. Examples are screenworks like No Maps on My Taps (Nierenberg, 1979), Dancemaker (Diamond, 1998), New England Dances (Bishop, 1990), and Rhythm is it! (Grube and Lansch, 2004) which may feature dance projects in the process of making and that may focus on dance teachers and/or choreographers, or any other social, historical, or anthropological, dance-related subject matter; documentaries that deal with the subject matter of dance as a form of expression in a wider framework. In other words, screenworks that discuss dance-related issues may include dance performance but they are not exclusively recordings of a specific dance event.

To distinguish between Snyder's dance documentary of a filmed dance event and the dance documentary that is generally dance-related, there have been many terms used, especially within festival frameworks where a categorization of the filmworks was needed. IMZ – International Music + Media Centre – festival 'dancescreen2005', for instance, used the term 'Live-performance relay' and 'Documentary' to distinguish between the two, while the philosopher and film aesthetician Noël Carroll talks about the former as being "moving-picture dance reconstructions" (2001, 55) since he argues that they "recreate the impression of the dance" (2001, 56).

However, as previously established, the dance in this category is not reconstructed. Reconstruction suggests that the original is absent-destroyed, and that recreation is attempted through the information available – like a series of renaissance court dances would be, for instance. Instead, it is a category that represents rather than reconstructs, since there is a strong indexical liaison, a physical and existential bond between the original, the referent and what in effect is a representation (Nichols, 1991, 149). It is rather a matter of documentation, since the material used to create the film is an imprint of the original similar to

the way that a sound recording is documentation of a live sound. On these grounds, this thesis proposes ‘dance documentation’ as the most concise, appropriate and simplest term to specify the category of films that seek to document and recreate a staged dance performance, and ‘dance documentary’ as the most explanatory term to define the general documentary filmworks that make use of the factual, historical world of dance.

Therefore, the following three categories are schematized so far. In close reference to a specific dance event, the category of ‘dance-notation film’ seeks objectively to register a dance event acquiring the most audio-visual information possible. Also, regarding a staged event, ‘dance documentation film’, aims at registering and evoking a live dance event’s impact and/or experience. Eventually, the third factual category of dance-related films is ‘dance documentary’, which deals with the wider dance realm.

## **1.5 FICTIONAL SCREENDANCE**

### **1.5.1 Screendance Art, the Far Right End**

The screendance art realm, Snyder’s (1965) choreo-cinema category, is situated at the far right, namely fictional end of the continuum, in agreement with Brooks (2002). As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, it is the art where “the film-maker and choreographer work together to create something which could not exist without a fusion of the two arts” (Snyder, 1965, 34), an art which emerges through “the creative interactions between film technique and dance” (Brooks, 2002, 58). As a category, it is the most discussed, being defined in diverse ways, thus acquiring an array of explanatory terms, such as choreo-cinema, cinedance, videodance, and moving-picture dance constructions, to name but a few.



### 1.5.2 ‘Screendance’ as a Term and Terms of ‘Screendance’

Engaging critically in terminology, cine-dance was historically the first most widely used term as largely demonstrated through the homonymous 1967 Dance Perspectives issue. Along with ‘cine-dance’, ‘choreocinema’ was also a term introduced by John Martin in 1946, in response to Maya Deren’s work A Study in Choreography for Camera (1945). This was mainly because, at that time, up to the 1960s, cinema was the only widely used means of reproduction of audio-visual text, and therefore, the only way that synthesis of dance with motion-pictures could be achieved.

However, when video technology entered the screen apparatuses, the cinematic practice that used filmstock for its recording and reproducing needs was largely abandoned by screendance practitioners. ‘Cine-dance’ gave way to ‘videodance’ practice. As media industry executive and educator Richard Lorber (1976) notes – one of the earliest scholars who deals with the videodance phenomenon and its ontology – with the advent of video in the early 1960s, the dance world found an artistic partner which could be easily accessed due to its technological attributes – direct playback, lightweight equipment relatively easy to use – as well as its financial affordability. Consequently, the number of people involved with screendance art multiplied and so did the writings on the subject of videodance; Richard Lorber (1976), Vera Maletic (1987b), Annie Bozzini (1991), Claudia Rosiny (1994), Sherril Dodds (1997a, 1997b, 2004), Katrina McPherson (1997, 2006a, 2006b), Douglas Rosenberg (2000a, 2000b) are a few of the contributing scholars.

Arguably, discussing videodance as a continuation of cine-dance is problematic, on the grounds that video-making is a completely different practice than film making. However, it is also argued that both video and cinema, being mediums of moving pictures, are fundamentally aesthetically similar and their formal distinctions are limited. Douglas Rosenberg – a screendance scholar and practitioner, among other things – specifies the main difference between video and cinema is in the picture quality, a difference that is currently obsolete. “As the quality and resolution of video has improved in recent years, the boundaries

between film and video practice have begun to diminish” (Rosenberg, 2000b, 277). Correspondingly, video practitioner Bob Lockyer (2002), from a creative perspective, argues that the language of film and video making, despite its technological differences, is fundamentally the same. The term he uses instead of cine-dance or videodance is ‘Dance for the Camera’, “a dance work that uses the film/video vocabulary, not one that could be seen on stage” (Lockyer, 2002, 159). This term, rather than referring to the cinematic or video technology, makes reference to the camera machine, which under normative use is part of both cinematic and video practices. Commenting on terminology, Rosenberg notes:

... *dance for the camera* is an inclusive term that refers to any and all dance created specifically for the camera, either in the medium of film or video... *cine-dance* is a term that refers to work made in the medium of film. *Video dance* which refers to work made for the camera using the contemporary medium and practices of video technology. All three terms refer to the art of creating a choreography for the camera, to be viewed as a fully formed, autonomous work of art, ultimately, either on a film screen or television.

Rosenberg, 2000b, 276-277

The term ‘dance for camera’ is also beneficial due to the fact that it is not as technologically specific as cine-dance or videodance, since, no matter which technology is used for screendance art making and what the medium is – film, video, digital processes – a camera is part of the practice. An exception from camera practice might be the films that use exclusively painted animated dance. However, as will be later established, it is highly problematic for such products to be considered screendance art practice, in the first place.

The main issue raised in regards to the term ‘dance for camera’ is that it specifically refers to a certain production stage, or more specifically, to a certain tool of the process, the camera. On these grounds, one could argue that ‘dance for the editing suite’ or ‘edited dance’ is an equally valid term. However, all of the aforementioned assign significance to the visual recording stage or to the

visual post-production creative processes correspondingly. What is needed instead is an all-inclusive term, representative of the medium as a whole.

‘Screendance’, a term used early in 1946 as two words (Library of Congress, 1946), is proposed by Rosenberg (2000a) as the most appropriate term.

Dance For Camera is an overarching framework within which there seem to be a number of sub-categories. The term SCREEDANCE [sic] seems at this point a better term to describe dance created specifically for the screen rendered in either film, video or digital technologies.

Rosenberg, 2000a, 3-4

Although it also refers to a certain part of the cinematic, video, or digital process, it is not anymore a stage within the creative process, or one of its tools, but the final stage, the screen through which the receiver experiences the artwork. In addition, it draws attention to the fundamental difference between ‘stage dance’ and ‘screendance’, which is the performing and mediating space of the arts, three dimensional space and two dimensional screen, respectively – both accompanied by conventions that will be revisited in chapter three. Therefore ‘screendance’, beside the technological evasion and the inclusion of all of the present ways of creating and mediating screendance artworks, also encapsulates all the different ways in which these artworks may be received, which can be via cinematic, video, or digital screenings as well as through more domestic screen mediums, such as television and personal computer monitors.

Finally, ‘screendance’ takes on board the fact that, due to current technological advances and digital technologies, it is sometimes impossible to define which format has been used during the creation of a screen product today (Rosenberg, 2000b), and that often multiple processes are employed. It is, thus, mainly the reception parameter, namely the screen – and the accompanied speakers, if required, that can be specified with certainty, and are easily distinguishable so that the ontology of the product can be defined.

Objections concerning the use of the term 'screendance' have been identified by Carroll (2001) who introduces yet another term, that of 'moving-picture dance constructions'. His argument against screendance is based mainly on two issues. The first concerns technological issues of viewing, whereas the second focuses on future practices of screendance art. Firstly, he argues that films do not need to be screened. He cites early viewing conditions and the kinoscope, where positive film<sup>9</sup> moving past a peephole provides the image projected. "Edison originally had the idea that films would be shown at peep shows, on devices that we would now call movieolas" (Carroll, 2001, 50). Along the same lines, he argues that the notion of screen is mistakenly applied to televised images, since the image is projected through the glass and not onto it (Carroll, 2001).

Discussing Carroll's first argument on the inappropriateness of using the term 'screen' in instances like televised or computerised images, one finds it groundless, since screen is not defined strictly in cinematic terms, as Carroll (2001) argues. Screen is a multi-faceted term that, as a noun embraces all screening methods, including the slide or film projection screen as well as the computer or television screen (Crowther, 1993).

The second main reason he provides against 'screendance' terminology is that "the concept does not seem to be well prepared for the future. For we can readily imagine holographic dances and dance in virtual reality... that will not require screens" (Carroll, 2001, 51). Whereas screendance category as a notion is perhaps not representative of a kind of dance such as holographic dances, it is also debatable whether it needs to be. No one can speak about the future with certainty and it is debatable whether holograms or three-dimensional virtual reality share enough formal characteristics with the rest of the screen/visual mediums to be discussed under the same umbrella as video, cinema, television, and their corresponding technologies. Thus, until scholarly literature establishes differently, an extended screendance category that includes virtual three-dimensional representative mediums is problematic. On the above mentioned grounds, notwithstanding 'moving-picture dance constructions' is a valid term, the research finds 'screendance' art appropriate for the current discussion which focuses on the norm of screenworks that employ single projection on a single

screen. Accordingly, works like multi-screen, 3D installations, or interactive computer works – what the screendance scholar Harmony Bench (2006) refers to as ‘hyperdances’, fall within distinctly different contexts and require specific methodological engagement that surpass the parameters of the current thesis.

### **1.5.3 Screendance Art Defined**

As will be established, there are two main ideological forces that drive scholarship on screendance art which refer to equivalent approaches of practice, namely dance/choreographic and kinetic. The former refers to screendance theory and practice that regards screendance art as being strongly linked with dance, and consequently, human body movement as being the primary ingredient of screenwork, whereas the latter defines screendance art as the screen art that uses motion in general as a primary ingredient of the artwork. Engaging in this dichotomy, the following text reviews the debate, by starting the discussion with the earliest writings of cinematic discussion and moving on to current debates, which also include electronic and digital screening technologies.

This dichotomy emerges in 1967 when scholarly insight into the identity of screendance arrived, with an issue devoted to the screendance phenomenon in Dance Perspectives, ‘Cine-dance’. An issue rich in quality and quantity, it comprises thirteen essays written by an equivalent number of scholars of established professional status and directly connected, either as theorists, practitioners or both, to the screendance art realm. Apart from Snyder, there are also contributors from the cinematic field like Arthur Knight, Parker Tyler, Slavko Vorkapich, and filmmakers and theorists, among other things, Sidney Peterson, Shirley Clarke, Stan Vanderbeek, Hillary Harris, Len Lye, Stan Brakhage, Ed Emshwiller, Jonas Mekas, and posthumously Maya Deren. It is noteworthy that many of the aforementioned artists involved with the screendance art were also established avant-garde filmmakers, a fact that demonstrates the experimental stage of the art and its unconventionality. As expected, there are numerous attempts to define cine-dance, some with conflicting viewpoints.

Outlining first the dance-focused screendance viewpoints, Deren's article is of most relevance. Despite being published in 1967, it is the transcript of a talk she made ten years earlier at a forum held by the Creative Film Foundation in New York. Within it, she discusses the ontology of a 'creative dance film' as a synthesis of dance and cinematic practice that results in a unique artwork. As she notes,

It is a question of how, by using a dancer, or choreographer, and a film-maker, you get something that you couldn't get by using either of them alone. This is what I mean by creative dance film...The creative synthesis is something different not in degree but in nature, from what could be accomplished only by dancers or only by film-makers.

Deren, 1967, 13

Along the same lines, film historian professor Arthur Knight discusses cine-dance as a "marvellous concordance of dance movement and camera movement" (Knight, 1967, 6), drawing attention to the importance of dance as being the focus of cine-dance rather than film trickery. Citing Shirley Clarke, a modern dancer prior to being an avant-garde filmmaker, he notes that,

While other experimentalists were almost totally absorbed in the tricks their camera could do, Shirley Clarke remembered that dance was the center of her film, and was learning how to fragment dance movements and combine them with other pictorial elements, fusing these through specifically cinematic devices to create cine-dance film in which the dance was not subordinated to the cine.

Knight, 1967, 9

On similar dance-focused grounds, Emshwiller emphasises the significance of dance material manipulated through the screen medium as the former is the basis of every screendance art product. In order to make his point clearer, he discusses screendance art in comparison with dance documentation. As he states,

Cine-dance is a movie dance, a film involving dance, a film using dance as its principal element; but not dance, not a film of dance, not a recording of a dance.

On the other hand a dance film is a kind of documentary, a recording.

Emshwiller, 1967, 25

This is one of the few times that attention is given to terminology and terms like dance-film and cine-dance are not used interchangeably. Emshwiller distinguishes between the mere recording of dancing material that uses dance as raw material – dance films – and the use of dance material as part of a synthesizing dance and cinematic product, where dance is the principal element, the main focus – cine-dance. Stating clearly his interest towards the second kind of creation, he notes that the former is more of a documentary form rather than a creative one. Using music to illustrate the qualitative difference between the two, he compares the dance filmmaking with the process of sound recording, and cine-dance with music composition. He writes:

... what interests me as a film-maker is not the documentary of a dance, but the creation of a film. To me it's like the difference between composing music and playing or recording it... I would like to make films as a composer... rather than as a... recorder.

Emshwiller, 1967, 25

As presented so far, the dance-focused theorists view screendance art primarily as a dance product that uses cinematic processes in a synthesising manner towards the creation of screen mediated art. An art that is a “creative synthesis” (Deren, 1967, 13), an art where “dance... [is] not subordinated to the cine” (Knight, 1967, 25), but “the principal element” (Emshwiller, 1967, 25).

Introducing the kinetic scholars, Shirley Clarke firstly defines screendance art in terms that are similar to Deren, Knight, Peterson, and Emshwiller, “Cine-dance, unlike a record of an existing dance, is choreographed for the camera. It can exist only on film, not on the stage” (Clarke, 1967, 20); clarifying both the importance

of a choreographed dance and its specific construction for the cinematic apparatus.

Citing Deren as the “film-maker who did most in trying to understand what cine-dance meant and how it worked” (Clarke, 1967, 20), Clarke acknowledges that cine-dance’s unique qualities cannot be explored unless it is understood that it is not a matter of merely using dance on film, but a matter of constructive synthesis. However, in contrast to dance-focused theorists like Deren and Knight, she considers her film In Paris Parks (Clarke, 1954) a cine-dance film, in spite of the fact that, as she notes, “Nobody actually dances in it, but the music, the cutting, the movement of the children, and the direction of action within the frame are both rhythmic and choreographic” (Clarke, 1967, 22). She argues that “Even a film in the style of *cinéma-vérité*<sup>10</sup> becomes choreographic because dance, as I conceive it, is the very nature of a human being” (Clarke, 1967, 22).

Her belief that the words ‘dance’, ‘kinetic’, and ‘choreographic’ describe the same thing is perhaps the basis for her claim that Bridges Go Round (Clarke, 1958), a film created by the movement which the filmed bridges have acquired through her filmic manipulation, is a cine-dance film. This, along with the fact that among the three aforementioned terms she prefers to use the word ‘dance’, make her conclude that all of her films should be considered dance-films, “I would say all my films are dance films” (Clarke, 1967, 23). However, considering that cine-dance is a film constructed by static objects, as happens in Bridges Go Round (1958) where the movement is only cinematically constructed and not through any form of dancing or dancers, broadens both the choreographic and the dance notion to arguably debatable extents.

Similarly, Slavko Vorkapich, a film editor by profession, states the importance of film being kinetic and claims that dance can be constructed in film by non-dance realities, as in the movement of the sea in his film Moods of the Sea (Hoffman and Vorkapich, 1941) (USA: informal alternative title) that he made with his colleague John Hoffman. Situating himself in favour of those who do not think that theatrical dance needs to be part of the cine-dance filmmaking, he states that film “should be an extension of dance, but not ballet or any stylized dance. Ballet



is a pre-formed art. No film based on a pre-formed art is really creative” (Vorkapich, 1967, 43). Once more, Deren is cited here, this time not for her excellence in making cine-dance, but for her incorrect decision, according to Vorkapich, to use stylized dance.

Finally, agreeing with Harris and Emshwiller, among others, Snyder discusses cine-dance as a form of dance film that synthesizes dance and film choreography. However, as in the case of Clarke, she furthermore agrees with Vorkapich’s notion that “Choreography of natural movement – this would be the art of film” (Vorkapich, 1967, 43) which broadens the cine-dance notion to kinetic discussion, where the involvement of dance is not a necessary ingredient.

Accordingly, kinetic scholars do not view cine-dance as dance affiliated, to the extent of arguing against using dance action, “Maya Deren used some cinematic means but most of her films (apart from that wonderful one she made with Alexander Hammid, Meshes of the Afternoon) are based on stylised dance, and that is what is wrong with them” (Vorkapich, 1967, 43). Instead, they call for a dance-cinema that substitutes the human dancer with what could be named an ‘environmental dancer’, a cinematic dancer which is reality-based, like in the Moods of the Sea (Hoffman and Vorkapich, 1941), or Bridges Go Round (Clarke, 1958) discussed above, but not human-based, thus, kinetic-cinema rather than dance-cinema or cine-dance.

The debate between the two camps ‘dance-focused’ and ‘kinetic’ is not an issue that only cine-dance practice had to solve. Lorber (1976) discusses how certain experimental filmworks are misclassified as videodance, and sets as parameters of membership the combination of video technological composition – what was cinematic manipulation for cine-dance – as well as dance choreography integration, which he calls “electronic expressionism” and “kinaesthetic coherence”, correspondingly:

A videodance artist with perhaps the most ecumenical aesthetic – neither conservatively “kinespheric” nor reductively optical conceptual – is Doris Chase<sup>11</sup>. She has managed in her tapes an optimal blend of electronic expressionism (video effects) and kinaesthetic coherence.

Lorber, 1976, 250

The first full-length study related to the subject of videodance is the edited book Parallel Lines: Media Representations of Dance (1993) by dance scholars Stephanie Jordan and Dave Allen. The limitations of this study in reference to the current thesis are, firstly its narrow focus – dance in British public television – and secondly its limited references with regards to the ontology of screendance as an art in its own right.

The popular dance and screendance author and educator Sherril Dodds, whose Ph.D. thesis (1997b) and book (2004) focus on dance on film, has also undertaken the task of defining videodance practice, which she considers as successor of Maya Deren’s avant-garde filmmaking, as choreographer and theoretician Vera Maletic (1987b, 3) and dance archivist and curator Jane Pritchard (1995, 29), among others, have argued. Similarly to Lorber’s electronic-kinesthetic synthesis, Dodds discusses videodance as being a ‘hybrid site’ “constructed through two distinct sites: a fusion of a postmodern stage dance tradition with the televisual apparatus” (Dodds, 2004, 170).

Furthermore, Dodds focuses on the way the ‘dancing’ or, to be more exact, the attributes of the stage dance performer alter once within this site, providing significant discussion upon what she defines as ‘video dance bodies’ in the sense that:

The televisual mediation of dance creates a ‘video dance body’ that transcends the limitations of the material body which offers the possibility of alternative modes of dance... the spatiotemporal boundaries of the body can be made to appear increasingly fluid, dynamics can be manipulated independently of the physical body.

Dodds, 2004, 170

An additional ontological element that can be retrieved through Dodds writings is her argument that video dance refers to the category of films that incorporate dance designed originally for the video apparatus, an argument that concurs with the fiction parameter the research proposed as paramount for screendance art.

... the concept of video dance initially developed through a number of ‘dance screen festivals’ as a means to delineate a category of work outside the documentary films and stage adaptations. The term video dance is consequently used to identify dance works that are originally conceived for the screen (de Marigny, 1991, p34; Meisner, 1991, p18).

Dodds, 1997b, 4

Resemblance is to be noted between Dodds’ ‘videodance’ arguments and Douglas Rosenberg’s ‘screendance’ statements:

... inherent in my definition of screendance is the concept of recorporealization. Here ‘recorporealization’ is used to describe a literal re-construction of the dancing body via screen techniques; at times a construction of an impossible body, one not encumbered by gravity, temporal restraints or even death [...] Screendance is itself a type of site specific practice [...] hybrid... [form] in which the camera and method of recording may be thought of as *the site*, as we might refer to the theatre as the site in concert dance.

Rosenberg, 2000a, 4

Thus, Rosenberg’s notion of screendance emphasises both the existence of dance material as performed by dancer/s and the importance of the process of reconstruction of this material in reference to the screen apparatus, both in terms of the body and its surrounding space.

Further related scholarship can be located in the edited book Envisioning Dance on Film and Video (Mitoma et al., 2002). Apart from Virginia Brooks, whose submissions are discussed at the beginning of the chapter, screendance creator Amy Greenfield and Bob Lockyer are two more scholars with relevant contributions. Greenfield (2002), also a dance-focused screendance scholar, discusses what she considers a specific kind of dance film, the “avant-garde dance film” (2002, 21). In reference to two filmworks, A Study in Choreography

For The Camera (Deren, 1945) and 9 Variations on a Dance Theme (Harris, 1966) Greenfield argues that the filmmakers Maya Deren and Hilary Harris “redefined the possibilities for the creative transformation of dance into avant-garde film” (2002, 21). Arguing that Deren’s filmwork and writings on film aesthetics are a milestone, she describes how both of the films that she discusses

... transform modern dance into cinema through specific techniques ... possible only onscreen. Both films use continuity of dance motion to overcome fragmentation of the body in time and space, asserting a transcendent sense of the wholeness of the human individual. And both use dance to reveal principles of cinematic motion.

Greenfield, 2002, 21

Greenfield’s avant-garde film is ideally a film that employs a dual dynamic. The cinematic apparatus explores modern dance, aka contemporary vocabulary, while dance informs the cinematic composition. Therefore, the synthesis, which for Emshwiller (1967) and especially Clarke (1967) is seen as a conflict of ingredients where destruction has to be undertaken for successful synthesis to be achieved, is seen quite differently. It is, for Greenfield, a productive, rather than destructive, field where the screen medium and the dance are involved in a mutual exchange, informing each other, a synthesis of apparatuses.

What can be considered a recent kinetic perspective of the ontological discussion of screendance art is Carroll’s ‘extended sense’ of screendance art (2001). While in what he calls the ‘central concept’ of screendance art Carroll agrees on the importance of dance material, with the ‘extended sense’, he argues that screendance art may be characterised as a product that employs movement; a creation that

... may be of elements inside the frame or it may be an impression of movement generated by technical means, such as editing or special effects, like pixilation...Where that movement is interesting in its own right, we have a case of moving-picture dance in the extended sense.

Carroll, 2001, 58

Carroll's inclusion of both dance-focused and kinetic notions of screendance art, as 'central' and 'extended' concepts, seems to resolve the dance-kinetic scholarly dichotomy. The only criticism against his extended notion is that it contradicts the rationale of classification, whose aim is to specify and clarify. It is, therefore, argued that as far as the ontological specification of screendance art is concerned, it is not a question of dance and kinetic but rather dance or kinetic concepts.

A final ideological arena that schematises a screendance definition is that of commissioning, programming and curating screendance art festivals. The inclusion of a mixture of dance and kinetic films often triggers disputes as to the ontology of screendance art among the creators who may attend these festivals and are sometimes candidates for screendance art awards. The IMZ festival, entitled 'dancescreen' for its screen choreography category, is an open approach to the art of screendance that includes, "movement based video clips, experimental films, animation & fiction" together with "choreography specifically created for the screen" (2009 [online]). Alluding to a kinetic approach, Gitta Wigro discusses issues of screendance curation using the term dance to describe "choreography of movement (but not necessarily of the human body)" (Wigro, 2008 [online]). By contrast, a team which compiled a '(Hu)manifesto' through a round table discussion in 2006 'Opensource {videodance}: Symposium', concluded, that "Inherent in the proposition of screendance is the possibility that through an accretion of images of bodies in motion, a larger truth may unfold" (Scottish Arts Council, 2007, 134). This statement emphasises the dance qualities of screendance artistry. Overall, this demonstrates that the dichotomy outlined in 1967 between dance and kinetic scholars is still relevant, and therefore the question of whether screendance is 'dance' specific or 'kinetic' remains unanswered.

### 1.5.3.1 To Conclude: Dance or Kinetic?

Although there is strong linkage between dance and kinetic notions, they are not equivalent terms, as dance is ‘a form of expression that uses primarily if not exclusively human body movement as its channel of communication’. Discussing the same dance-kinetic friction in screen terms, it is argued that, whereas movement synthesis is a fundamental attribute of all cinematic creations, movement – kinesis – alone is not enough for a screen product be classified as *screendance*, and that the human dancer is an essential parameter. As Mekas points out, “Everything that moves has something to do with dance, has dance in it, without really being “a dance” (Mekas, 1967, 33).

It is, indeed, a fact that dance acquires a different nature once in filmic apparatus, as Dodds (1997b, 2004) and Rosenberg (2000a) amongst others have noted and as will be further examined chapter three, and therefore screendance art is not screened dance, as Emshwiller (1967) emphasises, but something completely different in nature (Deren, 1967). However, arguing that this alteration reaches the subtraction of the most fundamental element of dance creation, namely the human body, as Vorkapich (1967) and Clarke (1967), amongst others, enlarge on how the film can create dance regardless of the raw material filmed, is highly problematic.

On these grounds, films that omit ‘dance’ as established above are problematic to be considered as screendance artworks; as in the case of Clarke’s Bridges Go Round (1958), discussed previously, or, to give more recent examples, the awarded screendance art-products Scratch (Love, 2005) that features an animated marionette, and Birds (Hinton, 2000) which is a film consisting of edited scenes of birds’ movement, to name a few kinetic films. Despite their highly kinetic nature and their established artistic value, they are not necessarily cine-dance, video-dance, screendance art or any other dance combined term for that matter.

Accordingly, there are three ontological parameters that demarcate screendance art as defined here. The first parameter is the inclusion of dance as established in the beginning of the chapter; primarily the human dancer along with other

observable elements, such as the general visual setting – scenographic elements, as well as the aural environment – most of the time in the form of music. Secondly, screendance art is materialised within a cinematically constructed context. The represented material has either been performed exclusively for film purposes and/or it has been manipulated in a way that has deviated from its factual nature. Overall, it results in an imaginative world constructed especially for the screendance art-work and is therefore to an extent free from factual elements; implicitly, its situation is at the fictional end of the continuum. Finally, screendance art refers to products that are purely screen mediated – along with speakers, if required, and not to creations that are part of a wider performing complex, like the use of projection of screendance art within a staged dance performing event, which is, in effect, a multimedia performance. In the case of the latter, screendance art is part of the wider nexus of the performing event and thus has no autonomy in that context. In a nutshell, any fictional screen product which uses primarily, if not exclusively, dance as a medium of expression and exists in its own right, is a screendance art product.

#### **1.5.4 Musicals, Screen-Musicals, Screen-Hybrids and Beyond: A Case to Discuss, a Case to Exclude**

Another generalisation worth attention is that screenworks, even if they incorporate dance and are screendance art-related, are not necessarily screendance art-products; such is the case with screen-musicals. The scholar Mary Jane Hungerford (1946) is perhaps the first to draw connecting lines between screendance art and screen-musicals. Defining cine-dance, she argues that it is a dance that cannot be reproduced outside the filmic apparatus, but is constructed in relation to camera and is always interconnected with narrative. More extensive discussion on the subject two decades later is by Casey Charness (1977) whose thesis establishes that “not until the collaborative work of [director] Stanley Donen and [dancer and choreographer] Gene Kelly was actual cine-dance born” (1977, i).

Analysing their films, Charness demonstrates how Donen's camera directing and Kelly's choreography and performance, "elevated Hollywood dance from a simplistic display of either dancing or photographic ability into a perception that incorporates both what the dancer can do and what the camera can see" (Charness, 1977, i). Charness distinguishes between dance that appears on film and cine-dance, which she defines as instances of a "unique blend of cinematographic and choreographic expertise... interrelationship of photographic and dance techniques" (Charness, 1977, 134), referring to the synthesis of apparatuses discussed by all dance-focused screendance scholars.

The significance, however, is that she does not speak about musicals being cine-dance art products but rather as being films that occasionally include cine-dance segments. With that, she advances the discussion of cine-dance as not being necessarily a form of independent expression but one that can be also incorporated and combined within musical films, and arguably, within any kind of film.

Similar to the way that dance as a live performing art is incorporated within synthesised performing art works, like opera and staged musicals, screendance as an art is also manifested in combination with other screen practices towards the creation of synthesised screen art works. The screen musical is one of the most common cases of screen art combinations or hybrids to use a term that emphasises both the synthesis as well as the multifaceted attribute of screen musicals. Along these lines, the film scholar and author Susan Hayward defines it as a "hybrid genre given its descent from the European operetta (particularly Austrian) and American vaudeville and the music hall" (Hayward, 2000, 243). While other theorists, such as the film theorist, sociologist and writer Siegfried Kracauer (1889 – 1966) (1997) and film critic, theorist and historicist Rick Altman (1987), place it among fiction films that use classical narrative lines, incorporating scenes of music and singing, and often dance; it is due to the inclusion of the latter, namely dance, that screendance art is related to screen musicals as an ingredient of the overall product. Thus, it could be argued that screen musicals are story-telling films that employ a formal framework that



combines acting, dancing, and music or singing, giving to all of them a highly important role. They are, in a sense, multi-art screen creations.

However, the case of multi-art products that merge screendance with other arts, like acting and singing, does not apply only to screen products that have been constructed within a story-telling narrative system. Examples of screen hybrids can also be identified within practices that originate from frameworks neither as popular nor as commercial as screen musicals. The work of Meredith Monk, an interdisciplinary artist and pioneer – director, choreographer, performer, music composer, filmmaker and installation artist – is such an example. Similarly with the Hollywood screen musical, while it is screendance-related, is not screendance art.

As Monk declares and her work confirms “I’ve never made a dance film per se, but the fact that my films are for the most non-verbal and nonlinear in structure naturally relates them to an art form that speaks without words” (Monk, 2002, 89), referring to dance and screendance art. Being a multi-disciplinary artist and performer with interests that cover the whole spectrum of live performing arts from musical composition and performing to live art installations, her film encounters are relatively limited in number but, nevertheless, of great significance. On screen, she finds the site that allows her to combine all these arts, music, images and movement, as seen for instance in the Book of Days (Monk, 1988).

Synthesising screendance art scenes, as well as singing and acting, the work resembles, in formal terms, the wider notion of musicals as established above. However, it is upon Monk’s use of narrative structure that the film differentiates itself significantly from the screen musical form. Instead of the story-telling form of narrative often used in fiction films, Monk gives instead a series of short scenes, images that may be connected in terms of iconography, as they are set between two primary locations – a modern city and a medieval town – but which are not necessarily interconnected in terms of a story-line in the conventional sense of the word; meaning they are not scenes that follow causality, and familiar

plot patterns. As dance critic Jennifer Dunning writes, Monk “has created a film that is essentially a moving picture... a very beautiful visual play of surfaces and textures” (Dunning, 1990 [online]). Therefore, defining it as screendance product would be a debatable classification, since its multi-art incorporation demonstrates a screen hybrid instead.

Further examples of screen hybrids that fall within the parameters of single screen/projection are music videos and certain advertisements that may include scenes demonstrating artistry that fulfils the criteria of screendance art (Dodds, 1999, 2000). However, it is problematic for screen hybrids to be regarded as constituting screendance artworks in their own right. Such an approach would miss the interconnections among the screendance art scenes and the rest of the creation which might have either artistic and/or commercial aims. Furthermore, the analytical tools would prove to be inadequate for discussing scenes of verbal or written text, dialogue and singing. Instead, it is beneficial if screendance ingredients are regarded as part of the wider nexus created by the screen hybrid’s elements.

### **1.5.5 Dance Adaptation: in Between Two Worlds**

Returning to the ontological discussion of screendance art and the factual-fictional spectrum, there is a last category of dance-related films neither Snyder (1965) nor Brooks (2002) addresses and that seemingly oscillates between factual and fictional: the category named as ‘Camera Re-work’ – IMZ festival ‘dancescreen2005’. Again, as with screendance terminology, ‘camera re-work’ as a term refers to a certain production stage, a tool of screen production, namely the camera. The research proposes instead the term ‘Dance adaptation’, as being a more inclusive and self-explanatory term.

In this category, the artworks are the results of a screen adaptation of past staged performance. The particularity of this category is that, while it could be formally regarded as screendance artwork – fulfilling the aforementioned criteria; fictional, mediating dance, received through screen – it also has a factual parameter which links the artwork with the historical world of dance. Thus, it is

fictional on formal grounds, namely the filmed and projected material is all cinematically constructed, while it is also factual on a conceptual level, since the content of the artwork belongs to a staged event – at least this is what is claimed by the creators of these films. In reality, the latter is highly disputable.

Mentioning two recently awarded and highly acclaimed examples of this category, firstly, the stage and screenwork Blush, 2002 and 2005 respectively, by the choreographer director and filmmaker Wim Vandekeybus relocated from a stage environment to the landscapes of Corsica and Brussels, this was derived from a two hour stage work and condensed into 52 minutes of screentime. Secondly, The Cost of Living stage work and screen version, 2003 and 2004 respectively, by choreographer and filmmaker Lloyd Newson, which transferred from a stage environment to Cromer on the Norfolk coast, and from being a 90 minute long theatre piece to 35 minutes of screenwork<sup>12</sup>. Accordingly, in both cases there is duration and location inconsistency between screenworks and their corresponding stage works; parameters which by definition have affected significantly the movement content and the audio content. Therefore, since the movement, the scenographic, and the aural elements have been altered for the screen purposes, it is questionable as to the extent to which the screenworks correspond to the stageworks. It is generally observed that the fewer the shared attributes between dance work and its screen adaptation are, the weaker the connection between the screenwork and the dance's historical existence, moving further away from the factual end.

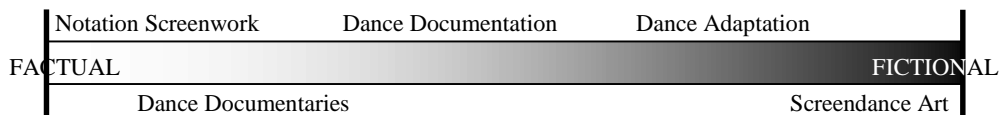
Overall, it is purely in terms of information that this category is created, and, unless the viewer is informed otherwise and/or has watched the corresponding live work, what can be seen does not differ stylistically from many other screendance art products. Therefore, 'dance adaptation' screenworks, seen from a purely formal perspective, correspond to screendance art attributes, and thus, to their situation towards the fictional end of the screendance continuum.

## 1.6 CONCLUSION: THE DANCE ON SCREEN TYPES DIAGRAM

The aforementioned discussion of the types of screendance, initiated by Snyder (1965) and based also on Brooks' (2002) continuum, has been remodeled into a broader categorization, more concise and accurate in content and terminology. The 'factual' section concluded with the schema of three categories, two of which relate to a specific dance event. Firstly, the 'dance notation screenwork' is an audio-visual registration of a dance event which aims to acquire and preserve the most quantitative and qualitative information, meaning the most possible information with the most reproductive fidelity possible. Secondly, the 'dance documentation screenwork' aims at the reproduction of the live theatre experience, thus focusing not only on the mere acquisition of information but also on recreating-preserving the dance event's live theatrical experience-message through cinematic directorial choices. Finally, the last factual category is the 'dance documentary' and refers to screenworks that engage with the historical world of dance in general. The obvious difference between the two former factual products and the 'dance documentary' is that, in the case of 'dance notation screenwork' and 'dance documentation', no added cinematic material is used beyond the one captured from the corresponding dance event, whereas, in 'dance documentaries', cinematic material outside theatrical performance, e.g. interviews and backstage material, is often incorporated.

The fictional discussion, which the current research views not as a separate category but as a continuation of the factual, is constituted basically from the overarching category of screendance art. As established beforehand, screenworks of that category are characterised by three parameters, screen, dance, and fiction, thus they are screenworks that mediate dance within a fictional cinematic framework. A subcategory of these films is considered to be the 'dance adaptation' which, as screendance art and taking into consideration its formal characteristics, acquires through authorial initiative a factual relation to a certain historical dance creation. Finally, there have also been identified instances where screendance art is incorporated along with other elements towards either the creation of screenworks of hybrid nature, as in the case of musicals and pop videos, or towards the creation of multimedia performances.

The following continuum is an updated, more concise and accurate version of Brooks' (2002) continuum based on the above results. The continuum is preferred as an illustrating way with a view to depicting the continuation and the relation between the categories. What is placed above or down the line is of no particular importance; the categories are primarily placed in reference to the factual – left – and the fictional – right – attributes.



**Figure 1-2: Dance on Screen; 5-Part Typology**

The identified formal ontology of screendance art sets the foundations for the thesis's succeeding investigation. It clarifies the dance and screen parameters that chapter three's discussion is based upon for the development of the screendance model of formal analysis. It sets the basis according to which Deren's screendance practice will be assessed in chapter four, but prior to the aforementioned, it produces the framework for the discussion of Derenian aesthetic theory in the next chapter.

## **2 DERENIAN AESTHETIC THEORY FROM A DUAL PERSPECTIVE**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Maya Deren:

There *is* a potential filmic dance form, in which the choreography and movements would be designed, precisely, for the mobility and other attributes of the camera, but this, too, requires an independence from theatrical dance conceptions.

Deren and McPherson, 2005, 29

The current chapter focuses on Deren's aesthetic perspectives as manifested mainly through her theoretical work on the cinematic medium. Taking into account the ontological parameters of screendance art, as identified through chapter one, this chapter explores the thesis' hypothesis according to which Maya Deren's aesthetic theory is best understood if examined through a dual dance and screen/film perspective. By discussing and clarifying Deren's viewpoints on art in general, but mainly on film practice, Deren's relation to both cinematic and dance theoretical realms, and in turn the extent of originality in her theoretical perspectives, will also be established. The discussion will start with a debate on Deren within film theory, and will continue with the discussion of Deren's aesthetic viewpoints through a dance perspective. It will conclude by merging the outcomes of each approach, in an attempt to define the screendance characteristics of Derenian theory. First, a review of the scholarship that discusses Deren's aesthetic viewpoints, aims to focus on the limited cinematic contextualisation, along with the relative lack of dance-based discussion of her theory.

### **2.2 DEREN DISCUSSED: LITERATURE REVIEW**

In reviewing writings from and about Deren, initially primary source material comprised primarily of Deren's published and unpublished texts is considered, followed by scholarship that engages with Derenian theory and practice. This

second strand of analysis is subdivided according to the general focus of the corresponding scholarship into four thematic sections (2.2.3 – 2.2.6).

### **2.2.1 Primary Source Material**

Deren started as a film artist in the 1940s and was subsequently involved with the theorising and analysing of her films and of cinematic art in general. Her theoretical involvement emerges firstly through the promotional material that accompanied her films, in order to solicit the screenings. She often commented on her films, lecturing about her practice, always aiming to support her non-mainstream film practice and to familiarise her audience with the kind of film form she was proposing. Many of these brochures and lectures have been published in art and cinema related magazines<sup>13</sup> – Movie Makers (1945, 1947, 1959), Daedalus (1960), Popular Photography (1946), Film Culture (1963, 1965), Home Movie Making (1960); the Village Voice (1960) newspaper; dance related publications – Educational Dance (1942) Dance Magazine (1945, 1946), Dance Perspectives (Deren, 1967); as well as in the influential women's magazine, Mademoiselle (1946, 1948). This broad exposure increased the accessibility of Deren's theoretical viewpoints. Beside the aforementioned small length texts, Deren's monograph, An Anagram of Ideas on Art, Form and Film (1946), discusses cinematic aesthetics, alongside a broader artistic, political and scientific context that originates from disciplines as diverse as psychology and physics.

The first and most comprehensive compilation of Derenian texts was undertaken and published by 'Anthology Film Archives' in New York City, resulting in the multivolume The Legend of Maya Deren: A Documentary Biography and Collected Works (1985, 1988). This mammoth research project was started in the early 1970s by professor and ethnologist VěVě Amasasa Clark (1944 – 2007), choreographer, dance historian and reconstructionist Millicent Hodson (b.1945), and art scholar, author and editor Catrina Neiman. It sought to investigate Deren through the reprinting and/or transcription of primary sources of every facet of her life and practice, biographical, and/or artistic, accompanied by interviews and

comments. The aim was to draw a holistic picture of the woman as well as the artist, in order to stimulate further academic study on Deren. The importance of this research project is paramount to anyone that has dealt with any issue related to Deren, since it made a vast amount of information about Deren accessible and at the same time provided a profound insight into Deren's mysterious and multi-faceted life and work. Unfortunately, only part of the research project has been completed and published up to this date, but substantial work that covers the period including her last filmworks has been already done. Succeeding The Legend of Maya Deren, Essential Deren: Collected Writings on Film (Deren and McPherson, 2005), is a briefer, more focused, and widely accessible introduction of Deren's ideas on film. Edited with a preface by publisher Bruce R. McPherson, it reprints a selection of Deren's published texts on film.

In addition, of significant scholarly value is Deren's ethnographic text on the Haitian Vodou culture Divine Horsemen – The Living Gods of Haiti (Deren, 1953) as well as the homonymous screenwork (1985), produced from Deren's screenreels, posthumously edited by her last husband the music composer and performer Teiji Ito (1935 – 1982) and his wife and accomplished photographer and film editor Cherel (also quoted as Cheryl) Winett Ito (1947 – 1999). However, due to their anthropological focus, they will not be incorporated in the current screendance focused analysis. Instead, Deren's completed screenworks, widely now available through Mystic Fire's DVD Edition Maya Deren: Experimental Films (Deren and Hammid, 2002) will be the primary focus of this thesis as well as the sole subject matter of analysis for chapter four.

Further audiovisual material includes In the Mirror of Maya Deren (Kudlacek, 2002), a documentary on Deren's personal and professional world. Not aimed towards the scholar but to the general viewer, it sacrifices detailed information in the interest of cinematic fluidity and duration. However, that is not to limit its artistic and informative value, which among other things provides original interviews and statements from people directly acquainted with Maya Deren<sup>14</sup>, contextualising Deren both personally and artistically.



Finally, Deren's application packs to the Guggenheim Foundation in the years 1945, 1946, 1947, 1948, 1949, 1953 offers an invaluable source of primary material. Acquired through personal communication, the unpublished material includes Deren's personal description of her work, as well as her plans for prospective screenworks. In addition, it includes comments on her work and reference letters Deren acquired from seminal figures of the era like professor Sawyer Falk, artist Marcel Duchamp, filmmaker Herman Weinberg, artist Ossip Zadkine, art dealer and lecturer Jsrael Berk Newman and art collector and lecturer Galka Scheyer. References to this unpublished material are cited in the current text by year of application.

### **2.2.2 Secondary Source Material**

Although Deren was a prolific writer, she was ignored by scholars for her theoretical viewpoints prior to the emergence of feminist studies. As film professor Renata Jackson (2002) also notes, it was not until the early 1970s that her theoretical stature started to appear, along with that of other female practitioners and theoreticians who were often omitted from cinematic literature, thanks to scholars like Regina Cornwell (1971 – 1972), Patricia Erens (1979) Ann Kaplan (1983), Tom Gunning (1983), Louise Heck-Rabi (1984), Stan Brakhage (1989), Judith Mayne (1990), Patricia Mellencamp (1990) and Ally Acker (1991).

However, it was first with Bill Nichols' (2001) edited book, that some of the most important thinkers on Deren's life and work presented perspectives that cover a wide array of issues. Introducing the content of his edited book, Nichols also provides biographical and socio-cultural context on Deren, a critical summary of her theory, as well as discussion of factors that contributed to Derenian theory being neglected by cinematic scholarship (for further on Deren's neglect see Nichols, 2001, 12-13), thus providing a significant contribution towards a general understanding of the artist.

Most of the articles in Nichols' book, cited here individually, assess Derenian aesthetics through a cinematic, feminist or ethnographical perspective that echoes to an extent the few preceding writings of Sitney (2002), Clark, Hodson, and Neiman (1985, 1988), and Rabinovitz (2003), and are therefore limited in terms of extending the understanding of Deren from a screendance perspective, as will be demonstrated. Below follows a thematic review of Deren-related texts, classified according to their focus. The dance and screendance related texts will be reviewed in the dance perspective section (2.4) following the cinematic contextualisation.

### **2.2.3 Feminist and Gender Readings**

Points of Resistance: Women, Power & Politics in the New York Avant-garde Cinema, 1943-71 (2003) by film professor Lauren Rabinovitz, first published in 1991, provides the first substantial feminist perspective on Deren, and on the subject in general, by enlightening the otherwise obscure scene of feminist filmmaking within the North American avant-garde cinema of post World War II. Rabinovitz establishes that although Deren, along with artists and filmmakers Shirley Clarke (1919 – 1997), and Joyce Wieland (1931 – 1998), worked within a male-dominated environment, they succeeded in presenting female independence through their work, laying the ground for the succeeding non-patriarchal kind of filmmaking that feminist film theory often calls for<sup>15</sup>.

On similar grounds, 'The Ethics of Form' (Turim, 2001), by author and professor of film studies Maureen Turim, investigates the notion of form and Deren's moral perspectives on cinema. Drawing on writings on Deren by Rabinovitz and filmmaker and author Cecile Starr, Turim contextualizes Deren within feminist practices through a closer look at Meshes, At Land and Ritual. Notably, Turim revisits Deren in two instances. First in 'The Violence of Desire in Avant-Garde films' (2005), focusing on Deren's Meshes, and Meditation, along with other practitioners like Germaine Dulac, Yvonne Rainer and Marina Abramovic, Turim explores how violence is interpreted within the feminist avant-garde. Furthermore, Turim (2007), in the 'The Interiority of Space: Desire and Maya

Deren' expands on the two aforementioned analyses by focusing on the issue of how external space is filmically used and altered by Deren in order to communicate the 'interiority' of the characters to the viewers.

Film scholar Theresa L. Geller (2006), focusing on Meshes, revisits the issue of Deren's feminist screen practice, explaining the gender reasons for the critical response to her work, while film researcher Rieko Yamanaka (2002) focuses on the way At Land presents anti-phallogentric filmmaking attributes. Furthermore, art and philosophy professor Catherine M. Soussloff's 'Maya Deren Herself' (2001), discusses Deren as feminist persona through a historiographic process, but also by investigating Deren's self-portraiture within her screenworks.

'Seeing Double(s): Reading Deren Bisexually' (2001) by professor of film, gender and feminist studies Maria Pramaggiore, focuses on gender, but this time situating Deren's aesthetic in a rather multi-dimensional sexual orientation. Pramaggiore, who has investigated Deren's persona and contexts of stardom in 'Performance and Persona in the U.S. Avant-Garde: The Case of Maya Deren' (1997), here focuses on "Deren's self-representation trilogy" (2001, 242) Meshes, At Land and Ritual, producing a bisexual reading as proposed by Storr (1999).

With a feminist, biographical, and psychoanalytic agenda, Inverted Odysseys: Claude Cahun, Maya Deren, Cindy Sherman (Rice et al., 1999) is a critical introduction to the aforementioned female artists. A catalogue of the homonymous exhibition (16 Nov 1999 – 29 Jan 2000 in Grey Art Gallery, New York University) discusses issues of identity and self-portrayals and particularly Deren's involvement with Haitian Vodou and the way it is intertwined with her practice; a connection revisited by Durant (2009) as will be explained in section 2.2.6.

Other texts related to Deren but not directly related to the thesis include a feminist and psychoanalytic reading of Meshes by the film scholar Marilyn Fabe (1996), as well as a discussion by the novelist, historian and activist Sarah Schulman (2003) of Triumph of the Will (Riefenstahl, 1935) and Meshes of the

Afternoon (Deren, 1943) as “the two most significant aesthetic trends in gay and lesbian cinema” (2003 [online]). However, the framework of both of these texts departs significantly from the formalist focus of the current research.

#### **2.2.4 Eisenstein, Ethnography, Anthropology and Beyond**

Deren’s book Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti (1953), as well as the homonymous movie (1985) has been under-researched until recently. One of the earliest accounts is submitted by professor of American literature and culture Jacqueline R. Smetak (1990), whose article ‘Continuum or Break? *Divine Horsemen* and the Films of Maya Deren’ highlights a degree of subjective writing in Deren’s book due to her personal involvement. Furthermore, it investigates the interrelations between her screenwork content and Deren’s Haitian experience, and the continuation from one to the other.

Professor of cinema studies Annette Michelson (2001), focusing on Deren’s Anagram (1946), draws on the revolutionary film director and theoretician Sergei Mikhailovich Eisenstein (1898 – 1948) and the seminal author and literary critic Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888 – 1965), among others, to discuss Derenian aesthetics. She explains the aesthetic and moral attributes included in the monograph, while discussing the depersonalization proposed by Deren through ritualistic film forms, which she argues resemble Eisenstein’s epic forms. Finally, as an extension of her much earlier article On Reading Deren's Notebook (1980), she investigates Deren’s anthropological interests, and how these relate to film director, writer, and actor Orson Welles (1915 – 1985) but particularly Eisenstein, who sought alternative filmmaking methods that depart from the existed documentary form towards an ethnographic one that “permit[s] the culture and the myth to emerge” (Michelson, 2001, 35).

Along the same lines and drawing too upon Eisenstein, cinema researcher Ilona Hongisto (2004) explains Deren’s non-Western innovative processes apparent in her Haitian project. He argues that Deren’s method of embodied knowledge laid

ground for new pathways of ethnographic documentary film that only recently have been revisited and developed.

The perspective of the film scholar and experimental filmmaker Moira Sullivan, in 'Maya Deren's Ethnographic Representation of Ritual and Myth' (2001) deepens and expands the idea submitted by Michelson on the ethnographical type of filmmaking. Her investigation focuses on Deren's relation with the anthropological work of Katherine Dunham, as well as her contact with other eminent anthropologists like Gregory Bateson, Margaret Mead, Joseph Campbell and Melville Herskovits. Focusing on Deren's Haitian Vodou project, Sullivan discusses the two-way influence between Deren's choreocinematic practice and ethnographic filmmaking.

Also focusing on Deren's anthropological aspect, novelist and writer of criticism and history Marina Warner (2007), discusses Derenian practice in conjunction with the artist's involvement with Haitian Vodou culture and links Deren's screenworks with the mystical oxymoron of 'white darkness' which is a metaphor, she notes, for possession. The most recent anthropologically based viewpoint on Deren is ethnologist Dorothea Fischer-Hornung's (2008) 'Keep Alive the Powers of Africa; Katherine Dunham, Zora Neale Hurston, Maya Deren and the circum-Caribbean culture of Vodoun', where Deren's personal and anthropological interest on Haitian culture is discussed alongside that of Dunham and Hurston. Notably, Fischer-Hornung discussed Deren's work in 'Facts of the Mind Made Manifest in a fiction of Matter' (2005), focusing on Meshes of the Afternoon (1943) and Ritual in Transfigured Time (1946) where she identifies the interrelationship between Deren's biographical details and her fictional screenworks.

### **2.2.5 From Psychoanalytic to Personal Accounts**

'Moving the Dancer's Soul' by film historian Ute Holl (2001), draws on Deren's dispute with Anais Nin, in order to emphasise Deren's aesthetic perspectives, especially as these are affiliated with the psychoanalytic practices Deren was

exposed to through her father, Dr. Solomon Derenkowsky. Holl argues that the psychoanalytic theories that her father was taught in Russia influenced Deren's approach towards the explanation of the phenomena of hysteria, hypnotism, possession, among other social and mental activities. However, Deren's knowledge and understanding of psychoanalysis do not presuppose a surrealist affiliation, as emphasised by Deren and clearly demonstrated by Holl.

Extending Holl's discussion towards a less scholarly but nevertheless insightful perspective on Deren's personality, writer Jane Brakhage Wodening, former wife of Stan Brakhage and directly acquainted with Deren, enumerates certain distinctive incidents of Deren's admittedly stormy life in 'Maya Deren' (Brakhage Wodening, 2001). This essay echoes the stories included in Wodening's autobiographical Book of Legends (Wodening, 1993) originally published in 1989; a book that among other things provides a wealth of information about Deren's personal life and acquaintances. However, there is limited information related to her aesthetic perspectives on cinema and/or dance, and it is therefore of secondary importance for the current thesis. Finally, another personal account is provided by film and video maker Barbara Hammer with 'Maya Deren and Me' (2001) which discusses the way her career was heavily influenced and inspired by Deren's, describing instances of her own feminist struggle.

Along the same lines, a text that focuses on Stan Brakhage by experimental filmmaker and author Nathaniel Dorsky and independent animation filmmaker Larry Jordan (MacDonald, 2007) (introduced by film author and lecturer Scott MacDonald), provides personal insight on Deren's bohemian character, noting that while "Most artists have a strong suit – they're either powerfully intellectual or emotional – ... Maya had both going full blast" (5, 2007). Writer and lecturer on American literature and women writers, Charlotte Nekola (1996), too, provides a personal and arguably emotional text on Deren, noting the similarities and differences between Deren and herself in relation to her own multiple identities as female, mother, and professor.

### 2.2.6 Film Aesthetics, Modernism, Poetic Imagism, Deleuze... and Recent Practice

The first extensive discussion of Deren's theory and practice was undertaken by professor and film historian Paul Adams Sitney, co-founder of 'Anthology Film Archives'<sup>16</sup> which is devoted to the preservation and exhibition of experimental film. In his book Visionary film; the American Avant-Garde (2002), originally published in 1974 and remaining a standard text on American avant-garde filmmaking, Sitney addresses the fact that cinematic scholarship had focused on writings of theorists like Hugo Münsterberg (1863 – 1916), Rudolf Arnheim (1904 – 2007), Siegfried Kracauer (1889 – 1966), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908 – 1961), André Bazin (1918 – 1958), as well as Louis Delluc (1890 – 1924) and Jean Epstein (1897 – 1953). Meanwhile, "major theoretical writing was being produced by the filmmakers within the American avant-garde. Deren, Brakhage, Markopoulos, and Kubelka were defining new potentials for the cinema" (Sitney, 2002, xiii)<sup>17</sup>.

Sitney discusses Deren's overall theory and practice as establishing many succeeding avant-garde trends. He initiates his discussion through Parker Tyler's book The Three Faces of the Film and his notion that "The chief imaginative trend among Experimental or avant-garde filmmakers is action as a *dream* and the actor as a *somnambulist*" (1960, 96). Introducing the notion of 'trance film', Sitney refers to screenworks that create a first- person, self-centered atmosphere around an often isolated protagonist who is situated within a realistic yet highly symbolic environment. In accordance with Parker Tyler, he argues that Cesare, the Somnabulist of The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (Wiene, 1920) is "the archetypal protagonist of the trance film ... [and] the form of Jean Cocteau's Le Sang d'un Poete is the model for its development" (Sitney, 2002, 18). He furthermore establishes Deren's practice and especially At Land (1944) as "the earliest of the pure American trance films." (Sitney, 2002, 18), with Meshes of the Afternoon (1943) referred to as the predecessor, a 'psychodramatic' or 'early trance' film. On these grounds, Sitney situates Deren's theory and practice as being the cornerstone of the non-mainstream cinematic scene, of what he reads as the 'visionary film' type within the multi-faceted North-American avant-garde.

Renata Jackson's work on Maya Deren is the most recent, and the most extensive. Jackson deals with the identification of Deren's aesthetics in two instances (2001, 2002). In these two publications she argues that Deren's theory is situated in the tradition of classical film theory which took shape during the era of silent film, in order to provide a framework to address primarily issues of cinematic techniques and codes, as well as issues of genre, subjectivity, and authorship, and the writings of the film critics and theorists Rudolf Arnheim, André Bazin, and Siegfried Kracauer. After investigating Deren's viewpoints in the context of the aforementioned film theorists, Jackson discusses Deren through the non-cinematic context of poetry, arguing that Deren's theory consists fundamentally of "an adaptation of Bergson and the modernist poetics of Hulme, Eliot and Pound to the art of film" (Jackson, 2002, 83)<sup>18</sup>.

The earliest published reference to imagism in conjunction with Deren's aesthetic perspectives, and especially in response to her notion of verticality, that will later be expanded, was undertaken by experimental filmmaker and poet Willard Maas (1906 – 1971) in the 'Poetry and the Film' symposium (Deren, et al., 1970). However, it was not until a few months later, in winter of 1963 – 64, that the issue was properly discussed by Sitney in his investigation of Choreography for Camera, as being related to Pound's notion of Imagism where "images are not decorations and that one central image can motivate an entire poem" (Sitney, 1970, 187).

'Sitney's Visionary Film (2002) was also one of the earliest to identify the relations between poetic Imagism and Deren<sup>19</sup>. As Jackson notes, Deren's degrees were in English literature, and her Master's thesis illustrates specifically her respect for the aesthetics that Hulme, Eliot and Pound express through literary work and theory. Furthermore, Deren herself draws connecting lines between poetry and film art throughout Anagram (1946), especially the early 20th century Anglo-American movement 'Imagism', which rejected the overemotionalism of 'Romantic' and 'Victorian' poetry in favour of accuracy of imagery and fidelity in language. In accordance with the above, Jackson (2002) argues that Deren gives us an aesthetic of "experimental or avant-garde film



practice as well as the metaphors of “horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ film form” (Jackson, 2001, 49). As Deren stated in 1953 at a Cinema 16 symposium, “Poetry and the Film”, film works on two axes. The first one, the horizontal axis, is basically the narrative axis of character and action. The second one is the vertical axis – the poetic axis which concerns the mood, tone, and rhythm of the images and scenes as well as the film as a whole, notions already discussed by Sitney (2002), and Michelson (2001), as previously established and will be revisited in section 2.4.3.4.

Succeeding Sitney, filmmaker and educator Jan L. Millsapps (1986) revisits the Imagist-Deren issue through a review of her screenworks, explaining the way poetry in general, and specifically Eliot and Pound, were related to Deren’s films. Notably, Millsapps is probably the earliest to discuss to such an extent the imagist-Deren relation, drawing on many primary archival materials including Deren’s MA thesis (1939).

Along the lines of Deren’s formalist perspectives, professor of film studies and English Lucy Fischer, in ‘The Eye for Magic: Maya and Méliès’ (2001) draws connecting lines between Deren’s late modernist practice and the early cinema of George Méliès (1861 – 1938). She addresses Deren’s affiliation with the notion of ‘magic’ both in personal but mainly in filmic terms by comparing specific scenes and strategies between Méliès and Deren.

“Motor-driven metaphysics”: movement, time and action in the films of Maya Deren’ (2007) by film author and lecturer Alison Butler, is one of the most recent scholarly texts that focuses on Deren. Butler engages with a wide array of issues in regards to Deren’s aesthetic perspectives. She contextualises Deren in reference to Bergson and Hulme, while investigating how Deren’s interests in 20<sup>th</sup> century physics, Einstein, as well as her metaphysical concerns enhanced through the Haitian project, informed her practice. Explaining Deren’s modernist ideas that sought to create a new spatial and temporal film world, Butler is also the first scholar to investigate Deren through a Deleuzian<sup>20</sup> perspective in such depth, expanding in that way Jackson’s notes (2002). In between Jackson (2002) and Butler (2007), dance and film researcher Erin Brannigan (2002), whose

article will be revisited for its dance references, as well as stage and screendance creator and researcher Tracie Mitchell (2006) refer to the Deren - Deleuze connection, explaining how Deren's notion of a vertical and horizontal approach to filmmaking (see section 2.4.3.4), anticipates notions of time-image (1989) and movement-image (1986), an argument shared with Jackson. However, as established by Butler (2007), the parallels between Deren and Deleuze are neither as simple nor as straightforward. Finally, lecturer in film and English Anna Powell (2007) provides another Deleuzian focused reading which is concerned with investigating Deren's contextualisation in reference to surrealism and specifically the European and American trance film. However, not being screendance related texts, the Deleuzian focused analyses are not directly related to the thesis.

Furthermore, film lecturers and writers Wendy Haslem (2002) and Catherine Fowler (2004) investigate Deren's noteworthy relevance to recent practice. The former undertakes an overview of Deren's life, also providing brief details and in some instances analyses of Deren's screenworks even beyond the point of the artist's untimely death, delving into how current practitioners like David Lynch are still inspired by her work. On similar grounds, Fowler demonstrates that the contemporaneity and applicability of Derenian theory exists beyond its time, but also beyond the confinements of mainstream cinema. She discusses Deren's notion of vertical time and the way it relates to non-mainstream film installations like multi- or split-screen projections. However, it is focused more on the way recent artists make use of Derenian aesthetic theory, rather than developing the discussion around Deren herself. Finally, 'Maya Deren: A Life Choreographed for Camera' by artist and writer Mark Alice Durant's (2009) is a very recent submission whose perspective is mainly biographical with some aesthetic analysis, which provides an overview of Deren rather than advancing the scholarship around the artist.

The above review of Deren-focused essays and books has identified the scholarly texts that relate to the theoretical and aesthetic perspectives of Deren, forming the basis of discussion for the cinematic contextualisation of the artist.

### 2.3 DERENIAN THEORY FROM A FILM PERSPECTIVE

As identified, Derenian aesthetic theory is discussed and analysed in a cinematic context that generally situates it within the formalist theoretical tradition of Münsterberg, Eisenstein, Kuleshov, Arnheim and Balázs (Sitney, 2002; Rabinovitz, 2003; Jackson, 2002). From a similar perspective, the following section discusses, in depth, Deren's stylistic techniques of shot and editing primarily within a formalist context, as well as her viewpoints on sound; attributes relatively unexplored in previous writings. Extending these perspectives, the study examines Deren's affiliation with cinematic realism and her focus on human corporeality. Amongst other of her publications, the study draws on Deren's monograph 'Anagram' (1946) to identify the aesthetic parameters of her theory as seen from a cinematic perspective and in line with the focus of the research on the formal characteristics of Derenian aesthetics.

The formalist tendency of filmmaking has been retrospectively attributed to Georges Méliès<sup>21</sup> (Tudor, 1974; Bordwell, 1997; Miller and Stam, 2004) who considered that cinema should manipulate its particular elements towards the production of an experience that only cinema can achieve. On similar grounds, formalist scholars such as Arnheim (1957) perceive the special attributes of the cinematic medium that define its limitations while highlighting its unique creative capacity. Notably, such formalist perspectives are affiliated to the Greenbergian parameters of Modernism, as will be discussed later.

Viewed from this standpoint, Derenian aesthetics, in pursuit of a new filmic reality, are opposed to the use of exogenous actual realities or art-realities and their reproduction via the cinematic medium. According to Deren's theory, any film practice based on other art forms, namely literature or theatre, is uncinematic. She considers Hollywood's form of fiction filmmaking, as only superficially filmic.

According to Deren, by incorporating and merely reproducing art forms, such as literature, drama and dance, Hollywood filmmaking results in a product which is no longer a filmic reality, but rather a representation of those art forms not the creation of cinematic art, thus a reproduction of exogenous art-realities. For Deren, “the reproduction on film of other art forms does not constitute the creation of a filmic integrity and logic” (Deren, 1946, 48) and, by filmic integrity and logic, Deren refers to film as an art rather than a mere medium. Deren argues that cinematic quality cannot be “accomplished by an extension of the recording method to cover the forms of any or all the other arts.” (1946, 39) and reaffirms her principles of a new filmic reality. Film art is only achieved when the combined elements incorporated into the creative process “... are related according to the special character of the instrument of film itself – the camera and the editing – so that the reality which emerges is a new one which only film can achieve and which could not be accomplished by the exercise of any other instrument” (1946, 39 – 40). It is on the basis of this interrelated technique of reconstruction, rather than reproduction, that Deren incorporates the ‘art-reality’ of dance in her filmworks, as will be later explained. However, Deren’s notion of the creation of a “filmic integrity and logic” (1946, 48) or a new film-created reality is not original. Hugo Münsterberg (1916) stated that, in order for the cinema to establish its own film aesthetics and therefore be considered an art, it should manipulate reality to achieve an imaginary result<sup>22</sup>.

Correlations can be made between Deren’s theory and the viewpoints of Rudolf Arnheim. In his pioneering book Film as Art (Arnheim, 1957)<sup>23</sup>, Arnheim argued against the belief that cinematography, as a mechanical imitation of nature, cannot be considered to be art. It is noteworthy that Arnheim was, in fact, directly praising Deren’s creative endeavours, arguing that she is a “delicate magician... [who constructs sequences that are] neither arbitrary nor absurd... [but instead] follow the letter of a law we never studied on paper; but, guided by our eyes, our minds conform willingly” (Arnheim, 1957, 86). His analysis of the perceptual principles involved in film, seeks to demonstrate the differences between film and reality which enable the cinematic expression to be considered an art form. According to Arnheim’s writings, these actual differences that distance film from reality and their limitations of natural perception are the ones

that allow an aesthetic perception<sup>24</sup>. The technical confinements of film representation are, for Arnheim, the ones that should be celebrated and developed in order for film to be art while, for Deren, such limitations are the creative tools of expression.

### **2.3.1 Deren's Raw Material: Filmic Shot, Reality and Realism**

Investigating the perceptual activity of cinema, Deren makes a comparison between the 'camera's vision' and the human eye. She emphasizes two differences, the 'field of vision' – the visual angle through which the light enters the lens – and the focus. Deren briefly states that the human eye is comparable to that of a wide-angled lens – a typical wide-angle lens is 28 mm – despite the fact that it is generally considered that the 'normal' lens – 50 mm – best approximates perception with the naked eye (Monaco, 2000). The fact is that both viewpoints are correct in specific terms. The 'normal' lens is closer to human vision as regards the perception of depth while the 'wide angle' lens is truer to the naked eye's angle of vision which is wider than the 'wide-angle' lens. However, both lenses have perceptual drawbacks. The angle of the former lens is very narrow, while the 'wide angle' lens affects the depth dimension, distorting the linear arrangement of the objects in the picture.

Deren's main interest, however, is the issue of focus. While the focus of the human eye is driven by certain stimuli which relate to one's interests and anxieties, the focus of the camera is based on mere technical issues. According to the depth of field used, the focused plane will be observed and recorded with impartial clarity. Therefore, the eye is selective according to subjective preferences, while the camera, despite the fact that it can limit its depth of field, cannot isolate certain images from the surroundings in the psychological way the human eye can. Deren notes that these differences are very important for a filmmaker to bear in mind while shooting, in order to avoid the misconception that what the camera sees and records is what the eye sees (1946, 46-47).

Discussing realism, Deren draws the reader's attention towards the most important difference between cinema as a photographic medium, and other art forms. She argues that, while in most art forms "the artist is the intermediary between reality and the instrument by which he creates his work of art" (1946, 30), the photographic lens has the ability to record reality in the most immediate way. It is noteworthy that Deren's viewpoint is a precursor of the philosopher Stanley Cavell (b. 1926) whose seminal book The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film (1979) argues that what is screened is reality. Unlike realistic painting which presents the "likenesses" of things, the objects on screen as well as the persons depicted are in fact real, despite the fact that they do not exist at the time of screening. Similarly Deren considers that, while most art mediums physically manipulate their material in order to achieve a kind of realism, cinema starts with reality itself as its raw material which, mechanically recorded, is then manipulated in the creation of a film work.

Deren acknowledges this factor as the main reason why cinema often treats reality in a naturalistic way. The film artist, instead of using the 'realism' of photography to create an altered imaginative reality, tries to rely as much as possible upon the mechanism itself, thus reducing the manipulation and therefore his/her creativity to a minimum (Deren, 1946). Deren's strong disapproval of this practice being considered a form of art bears similarities to the formalists' ideas whose faith is in the plastic attributes of the image rather than the reality, to paraphrase Bazin (1967, 24). Deren calls for a filmic reality which can only exist on celluloid and by that she refers to the reality constructed through the cinematic medium rather than a mere record of it; a filmic reality freed from reality's spatial-temporality, acquiring its own film-time and film-space dimensions, as will be analysed later.

Cinematic realism, discussed extensively and developed by André Bazin (Bazin and Cardullo 1997), is based on the foundations laid by the early filmmakers August Marie Louis Nicolas Lumière (1862 – 1954) and Louis Jean Lumière (1864 – 1948)<sup>25</sup>, (Tudor, 1974; Bordwell, 1997; Miller and Stam, 2004). From Bazin's perspective, the essence of cinema lies in its ability to mechanically record reality. Calling for a cinema of 'transparency', he argues that, "the highest

level of cinematic art coincides with the lowest level of *mise-en-scene*” (1997, 4)<sup>26</sup>.

Although Deren opposes the cinematic realism that Bazin proposes and dismisses cinema modes like those of film director William Wyler (1902 – 1981) as un-cinematic, her ideas about realistic reproduction are not entirely against any form of representation. What Deren criticises in cinematic as well as in more general terms is realism as a form of artistic expression. Her position on the subject is categorically against any sort of unaltered reproduction. For Deren, the imitation-representation of reality is not worth being made by artists and their art instruments, given that science can duplicate and analyse reality much more efficiently than any art medium. As she argues:

if science has found it necessary to arrive at all these instruments and calculations in order to analyze reality realistically, how can the artist “realist” presume to cover the same ground on the basis of his personal powers of perception?

Deren, 1946, 12

Furthermore, Deren is against such a practice because, according to her beliefs, the minimization of personal interpretation and subjectivity results in a reduction of the creative process; such an artistic approach violates Deren’s principles of art creation:

Art is the dynamic result of the relationship of three elements: the reality to which a man has access – directly and through the researches of other men; the crucible of his own imagination and intellect; and the art instrument by which he realizes, through skilful exercise and control, his imaginative manipulation. To limit deliberately or through neglect, any of these functions, is to limit the potential of the work of art itself.

Deren, 1946, 17

However, as one of the unique points of her theory, Deren does not entirely dismiss cinema’s ability to capture and reproduce reality. As far as the raw

material is concerned – the filmic shot – Deren not only agrees with Bazin, but emphasises that the mechanical reproduction of reality should be the basis of cinematic creation. In other words, cinema should make use of the unique photographic/cinematographic capacity which Cavell labels as ‘automatism’, a process of mechanical reproduction that partly removes the human agent (1979, 23). At no point in her career did Deren use techniques of filmmaking other than the traditional process of recording material performed in order to edit and then screen it. Although, within this process, the manipulation involved and the techniques of filming and editing she used were highly innovative, the content of the film, the raw material on which the filmic time-space continuum is constructed, had reality as its starting point. On these grounds, Deren was opposed to the abstract film form which “denies the special capacity of film to manipulate real elements as realities, and substitutes, exclusively, the elements of artifice (the method of painting)” (Deren, 1946, 46). She states clearly that the film artist should be behind a camera that in turn should be in front of reality. As Cavell notes, for “movie [to be] a candidate for art... [it should have] a natural relation to its traditions of automatism” (1979, 103), thus asserting Deren’s viewpoint of reality.

The fine balance between using reality without reproducing it is a key element in Deren’s creations. Echoing Arnheim, Deren argues that since cinema and reality are closely connected, film should serve this mimetic element in an opposing way by deconstructing rather than reproducing reality. However, the film artist should respect the film’s capacity to use reality and it should exist in the context of the world around rather than a completely abstract one.

In Deren’s insistence on the use of reality, the camera provides certain elements derived from realities which are afterwards related into a dynamic whole through the process of editing. Despite the fact that this might sound obvious, Deren, by referring to this process, mainly wants to achieve two things. She expresses her opposition to those who might dispense with either one or even both of these processes, as is possible in an abstract film which the artist might create by hand-painting directly on the celluloid – e.g. *Scherzo* by animator and film director Norman McLaren (1914 – 1987) (1939) – and furthermore, to emphasize the



equal importance of both processes, camera and editing, as will be further demonstrated.

### **2.3.2 Derenian Editing and Film Elements: Film-Space, Film-Time and Beyond**

The analysis of editing refers to the narrow definition of the term which assigns “the process a role as organizer of the elements of film... according to their order and duration” (Aumont, 1992, 44) as much as this regards the film’s visual dimension. On these grounds, and according to the empirical approach as argued by Aumont (1992), there are two functions related to the editing technique that correspond to equal number of editing styles. The first one is the ‘narrative’, which assures the ordering of the shots according to the needs of causality and/or diegetic temporality, with ‘diegesis’ being the succession of screened events that make up the particular story (Genette, 1980). The second one is the ‘expressive’, which “is not a means but an end ... aiming to express by itself – and by collision of two images – some emotion or idea” (Martin, 1977, 131). A brief analysis of the aesthetic editing systems of Bazin, who proposes devaluation of the functions of montage, and Eisenstein, who at the other extreme considers it an essential element of cinematic expression, will facilitate contextualisation of the Derenian editing principles.

Bazin’s notion of filmic transparency and how cinema should aim at representing reality as unaltered as possible, are discussed above. Bazin acknowledges that, for practical reasons – limited duration of film roll per magazine, as well as mise-en-scene changes, to name but a few – montage is an essential process in cinematic creation. However, that is not to say that it should be given primary creative manipulation, which results in the fragmentation or even the deconstruction of the filmed reality. According to Bazin, its use should aspire to preserve the continuity and homogeneity that exists in reality towards the creation of a spectacle that resembles it.

Whatever the film, its aim is to give us the illusion of being present at real events unfolding before us as in everyday reality... But this illusion involves a fundamental deceit, for reality exists in a continuous space, and the screen in fact presents us with a succession of tiny fragments called “shots,” whose choice, order and length constitute precisely what we call the film’s *decoupage*. If, through a deliberate effort of attention, we try to see the ruptures imposed by the camera on the continuous unfolding of the event represented, and try to understand clearly why we normally take no notice of them, we realize that we tolerate them because they nevertheless allow an impression to remain of continuous and homogeneous reality.

Bazin, 1978, 77

On these creative lines, the continuity editing techniques of classical cinema have been developed, such as the ones cited by Aumont: the eyeline match, the match on movement, the match on action, the match on the axis (Aumont, 1992, 56), as well as the 180° and 30° rules of angle change of succeeding shots<sup>27</sup> to name some of the devices.

In marked contrast with the above techniques, whose purpose was to present an homogeneous reality with editing that does not draw attention to itself, is the editing style used by the Soviet filmmakers of the 1920s and the montage tradition that derived from the work of Lev Kuleshov, Vsevolod Pudovkin (1893 – 1953), Alexander/ Olexandr Petrovych Dovzhenko (1894 – 1956), and especially from the work of Sergei Eisenstein. His belief was that reality should undergo maximum manipulation in order to convey meaning through the art of cinema. As Aumont points out, for Eisenstein, film is “less a representation than an articulated discourse and his reflections on montage consist precisely in defining this articulation” (1992, 60). Similarly, Pudovkin in the 1930s argues that “the foundation of film art is *editing*” (Pudovkin and Montague, 1974, 23). To illustrate this, he claims that “every object, taken from a given viewpoint and shown to the spectators, is a *dead object*, even though it has moved before the camera” (1974, 24) and he continues by emphasising that

only if the object be placed together among a number of separate objects, only if presented as part of a synthesis of different separate visual images, is it endowed with filmic life... Every object must, by editing, be brought upon the screen so that it shall have not *photographic*, but *cinematographic* essence.

Pudovkin and Montague, 1974, 25

On the same grounds, Eisenstein's theoretical as well as filmwork calls for the utmost use of editing as being cinema's greatest expressive tool. His way of editing brought forward the juxtaposition of images that aimed to create an emotional impact rather than being storytelling devices of an illusionary homogeneous reality. "I should call cinema 'the art of juxtapositions' ... for the exposition of even the simplest phenomena cinema needs juxtaposition ... between the elements that constitute it: montage is fundamental to cinema" (cited in Taylor, 1998, 36). Eisenstein's filmwork often consists of contrasting shots that aim to interact, or to collide or 'conflict', "...simple contrasting comparisons ... produce a definitely emotional effect..." (cited in Taylor, 1998, 37)<sup>28</sup>. Eisenstein's beliefs about montage, summarised in the following statement, were shared by the majority of Soviet filmmakers of the 1920s: "The montage of attractions: it is not in fact phenomena that are compared but chains of association that are linked to a particular phenomenon in the mind of a particular audience" (cited in Taylor, 1998, 36)<sup>29</sup>.

According to film theorist, critic and author David Bordwell (1993), among others, these are four relations between two successive shots: "1. Graphic relations... 2. Rhythmic relations... 3. Spatial relations... 4. Temporal relations ..." (Bordwell, 1993, 250). Hence, the classical continuity editing style, with a preoccupation with devaluation of montage and "a strict submission of its effects to the narrative instance or to the realistic representation of the world" (Aumont, 1992, 53), uses the aforementioned matching techniques to ensure visual continuity, by smoothing the transitions as much as possible. It tries to blend the graphic, rhythmic, as well as spatiotemporal elements of each shot to the next shot in order not to disrupt the homogeneity of the film. In contrast, the dialectical editing style seeks to create meaning and/or emotion, while

emphasising that editing is cinema's most essential dynamic element. It uses these relations in order to create collisions between the shots. The graphic, rhythmical or spatiotemporal relations that are created between the shots should be stressed and accordingly, shots should differentiate themselves from one another. The relations that dialectical editing calls for include contradiction, which is intentionally apparent rather than masked behind matching techniques that aim to pass unnoticed.

By defining how Deren uses the filmic relations between two shots, that is, the way she chooses to construct film-space and film-time, this chapter will investigate whether her beliefs tend towards the continuous or the dialectical editing styles. Due to Deren's formalist perspectives, one may rush to conclude that she would be interested in the montage proposed by the Soviet school rather than the 'narrative' one. This conclusion would not be an entirely false one; however, that is not to say that Deren's filmmaking and film-theory automatically involves a dialectical editing style either. The answer is more complex and is situated in the combination of these radically different techniques, resulting in Deren's unique and innovative approach to editing.

Deren's discussion of editing is confined to the fact that it is for her an expressive cinematic process that should be exercised in order for reality to be manipulated towards the production of a new film-reality: "Upon the mechanics and processes of 'editing' falls the burden of relating all these elements into a dynamic whole" (Deren, 1946, 46). This statement immediately distances Deren from the classical continuity editing style, which seeks to minimise the expressive usage of the editing. However, she does not argue in favour of Eisenstein's montage of conflict and collisions. Her editing style, evident in her filmwork, seeks to discover the effect of transitional moments that defy realism. She argues that, although the Russians' contribution to the technique of editing is remarkable, Eisenstein being among the primary figures of the movement along with Dovzhenko, these works are still literary narrative. Despite their use of conflicting images to convey their messages, the result is still one that drives narrative causality. Therefore, although it started as an innovative technique, according to Deren it did not develop, and as a result, Eisenstein's "originally

inspired methods have fallen into conventionalized usage” (Deren, 1946, 44), referring only to the formal parameters proposed by the Russian school and not to its socio-political dimensions<sup>30</sup> (Holl, 2001).

To define the exact Derenian editing principles, reference should be made to her discussion of the filmic elements and how she proposes that these should be combined towards the creation of an artistic whole. With reference to Bazin and Eisenstein, Deren’s discussion on the combination of film elements does not confine itself to the ordering of the shots. Throughout Anagram (Deren, 1946), the reference to elements at times concerns the ones included within the shot rather than the shot itself, and at other times notions such as film-time, film-space even film-sound, as it will be later discussed. This implies that, while her discussion includes the narrow notion of editing that concerns the ordering of the graphic material of the film, it also concerns the material within the shot as well as the non-graphic material, namely the sound which will be later discussed.

Deren also clarifies another key theoretical viewpoint which is her concept of ‘economy in art’ (1946). Equating, in a sense, the creation of new experience, with the “emergent whole” (Deren, 1946, 24) – a term which she claims to borrow from Gestalt psychology<sup>31</sup> – Deren discusses how the elements that constitute an art product acquire a new value resulting in an outcome that “... transcends, in meaning, the sum total of the parts...” (1946, 24). In other words, she is interested in the exploitation of the dynamism that the elements acquire, once combined. Consequently, Deren also specifies that the artist should aim to achieve “... the creation of a logic in which two and two may make five, or preferably fifteen; ... [on these grounds] two can no longer be understood as two” (Deren, 1946, 24).

Notably, the identification of the way synthesis creates meaning through association is a fundamental recognition in Soviet montage theory discussed above. However, the Derenian viewpoint raises certain issues, which rest on the fact that her argument does not necessarily concern editing specifically – the process of shot assemblage – but also the elements involved within a shot, the ‘mise-en-scene’. For Deren, the elements within the shot can be related either

with the rest of the elements in the shot (intrashot), or with the elements of preceding or successive shots (intershot), thus becoming objects of editing discussion. One also cannot fail to compare Deren's statement on economy in art, as mentioned above, with Balázs' preceding claim that montage has the ability to "convey to us something that cannot be seen in any of the images themselves" (Balázs, 1970, 123).

Deren argues that the elements used in art creation should aim to interact in a way that transcends their individual qualities and characteristics. The artist, according to Deren, should use this combination with a view to creating an art-reality that exploits the new attributes of the elements; a concept that is in harmony with her notion of creation of a unique art-reality that is determined by cinema's specificity, linking in that way with Arnheim's discussion on cinema's specificity as an art-form.

Another point that can be derived from her filmwork rather than from her theoretical claims is that Deren does not completely dismiss the matching techniques of the classical continuity editing style. Demonstrating the combination of the primary editing styles discussed above, there are occasions where Deren makes references to the matching techniques. One of the most obvious ones, is the 'match on action' technique. According to the classical cinema, such an editing moment would depict a gesture which begins in the first shot and completes in the second shot, while the point of view-framing of the action is changed. One example, which can be considered to be a pertinent reference to these techniques, can be seen in [A Study in Choreography for the Camera](#) when the seminal African-American dancer and choreographer Talley Beatty (1919/1923<sup>32</sup> – 1996) starts a leg movement in shot 1 and finishes the action in shot 2. Although for anyone who has not seen the film, this seems to be a classical case of 'match on action', the important thing to note is that, while shot 1 is placed in an exterior environment, a forest, the second shot is placed indoors, in an apartment, to be more exact. Such a technique, includes a strong connective transitional aspect, that provides a reference point for the spectator to continue her/his visual experience without being interrupted by the editing, while

including graphic collision, produced by the change of locales which surround the seemingly uninterrupted foreground action.

Deren's editing technique discussed above, cannot be easily labeled as being either classical continuity or dialectical. Equally, Deren, without denying any of the above editing styles and the techniques which they have developed, combines them towards new directions. She proposes yet another way of editing that is juxtaposing, not necessarily in the associational manner in which the Eisensteinian montage acts, but on an intellectual level that at times resembles realistic techniques that seek to conceal shot transitions. The result is unprecedented, since it defies the spatiotemporal elements of the recorded reality, which will be further demonstrated through the analysis of Deren's film practice, in chapter four. Having established Deren's visual aesthetic approach, the following section investigates the sound parameters of her theory within a cinematic context and through their relation to the visual parameter.

### **2.3.3 Film as an Audio-Visual Experience**

According to Aumont (1992, 159) the sound elements – verbal language, music, and sound effects – can be only considered film sound elements if they occur “simultaneously with the image; it is this simultaneity that integrates them into film language, because taken on their own, these three would simply constitute another language, that of radio” (Aumont, 1992, 159). This section deals with the under-researched element of Derenian sound aesthetics as manifested in combination with the visual.

The addition of synchronised sound on film around the end of the 1920s was a development that polarised the cinematic practice of those directors and theorists that celebrated its arrival as a natural evolution of the cinematographic experience, and those that confronted its usage with scepticism. This debate was about the usage of realistic dialogue and an image's environmental sounds, versus sound effects and music that were not realistically connected with the image (Weis and Belton, 1985).

Arnheim (1957) was opposed to the coming of sound altogether on the grounds of medium's specificity. Based on the purity reasoning of Lessing (1766), he regards sound as being a non-cinematic dimension that returns films to theatrical forms of composition; meaning realistic narrative forms. According to his writings, sound destroys the balance of the visual objects:

In the universal silence of the image, the fragments of a broken vase could "talk" exactly the way a character talked to his neighbor, and a person approaching on a road and visible on the horizon as a mere dot "talked" as someone acting in close-up... This homogeneity... is destroyed by talking film: it endows the actor with speech, and since only he can have it, all other things are pushed into the background.

Arnheim, 1957, 227

At the same time, sound paralyses the actor's action in favour of speech "replacing the visual fruitful image of man in action with the sterile one of the man who talks" (Arnheim, 1957, 229).

In marked contrast, Bazin was in favour of the use of synchronised sound in film. The ability to add audio representation to the already highly representational image is a significant development in the absolute representation of reality. His notion of reproducing reality became stronger with the use of location sound that aimed to add to the ontology of the image, thus helping the audience through the narrative flow of the film (Bazin, 1967).

Similarly, Deren welcomed the use of sound as much as Bazin but for completely different reasons. While Bazin saw the introduction of the audio-track as one step closer to the reproduction of reality, Deren reacted to the development as an additional creative element that can contribute to the cinematic experience (Guggenheim and Deren, 1945). On these grounds, she generally adheres to the formalist sound usage that envisaged the audio dimension as an element that should not be cinematically incorporated in a realistic manner.



Filmmakers and theorists like Basil Wright (1907 – 1987) and Brian Vivian Braun (unknown dates) distinguish between the talking film and the sound film, dismissing the former as theatrical in form. On similar grounds, Siegfried Kracauer, fundamentally a realist theoretician, distinguishes between what he calls the spoken word or dialogue and sound proper, calling for a usage of speech not as an instrument of narrative realism but as another sound element full of creative possibilities. As he notes, “All the successful attempts at an integration of the spoken word have one characteristic in common: they play down dialogue with a view to reinstating the visuals” (Kracauer, 1997, 106); emphasising the formalist belief that film is primarily a visual medium and the necessity of creating according to the “supremacy of the image” (Kracauer, 1997, 103).

Other prominent figures such as Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov, who co-signed the ‘Statement on Sound’ in 1928 (Eisenstein et al., 1994), acknowledged the need for a distinct use of sound. As film professors Elisabeth Weis and John Belton (1985, 76) note, their main concern was to safeguard the Eisensteinian montage principles of visual ‘neutralisation’; the use of photographed material not necessarily in its realistic context but as an independent block of creative material, a sort of a complex sign cut off from surrounding reality. Accordingly, sound is considered a valuable montage element not through “mere *addition* [namely adhesion..... but through] *contrapuntal use ... sharp discord ...* [in order to be achieved] *orchestral counterpoint* of visual and sound images” (Eisenstein et al., 1994).

The above formalist tendency of sound use also had advocates outside Soviet practitioners. French filmmaker René Clair (René-Lucien Chomette, 1898 – 1981), although initially resistant to the use of sound, realised that it could be used as an added creative film dimension which would enhance the associational imagery montage of the film. Clearly against synchronised filmmaking and the industry of talking films, Clair states that, “We do not need to *hear* the sound of clapping if we can *see* the clapping hands... It is the *alternate*, not the simultaneous, use of the visual subject and of the sound produced by it that creates the best effects” (Clair, 1985, 94), thus calling for a change of focus from a talking film to a sound film that makes creative use of a wealth of sounds.

Along the same lines, the French film director and theorist Jean Epstein has some ideas of his own on the use of sound, with the essay 'Slow Motion Sound' (Epstein, 1985) as his most famous contribution. In this, he requires sound experimentation to depart from the theatrical spectacle. His viewpoint was to penetrate the realm of sound through analysis of its elements providing new dimensions of the known world, similar to the way visual slow motion has the ability to reveal movement.

Finally, Balázs (1970) makes perhaps one of the most inclusive references on the subject while drawing connecting lines with the aforementioned filmmakers, film-theorists and with Deren. Balázs emphasises that film sound should turn "from a technique of reproduction to a creative art" (1970, 194) while stressing that "in art only that counts for a discovery which discovers, reveals something hitherto hidden from our eyes-or ears" (1970, 197). He regarded a sound film that explores and reveals the acoustic landscape that surrounds mankind, the "speech of things" (Balázs, 1985, 116), as articulating an alternative view to Arnheim who viewed sound as a threat to 'talking' things.

Regardless of Deren's belief that cinema is primarily a visual experience constructed by space and time manipulation, a common formalist viewpoint emphasised by Arnheim, she does not oppose the use of the new film elements provided by sound. Although her discussion of sound and her experience in the use of sound is limited, she is convinced of its value. The only aesthetic parameter Deren put forward for the proper use of sound was that it has to be explored according to the attributes it gains while in the cinematic apparatus.

I have not, myself, had the opportunity of experimenting with sound but I am convinced that an explorative attitude, brought to the techniques of recording, mixing, amplifying, etc., could create a wealth of original film sound elements.

Deren, 1946, 48

Anticipating Balázs, Deren argues that if the aesthetic principles she proposes on film treatment are applied to the sound, then the creation of new film-sound

elements is possible and thus new filmic possibilities are within grasp. Based on the above analysis of visual treatment, one can infer that Deren values highly the sound that is composed, created according to the film experience and treated as a dimension of the cinematic process: a sound that is reality based but does not reproduce reality, a sound that is generally manipulated according to the possibilities that it acquires once within the cinematic apparatus. As she writes:

I would like to use sound not in terms of illustrating and helping along the emotion which the visual image wishes to project, but as an element in its own terms which, brought together with the visual image, will create a synthesis – an effect which is different in quality from both the visual image and the sound image.

Guggenheim and Deren, 1945

This kind of treatment is the only one that can give rise to the discovery/invention of the unique abilities inherent to film-sound. In that sense, Deren is in favour of the use of sound, as proved through her last two filmworks that include music, Meditation on Violence (1948) and The Very Eye of Night (1952 – 1955), as well as the addition of sound to her first filmwork Meshes of the Afternoon (1943).

In general terms, Deren welcomed new expressive media or technical evolutions of existing ones. Quite possibly, this was one of the reasons why she embraced the cinematic as a means of expression, the newest of expressive mediums in her time. In regards to film-art, sound made cinema more realistic, thus leading to its immediate embrace by realist filmmakers and film-theorists like Bazin, and the general scepticisms on the part of formalist film critics. However, this fact does not coincide with Deren's beliefs. She welcomes sound for reasons other than the ability to bring the cinematic closer to reality. In parallel to Balázs's viewpoint, she was interested in the creative possibilities offered by the additional dimension of sound. In similar terms to the way reality should be treated, sound has to be manipulated in filmic terms in order to contribute to the filmic experience. The use of sound as experienced in reality is critically dismissed on the same grounds as is the reproduction of recorded reality. Thus, she argues:

the development of a distinctive film form consists not in eliminating any of the elements-whether of nature, reality, or the artifices of other arts [such as the art of sound-music] to which it has access, but in relating all these according to the special capacity of film: the manipulations made possible by the fact that it is both a space art and a time art.

Deren, 1946, 42

For Deren, the elements of film-time, film-space – the dimensions of the moving image and potentially of film-sound – are those that will contribute to film form. Upon their manipulation, the film creator should create a filmwork which departs from any other experience, man-made or not: “... a dynamic manipulation of the relationships between film-time and film-space (and potentially, film-sound) can create that specially integrated complex: film form” (Deren, 1946, 51). The introduction of sound on film added a significant new dimension with corresponding creative possibilities. It can be considered to have introduced a new art instrument, the audio-visual cinematic as opposed to the visual cinematic.

Such an interpretation clarifies further why Deren welcomes sound. According to her beliefs, it is precisely in the invention of novel art-instruments, in this case the evolution of the cinematic, that the possibility of original creativity in art rests. She argues that, “The reality ... (the artist’s) consciousness would today comprehend is not of any other period. In this, and in the invention of new art instruments, lies the potential originality of the art of our time” (Deren, 1946, 17). This reinforces Balázs’ words when he argues that “In art every technical innovation is an inspiration” (Balázs, 1970, 196).

#### **2.3.4 Derenian Film Theory**

According to the above, Deren’s film aesthetics seem to differ from the film literature preceding *Anagram* (1946). Therefore, Deren should be considered a valuable part of the history of film theory and aesthetics with valid and original comments and propositions that contribute to the realm. Whereas it is a valid argument that her theory, as much as is evidenced in the literature she has

provided, can be classified under the generic formalist aesthetic tendency, her views do not entirely coincide with one school of film theory and they cannot be confined by a strict set of cinematic rules.

In addition, this research argues that Deren, as an artist, cannot be easily classified because of the lack of stylistic homogeneity throughout her film-practice. This point is not clearly addressed in Jackson's (2002) analytical approach. It is a misconception that Deren's filmwork and theory can be illustrated through Meshes of the Afternoon (1943), which is widely cited as her most representative film, or through the A Study of Choreography for the Camera (1945), which is considered to be Deren's choreo-cinematic attempt. While Deren has certain aesthetic threads that can be traced throughout her brief, but, nonetheless, prolific career, she is nevertheless a polymorphous film creator. The heterogeneity of Deren's film approach will be extensively discussed in chapter four. Prior to that, a contextualisation of Deren's principles within the realm of dance theory will be undertaken, in search of a more comprehensive understanding of Derenian theory.

## **2.4 DERENIAN THEORY FROM A DANCE PERSPECTIVE**

Deren was involved with the art of dance at an amateur level while also having a theoretical interest. In addition, she had worked as general assistant and press-promoter for Katherine Dunham (1909 – 2006) – a well established African-American dancer, choreographer, dance anthropologist and activist<sup>33</sup> – taking, for several years, an active part in the dance scene. However, it is neither Dunham's dance technique nor her choreographic principles that influenced Deren, who was more interested in the dance anthropology content of Dunham's work. As she wrote to Dunham in 1941, "In addition to having a very deep feeling for dance with some uncultivated talent in that direction... I have had in mind, for some time, a children's book on dancing" (cited in Jackson, 2002, 29). Furthermore, whereas half of Deren's completed works incorporate identifiable dance/movement techniques of a diverse nature, none is directly affiliated with Dunham's dance technique. Based on her anthropological study on the African

roots of black Caribbean dance, Dunham's technique integrated movement qualities manifested in Haitian Vodou rituals, namely isolation of the spine from the pelvis and the limbs in flexible, complex and highly rhythmical movement; qualities not manifested in Deren's screenworks as stated by Deren herself (cited in Clark et al., 1988, 285), and Deren's actress as well as Dunham dancer Rita Christiani (cited in Clark et al., 1988, 521) as demonstrated in chapter four.

Deren's most significant reference to the art of dance discusses the parameters within which originality can be achieved in filmmaking. In her 1946 article 'Creating Movies with a New Dimension: Time' (Deren and McPherson, 2005), she first argues against the photographic approach of filmmaking with a focus on the artistic attributes on which still photography is based (framing, focus, exposure and colour)<sup>34</sup>, radically concluding that filmmakers would benefit more from mastering the compositional and aesthetic attributes of arts such as music and dance.

Do not approach motion-picture photography in the conventional manner. Do not look upon movies as a mere extension of the still photograph. And pay *no* attention to those who tell you the best approach to film-making is a sure grounding in photographic techniques through still photography... the best study for the embryonic film-maker is one of the time arts -i.e., the dance or music- since, after all, motion pictures are concerned with time and with movement.

Deren and McPherson, 2005, 131

Deren opposes the concept that still photography, being the technical predecessor of motion pictures, is the closest art in aesthetic and compositional attributes. She acknowledges the technical affiliation between the two instruments; photographic media with processes of registration that are technically the same. In conventional use, they both employ cameras to register light either on a strip of light-sensitive chemically coated film or, most recently, electronically in digital form, as it passes through the lens, the shutter, and the aperture –special photographic attributes which will be explored in the dedicated chapter three. Focusing on the differences between motion -photography and still photography, the registration of motion and duration as opposed to recording a

moment and depiction of stillness, she argues that it is not necessary for the new filmmaker to master first the instrument of still photography, since the technical part of the cinematic medium “can be learned directly in connection with movies” (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 131). Accordingly, the most beneficial way of learning the creative aspect of the motion-picture instrument is through an art that incorporates what actually differentiates the cinematic medium from still photography, namely the dimension of time.

The justification behind Deren’s radical argument that dance and music are possibly the two arts closest to the compositional artistry of the cinema is best understood in terms of the art of dance rather than music. Whereas music can be argued to be a spatiotemporal art that creates and consequently affects space through sound waves (Everest, 2001)<sup>35</sup>, its attributes are confined to the audio perceptual system. Therefore, although related to the spatiotemporal dimension in cinema, music lacks the essential visual element that characterizes the cinematic medium. Therefore dance is arguably closer to cinema’s aesthetic attributes due to its incorporation of visually perceived spatiotemporality. Accordingly, dance seems to be interlinked with Deren not only on a practical level but also on theoretical-aesthetic grounds. The following review demonstrates the argument further.

#### **2.4.1 On Dance and Deren**

Brief references to Deren and dance are located in numerous articles including that of Deirdre Towers in which the opportunity of promoting Deren’s restored negatives in a video publication provides a brief overview of Deren which covers personal financial and artistic information, noting that, among others, Deren is credited “as being the first dance filmmaker” (1986, 88). In the more recent publication by filmmaker Liliana Resnick (2004 – 2005), who provides a brief overview of Meshes and Study within a ‘Cine Dance’ context as proclaimed through the title of the article, there are little or no references to the movement attributes of the two films and minor inaccuracies.

In contrast to other authors, dance and feminist scholar Leslie Satin's article 'Movement and the Body in Maya Deren's Meshes of the Afternoon' (1993) discusses the body, its movement and the rendered physicality in Deren's screenworks. Focusing on Deren's Meshes, Satin draws connecting lines between Deren and the revolutionary dancer and choreographer Martha Graham (1894 – 1991), with brief references to seminal choreographers Doris Humphrey (1895 – 1958), Katherine Dunham, and Jean Erdman (b.1916).

Situating Deren within the modern dance tradition of the 1930s and 1940s, Satin is concerned not with the camera work or any other cinematic technique. Instead, she discusses how both Graham and Humphrey have developed systems of movement that denied the aerial context of classical ballet in favour of a relationship of the dancer to the earth, which is also evident in Deren's Meshes. Furthermore, she discusses Graham's and Deren's relation to Freudian and Jungian symbolism as manifested through the objects, set and costumes of their works, while raising awareness that both practitioners have dealt with the issue of female subject/object and the sexual conflicts with the patriarchy of the period. Finally, a considerable portion of Satin's discussion assesses, from a feminist perspective, the issues of spectatorship and gaze especially as manifested in Meshes.

Along the same lines as Deren's relationship to modern dance, dance professor and practitioner Mark Franko provides another of the very few instances where Deren is viewed from a theoretical dance perspective. His article 'Aesthetic Agencies in Flux' subtitled 'Talley Beatty, Maya Deren, and the Modern Dance Tradition in Study in Choreography for Camera' (2001) discusses Deren's work in the context of dance modernism of 1940. Franko investigates Deren's personal relationship to dance and her professional involvement with modern dance choreographer Katherine Dunham.

Franko focuses on Deren's film Study and with the specific use of black dancer Talley Beatty which he compares with that of the use of the white dancer and choreographer Frank Westbrook in Ritual, while discussing Beatty's work Mourner's Bench (1947), in relation to Martha Graham's Lamentation (1930).



He discusses the notions of depersonalisation and universality apparent in Deren and modern dance. Furthermore, he investigates the dance-cinema relationships within Study and Beatty as an example of an African-American male dancer that Franko notes as the “historical modern dance personae of the thirties and forties” (2001, 131). On these grounds, Franko argues that there is a dual hybridization occurring within Study, “that of dance with film, and of modern dance with a black male body” (2001, 140).

From the very beginning, Franko’s essay raises concerns with the statement “There has been no work to my knowledge that links Maya Deren to the American modern dance tradition” (2001, 131). It is therefore of no surprise that he repeats Satin’s (1993) connections between Graham and Deren, but more specifically on his discussion on the symbolism of objects. Furthermore, Franko emphasises that for modern dance, ‘space’ was the primary tool of choreography, whereas for Deren it was a temporal matter. However, the suggested unification of the choreographic aesthetics of ‘modern dance’ is problematic, on the grounds that modern dance practice is not a homogenous realm, with different practitioners demonstrating diverse aesthetic approaches. Furthermore, as Laban’s work, among others, has established, space is only part of what constitutes a choreography and is an element interconnected with time. While ‘time’ and its manipulation is a crucial, creative factor for Deren, it is nevertheless spatiotemporal unity that she sought to reconstruct, as will be extensively established in chapters three and four.

Nevertheless, Franko provides an insightful perspective on Deren’s struggle for universality and depersonalization. He explains that Study as well as Lamentation aimed for ‘departicularisation’ and what Deren refers to as ‘ritualistic form’ (Franko, 2001, 133-134), but, Study was unsuccessful due to the social-cultural and the racial issues of Beatty’s complexion. Franko argues that while a white female dancer was a universal image and could easily deliver the desired departicularisation, the black male body was burdened with historical and socio-political connotations especially in the cultural context of the 1940s in North America. Although he argues that skin complexion is unavoidably a

statement for the period, the formal focus of the film, discussed in chapter four, detracts from any racialised interpretations of the performer's body.

Apart from the Deleuzian analysis mentioned above, Erin Brannigan's contribution (2002) identifies correlations between performer, choreographer, and theatre lighting pioneer Loie Fuller (1862 – 1928) and Deren; a connection initially made by Snyder in a 1977 interview.

*Was there anything like Choreography for the Camera before Deren?*

SNYDER: No. Well, I take that back, because we don't really know. There was another woman named Loie Fuller, fifty years before Maya, who in her later years was doing experimental films in Europe...

Clark et al., 1988, 288

As Brannigan notes, Fuller and Deren are among the earliest artists who direct and choreograph their films, with Fuller being the earlier of the two<sup>36</sup>. Furthermore, Brannigan stresses the body centricity apparent in both artists' practices, and notes that they were both technophiles and keen on experimenting. However, it should be noted that Fuller's experimentation was mainly confined to the live staged event and not to the cinematic, in contrast with Deren whose experimentation was the dialogue between the two, as will be established in this chapter and in chapter four. As an endnote, Brannigan also draws connections between the artists and the Symbolist movement in literature, noting that:

Fuller was the subject of writers such as the French poet Stephané Mallarmé, and Deren's MA thesis was titled "The Influence of the French Symbolist School on Anglo-American Poetry". Like the Symbolists both artists resist narrativisation in their work, aiming at a transcendental aesthetic by turning their attention to the concrete terms of their medium.

Brannigan, 2002 [online]

Brannigan's article finally provides a brief analysis of the way the 'Party' scene in Ritual in Transfigured Time succeeds in producing dance material from pedestrian gestures, as discussed extensively in chapter four.

Viewed from a dance perspective, Deren is discussed in relation to modern dance. The subsequent sections assess Deren's aesthetic interconnections with modern dance tradition. Prior to discussing Deren's work in a modern dance context, it is essential to discuss the debates surrounding the terms 'modern' and 'Modernism' in the fields of dance and their usage in the current discussion.

#### **2.4.2 Modern Dance and Dance Modernism: Issues of Terminology**

'Modern' is a term which has chronological adherence, in that it always refer to the 'most recent', to what is 'contemporary' and 'up-to-date' and therefore it is non-historically placeable for describing a certain art movement. This fact raised concerns from early on. John Martin asserts in America Dancing (1968) – originally published in 1936 – while discussing terminological and ontological issues around 'modernity' in reference to 'modern dance':

Various efforts were made to discard the modernist title. In Germany the expression "absolute dance" appeared, only to be attacked... the term is inaccurate... In America, the term "free dance" was invented, but with no greater success, for obvious reasons. Free from what? Again there has arisen the phrase of "concert dance", but it is foolish on the face of it to refer to a solo performance as a concert.

Martin, 1968, 66-67

However, Martin continues reluctantly to accept the term 'modern dance' as the least inaccurate, explaining that:

...none of these devices has been sufficiently clarifying to replace the dubious but entrenched [sic] designation of “modern dance,” and for the present generation, at least, there seems to be nothing to do about it but to accept it with as fair a show of grace as possible, and indulge on rationalizations to save face.

Martin, 1968, 67

Despite the problems identified since the 1930s, there is still no crystallised term. In fact the issue became more complex when dance progressed to another stage, initially baptised as post-modern dance, whose definition is even harder to pinpoint and even more problematic. It was then that the word ‘historical’ was added to the original term, ‘historical modern dance’ (Banes, 1987). Despite having literally been a contradictory term, it is, to date, widely accepted<sup>37</sup>.

Seemingly a solution, the term ‘historical modern’ is nevertheless an oxymoron that could more appropriately be replaced by the term ‘modernism’. The art critic Clement Greenberg (1909 – 1994), refers to Modernism in the visual arts:

... I want to change the term in question from modern to Modernist -- Modernist with a capital M -- and then to talk about Modernism instead of the modern. Modernism has the great advantage of being a more historically placeable term, one that designates a historically -- not just chronologically -- definable phenomenon: something that began at a certain time, and may or may not still be with us.

Greenberg, 1979 [online]

On the same lines, ‘Dance Modernism’ is a term that transcends the issues of chronological adherence, and therefore, its reference can be historically placeable in the same manner that Greenberg argues above, while not being a contradictory term<sup>38</sup>. On these grounds the term ‘dance modernism’ is chosen as the most appropriate for the current discussion.

In relation to ontological and historical parameters, dance modernism has always been hard to pinpoint as to its nature. Dance critic and author Jack Anderson (b.1935) (1997) argues that modern dance is a ‘self-renewing’, ‘redefining’ and

therefore ‘undefinable’ art. The only certain dance modernist attribute is that it is mostly based on the characteristics of Modernism in the Greenbergian sense; the purification of the arts, each in its most essential characteristics by exclusion of the extraneous to the underlying nature of the medium (Copeland, 2004). Notably, from a different perspective, this essentialist approach resembles film’s formalist aesthetics that Deren adheres to, as established in the film contextualisation section (2.3).

Identified by scholars as an early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon<sup>39</sup>, dance modernism was a collective notion applied to all non-balletic – romantic and/or classical – theatrical dance art-practices. Characterised by creative experimentation, strongly based on individuals, dance modernism was represented by a plurality of authorial voices with distinct methods, techniques and choreographic approaches. Early protagonists in the United States of America and Europe, with Germany as a main contributor, included: Isadora Duncan (1877 – 1927), Rudolf von Laban (1879 – 1958), Ruth St. Denis (1879 – 1968), Ted Shawn (Edwin Myers Shawn) (1891 – 1972), Mary Wigman (1886 – 1973), Martha Graham (1894 – 1991), Doris Humphrey (1895 – 1958) and Charles (Edward) Weidman (1901 – 1975) as some examples of authorial voices and dance modernist styles.

Accordingly, in order to go more deeply into the ontological matters of dance modernism without falling into false generalisations, it is necessary to discuss dance modernism as expressed through specific practitioners. Expanding on Satin (1993), Franko (2001), and Brannigan’s (2002) discussions of Deren’s interconnections with modern dance, the research argues that, on formal grounds, Derenian theory is mostly aligned with the aesthetic theories of modern dance practitioners Doris Humphrey and Mary Wigman. Whereas it is unknown to what extent Deren was directly exposed to the practitioners, the discussion will illustrate that their movement philosophies were prevalent at the time she was working. It should be further clarified that, despite the strong individuality that is present in the work of these practitioners, comparisons of the dance practitioners is not the aim of this text. The current section examines the principles of their expression as related to the Derenian viewpoints.

### **2.4.3 Dance Modernism & Deren: The Case of Audiovisual Spatiotemporality**

As established in cinematic analysis, formalism is a fundamental concept within Derenian theory.

What is conspicuously lacking is the development of cinema as an art form-concerned with the type of perception which characterizes all other art forms, such as poetry, painting, etc., and devoted to the development of a formal idiom as independent of other art forms as they are of each other.

Deren and McPherson, 2005, 19

In line with the general modernist belief in the specificity of each art medium, one of the primary things advocated by Humphrey and Wigman is the specificity of dance to its medium. With the aesthetic aim of the emancipation of dance from the rest of the art forms, they were concerned with creating choreographic works that focused on recreating and re-discovering their main choreographic tool, namely the human body and its movement capacity through careful study and exploration of its attributes.

Bearing a striking resemblance to Deren's aforementioned formalist viewpoints, John Martin asserts the need for specificity from a dance perspective, with the emphasis of every art on its unique features as a generic preoccupation of Modernism:

[Regardless of whether the artist is] making something called a painting, or a sculpture, or a dance... in each case the materials with which he is working will have something to say about how he handles them... he must know first of all the nature of his materials, whether they happen to be sound, color, or movement, before he can shape them according to their inherent laws into being the outward body of his intent.

Martin, 1965a, 124

Significantly, beyond the generic modernist focus expressed by Wigman, Humphrey, and Deren, there is agreement as to the nature of this specificity that they have to master, which is the province of movement and the manipulation of visual spatiotemporality available through their media.

Wigman, echoing her teacher and mentor Rudolf von Laban, writes in her book The Language of Dance, “Time, strength, and space: these are the elements which give dance its life” (Wigman, 1966, 11). ‘Strength’ was defined as a “dynamic force, moving and being moved” (Wigman, 1966, 11), meaning the physical/body strength, the physical power and its qualities as expressed by the dancer. The space and time dimensions are manifested through the body when movement is realised. Similarly, and around the same period, Humphrey stressed the spatiotemporal attributes of dance in order to analyse the nature of movement, highlighting the creative capacity available to the choreographer. As she states in The Art of Making Dances (1959), “dance is an art in which design has two aspects: time and space” (Humphrey, 1959, 49). From a cinematic perspective, Deren argues that “... a dynamic manipulation of the relationships between film-time and film-space (and potentially, film-sound) can create that special integrated [and] complex film form” (Deren, 1946, 51), calling on the film/screen artist to use the capacity of the cinematic medium to create, alter, or reconstruct the visual spatiotemporality of its medium.

However, the visual spatiotemporality that the artists discuss is manifested in a significantly different manner through theatrical dance and on screen. Whereas theatrical dance concerns movement governed by the physical laws of classical mechanics, mainly Newtonian mechanics, screen movement is manifested within a virtual spatiotemporality constructed according to a unique blend of cinematic mechanics, as this is manipulated by the artist, both spatially as well as temporally.

Cinema – and by this is understood the entire body of techniques including camera, lighting, acting, editing, etc. – is a time-space art with a unique capacity for creating new temporal-spatial relationships.

Deren and McPherson, 2005, 29-30

Correspondingly, the dance modernisms practiced by Humphrey and Wigman explore the possibilities of movement within a four-dimensional environment; namely, how strength/effort in relation to space-time can provide new movement-based modes of expression. Alternatively, Deren is interested in exploring the possibilities of altering the spatiotemporal mechanics of cinema. The next chapter of the thesis discusses the formal attributes and the creative parameters involved in both, cinema/screen as well as screendance practice in reference to existing movement theories and the attributes of the cinematic medium.

Investigating further the aesthetic principles under which artists treat the visual spatiotemporality manifested through their mediums, the issue of representation will be discussed in regard to the performed action and its scenographic elements, followed by analysis of the narrative framework employed by the artists.

#### 2.4.3.1 Representation and Narrativity in Dance Modernism: Methodological Frameworks

Dance modernism is explicitly linked to the issues of representation and the degree of realism manifested within dance works. John Martin discusses modernism as being largely the result of the invention and broader use of recording devices; mainly photography and its broader use which fulfilled the need for realistic representation, namely reproduction<sup>40</sup>.



... technology had destroyed the current concept of art, which had been built up for many generations on the ideal of representationalism. Verisimilitude, the be-all and the end-all of art for so long, had ceased to be the business of the artist at all; it was now accomplished by any number of recording devices. There was no longer any sense in the artist's attempting to evoke wonder by his camera-like eye or his phonograph-like ear; he was clearly outdistanced, another victim of technological unemployment!

Martin, 1965a, 122

As Martin explains, technological advances freed artists from the need of representation, which is now in the hands of recording devices. The relationship between this argument and Derenian theory and practice is apparent, since the recording devices Martin refers to are the technological tools that constitute Deren's cinematic art form. However, in Deren's case, this specific reproductive ability of her medium is the reason for the failure of a 'proper' cinematic form.

..the makers have for the most part permitted this function to supplant and substitute for a development of film-form proper. The failure of film has been a failure of omission – a neglect of the many more miraculous potentials of the art instrument.

Deren, 1946, 44

According to Deren, the film artist should achieve through the medium an unprecedented reality, images that are based on its specificities and thus can only exist within the cinematic apparatus. She argues that only then does a product elevate itself to the province of art. In the 1945 brochure with 'Cinema as an Independent Art Form', she argues, "A truly creative work of art creates a new reality and itself constitutes an experience, in contrast to the merely descriptive effort which produces an existent reality or adventure" (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 245).

Identifying the aesthetic parameters of creation that Deren and the dance modernism of Humphrey and Wigman's practices, the following section identifies the artists' attitude towards 'representation', more specifically, the extent and form of abstraction used within their works. Prior to this analysis, the

first part of the current section discusses the methodologies of identifying performing representation, clarifying certain issues of terminology, on the premise that:

By 'represent' here we mean that  $x$  represents  $y$  (where  $y$  ranges over a domain comprised of objects, persons, events, and actions) if and only if:

1. a sender intends  $x$  (for instance, a picture) to stand for  $y$  (for example a person), and
2. an audience recognises that  $x$  is intended to stand for  $y$ .

Banes and Carroll, 1999, 21

Providing the simplest method of discussing representational issues of dance performance, the scientist and dance educator Margaret (Newell) H'Doubler (1889 – 1982) (1940) identified two categories of dance according to their communicative functions, the representative form, and the manifestive one. As H' Doubler (1940) explains, the representative form includes theatrical conventions such as dramatic structure, a high degree of realism in setting and characters as well as depiction of realistic events. By contrast, the manifestive form deals with abstract movement, meaning non-representational, non-identifiable movement in order to communicate emotions within the performing context.

In a more analytical way, dancer and choreographer, professor Susan Leigh Foster (1986) identifies four methods of representation within dance events: "resemblance, imitation, replication and reflection" (1986, 65). According to her classification, 'resemblance' occurs when the choreography refers to something by representing one of its qualities or attributes. Using her example, "the choreography can *resemble* the river if it focuses on... perhaps its winding path" (1986, 65). In order to identify choreography that 'imitates' rather than resembles, the choreography refers to the totality of aural and visual characteristics of the representing counterpart. Thus, in the case of a river, the spectator sees "a continuously moving line of dancers in flowing blue costumes..." (1986, 66). Similar to the 'resemblance' method, 'replication' takes place when certain qualities of the referent are revealed. However, the replication

is not focused on a single quality but rather on the relationship between or among certain distinct parts of the represented. It is a dynamic whole based on the tension between the represented elements; using her 'river example' "the flowing water and the bounding channel" (1986, 66). Finally, the 'reflection' method, the most non-representative of all the methods, suggests various associations largely open to interpretation. In fact, as Foster notes, the notion of 'river' might be irrelevant to the choreographer's intention, thus, conversely, "a sustained run across the performance space can mean nothing but itself" (1986, 66).

Rather than following Foster's more recent methodology, dance and theatre scholars Sally Banes and Noël Carroll (1999) seem to discuss the relation of dance to representation on similar grounds to H'Doubler, expanding the two-part categorisation to four categories. The first category, 'unconditional representation' is a form of representation that "proceeds by triggering innate recognition capacities and, in that sense, is immediate (that is, not mediated by the manipulation of an arbitrary or conventional code)" (1999, 21). Closely related to the above, and often mixed with the aforementioned unmediated form of representation, is the sort of 'lexical representation' or lexicographic, semiotic, coded – terms referred to by Banes and Carroll – where, "in order to realise that **x** stands for **y**, a spectator must know the relevant code" (1999, 21). Therefore, representation cannot be realised by merely looking, the spectator should also be familiar with the relevant lexicon, for example sign language. 'Conditional specific representation' is the third form of representation which is only accomplished on condition that the spectator is informed of what is being represented. It is therefore unlikely for the spectator to decipher the message unless s/he knows what it is intended to represent. Finally, 'Conditional generic representation,' refers not to specific antecedent knowledge about the spectacle but to the generic information that something is represented. By prompting the spectator to seek out representations, the spectacles:

mobilise our natural recognitional capacities, our linguistic associations, our capacities for following homologies, our sensitivity to synesthetic effects, and our knowledge of strict semiotic codes to determine appropriately what the representation is a representation of, without being told its specific, intended meaning.

Banes and Carroll, 1999, 23

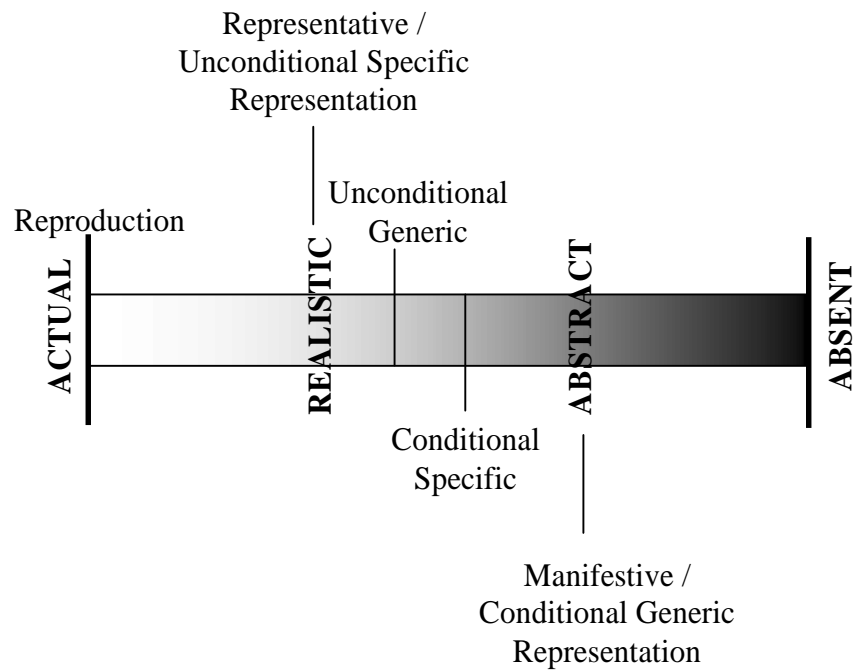
Professor of dance and theatre Roger Copeland (2004) focuses on the seminal dancer and choreographer Merce Cunningham to investigate American art from the 1940s to the 1990s. Contextualising Cunningham, Copeland explains the choreographer's departure from Martha Graham's highly emotional, id-obsessed and psychologically driven 'abstract expressionism' (2004, 8)<sup>41</sup> to a more cerebral aesthetic is the difference between "feel deeply" and "see clearly" (2004, 12). Therefore, in contrast to Banes and Carroll, he returns to H' Doubler's two-pole distinction. However, it is important to note that his discussion focuses on the non-representative end of the continuum, as will be later explained.

Similarly, dance and art critic Gay Morris (2006) focuses on dance modernism of the 1945 – 1960s and the issue of representation both from the point of view of artists, theorists like John Cage, and writers Edwin Denby and John Martin, as well as by examining many practitioners of the period from Martha Graham and George Balanchine (1904 – 1983), to Merce Cunningham (1919 – 2009) and Alwin Nikolais (1910 – 1993). Distilling her theoretical viewpoints, Morris emphasises the distinction between communication through embodiment and narrative communication through imitation or representation of an event; the former credited as a quality of expressional dance and the latter as a kind of dance-drama. Furthermore, Morris expands her discussion with a dance objectivist category which refers to dance works that are anti-narrative and aim to be even more abstract than the expressional dance that embodies communication, in fact their aim is to eliminate any intentional communication.

Developing the aforementioned in the construction of an appropriate methodology applicable to screendance works, there are certain parameters to be

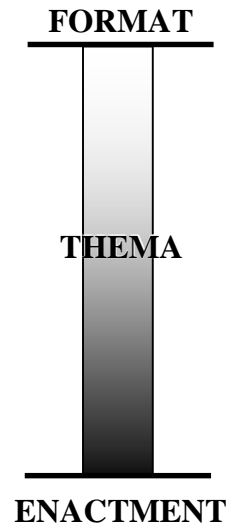
addressed. Dance is a multi-dimensional art that combines, apart from movement, sound as well as visual elements like lighting, set and costumes, all of which are communicative elements, analysed in chapter three. Accordingly, defining a dance work as representational is not as straightforward as discussing a painting where the discussion concerns an image, and the extent to which this image is figurative or not. Being 'dance', a live performing art has the capacity of employing realistic representational as well as actual elements. On similar grounds, 'screendance' as an audio-visual medium is capable of registering and reproducing the aforementioned representational or actual elements. In other words, a forest may be realistically recreated on stage and sounds of birds may accompany a dance, but beyond that, a dance may actually be performed in a forest and, in the case of screendance, the forest can be registered and reproduced faithfully. Conversely, a forest may be inferred by elements included in the dance work without being present at all. As happens in Humphrey's Water Study, premiered in 1928, the water element is implied by the movement but as far as the set design is concerned there is neither realistic nor abstract design that illustrates a river, the water element is scenographically 'absent'.

The aforementioned expands representational methodologies of dance beyond the realistic to the abstract – from representative to manifestive (H'Doubler, 1940), from unconditional to conditional representation (Banes and Carroll, 1999) to include the 'actual' and the 'absent'. The following diagram illustrates the expanded representational continuum, including the categories noted by H'Doubler, and Banes and Carroll for clarification.



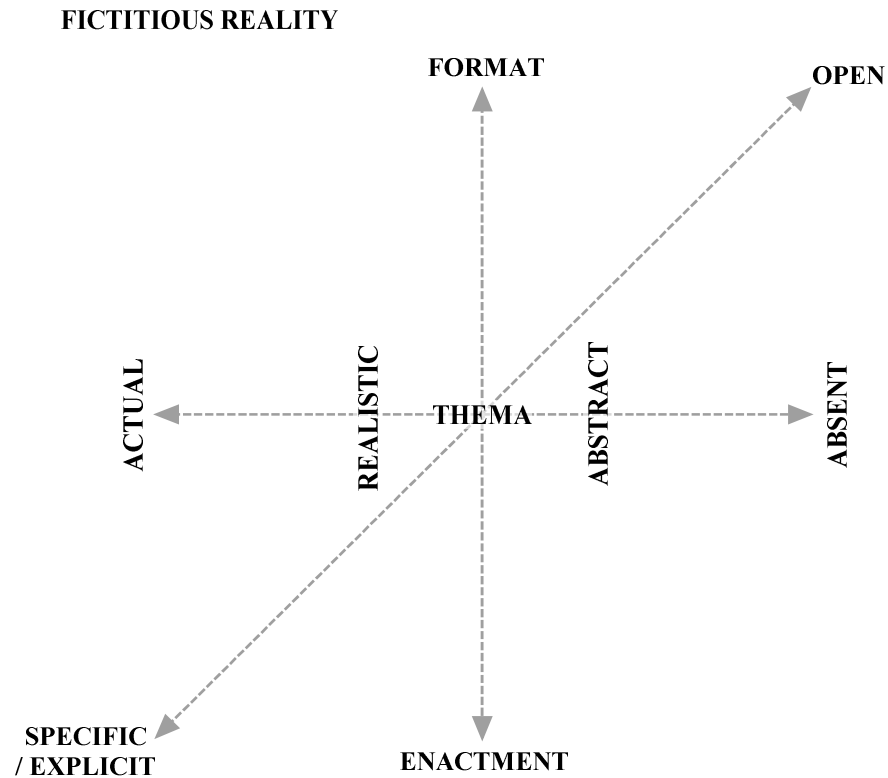
**Figure 2-1: Representational Continuum**

Besides the formal elements incorporated whose nature could be anything from actual to absent, their succession, namely the way they are synthesised in reference to the timeline, provides another representational issue, that of narrative or non-narrative development. Based on the work of practitioner and theorist Valerie Bettis (1919 – 1982), Morris (2006, 25) explains how dance modernism can be divided into two categories, “one based on plot, which was developed narratively, the other on an emotional idea, which was developed thematically”. With the emergence of objectivism, these two categories are extended towards the anti-narrative pole with works that are constituted simply by “activity of movement, sound and light” (Cage, 1961, 95) as Cage explains in 1956. Deciphering these terms, it is argued that on the narrative end of the continuum, the works concern ‘enactment’ of a series of events; in the middle, there is a ‘thema’/emotion which is communicated; finally on the other end, there is no plot or emotion that is deliberately expressed, it is rather a ‘format’ which is based on cerebral processes, for instance chance methods<sup>42</sup>.



**Figure 2-2: Narrative Continuum**

The discussion on representation is interconnected with the notion of meaning. Although there is always a degree of subjectivity involved, as different people perceive different things, depicted events range from those which are specific or explicit in meaning to those which are completely open to interpretation, where “The meaning of what we do is determined by each one who sees and hears it” (Cage, 1961, 94). Understanding the methodological underpinning among theorists, it is observed that only Banes and Carroll (1999) focus on the cognitive capacity of the spectator, namely his/her acquired information or knowledge in relation to the performing event, the rest of the methodologies focus on the creator’s intention or the work itself. It is furthermore essential to note the potential discrepancy between authorial intent and artistic result. Despite the individuality involved in the communication process, what is certain is that the more representative are the elements and the more narratively developed is the depicted event, the less openness is permitted as to its interpretation. The following diagram synthesises the two continuums – representational (horizontal) and narrative (vertical) – specifying also the ‘openness’ of meaning (diagonal axis).



**Figure 2-3: RNM model**

Having established the terminology and the methodological frameworks of representation and narrative approaches within dance, the next section will examine whether Derenian cinema and dance modernism, as expressed by Wigman and Humphrey, are concordant regarding their attitude towards fictitious reality.



#### 2.4.3.2 Discussing the Action, Discussing the Body

Along the same lines of Derenian formalism established in the cinematic section (2.3), Humphrey's works demonstrate a tendency towards the creation of an autonomous art form free from elements that are exogenous to dancing movement. Her small group work To the Dance, premiered in 1937, won the Dance Magazine award for choreography in 1938 for what dance critic Margaret Lloyd (1888 – 1960) called “an example of pure dance, unadulterated [sic] by drama or comedy, mime or pantomime, and was everywhere praised for its freshness and spontaneity” (1949, 104).

Discussing this formalist stance towards the performed action, one can identify in Humphrey's works an almost exclusive use of movement that is best classified as the manifestive/abstract end of the representational continuum, either understood as conditional or in the province of resemblance. A notable example of conditional specific representation is Water Study (Humphrey, 1928). Designed for fifteen<sup>43</sup> female dancers, the dance seems to re-create the movement of water. As discussed above (section 2.4.3.1), there is no stage setting or costume that denotes or connotes water and the dance is performed without any verbal or musical accompaniment<sup>44</sup>, thus, there are no identifiable audio-visual elements that aid the interpretation of the action as water-related. Movement is the exclusive element of the performance and even this does not seek to ‘imitate’ but to ‘resemble’ water, to use Foster's terminology. It is debatable that, without the program notes, the spectator would read the action as water-related movement, hence the conditional specific nature of the performance. As dance scholar and critic Marcia B. Siegel (b. 1932) (1979, 29) argues, “it is an example – perhaps a very extreme one, because it is so well fulfilled – of what the modern dance theorists were proposing when the fires of idealism burned strongest in them”: referring to the general dance modernist call for medium specificity and autonomy.

However, there are also instances where more imitative elements are apparent, as seen in The Shakers, premiered in 1930, where one cannot fail to acknowledge the strong, imitative costumes and the corresponding music. Originally entitled

'Dance of the Chosen', it is a dance about a homonymous religious sect danced by a mixed male and female company dressed in traditional Shaker dress and danced to a music composition based on Shaker music. In contrast with Water Study, where the performers are used purely as elements of a moving plastic form – not for their individual identity but for the form and movement their bodies provide – in The Shakers the performers represent human beings who are part of the sect. Yet the dance goes beyond pantomimic action into movement that seeks to suggest and embody rather than specify the meaning of each action.

On similar formative grounds, Wigman's work also sought to transcend the purely literal. She was not interested in representing a situation through physical actions, like for instance pantomime, but in communicating instead through non-realistic movement, using expressive, dramatic and not descriptive movement. As seen in her 1914 signature solo Witch Dance, Wigman is dressed like a witch, including wearing a mask, thus employing realistic representational means, therefore unconditional specific, as far as her costume is concerned, while her movement is conditional specific. There is no imitative action that connotes or denotes 'witchness' or 'witchcraft' in the traditional manner, where a witch either prepares a potion or transforms something or somebody, or any other action of similar manner. Instead, as Foster (1986, 75) notes, she replicates 'witchness' by assembling "enigmatic menacing shapes of unpredictable duration into one foreboding figure" performed by a body "burdened with heaviness, possessed something of the lurking, animal-like quality in the image of the enigmatic Sphinx, even though only by intimation" (Wigman, 1966, 42). Farewell and Thanksgiving, premiered in 1942, is also an example of conditional specific representation. Danced under the title 'Farewell and Thanksgiving', Wigman's last stage appearance encouraged the audience towards certain associations of the performing movement, despite its otherwise manifestive nature.

Despite the modernist stance of Deren, Humphrey and Wigman, attention should be drawn to the fact that the non-representational issue of dance is quite different from that of cinema, since dance can only partially distance itself from reality. It cannot, for instance, abstract itself to the extremes of painting where pure colour

or line ceases to incorporate any representation and thus, any connection with reality as perceived in everyday life. Dance is a kinesthetic art that communicates through the body. No matter how abstract a dance aims to be, it is always bound to human body reality, otherwise known as human corporeality. As Martin notes, “the body cannot be separated from implied intent” (1965a, 125). Lloyd concurs, while discussing Humphrey’s aim of creating non-referential/abstract dance, “for dance, using human movement and human gesture cannot actually be abstract...” (1949, 88).

Although Deren’s tool of expression, the cinematic medium, does not have the limitations of human corporeality, her theory demonstrates a similar representational attitude to that of Wigman and Humphrey. Deren decides not to abstract her films beyond the point of human existence. It is on these grounds that she is against the use of “the mobile ornamentality of lines, planes and solids” (Balázs, 1970, 182) that abstract films employ. She argues that ‘abstract film’ should not be considered a film-art but rather animated paintings that neglect the main formal ability of cinema and its capacity of recording, manipulating and reproducing reality. For Deren, the creation of new experience through the manipulation of reality should be the focus of the film; any cinematic form that does not function within these parameters should not be considered cinematic art. In her monograph, she writes:

My main criticism of the concept behind the usual abstract film is that it denies the special capacity of film to manipulate real elements as realities and substitutes, exclusively, the elements of artifices (the method of painting) ... Any concept of film which can in theory and practice dispense with the use of both camera and editing does not seem to me to be, properly speaking, a film, although it may be a highly entertaining, exciting or even profound experience.

Deren, 1946, 46

In her 1960 article, ‘Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality’, Deren develops her argument in favour of a cinematic form that incorporates reality.

... the meaning of the image originates in our recognition of a known reality and derives its authority from the direct relationship between reality and the image in the photographic process. While the process permits some intrusion by the artist as a modifier of that image, the limits of its tolerance can be defined as that point at which the original reality becomes unrecognisable or is irrelevant ... reality ...is the building block for the creative use of the medium.

Deren and McPherson, 2005, 122

While calling for manipulation of the cinematically recorded reality, Deren limits this 'intrusion' to the point of recognition of the reality, with reality being the performing material and its surrounding as perceived through the camera lens, as will be extensively discussed in the next chapter.

What makes her film-form even more consonant with aspects of the dance modernism of Humphrey and Wigman is Deren's insistence on human corporeality. It is within the cinematic capacity to use as raw material any image, yet Deren chooses to compose through human performance and the recorporealisation of this performance, as will be analytically established in chapter four. The version of reality incorporated in Deren's filmworks has been established in the cinematic contextualisation of her theory. What is important in relation to dance is to acknowledge that the reality Deren is referring to as the raw material of her practice is body-focused. It is not just any reality that the camera is able to record, in which a countryside scene would qualify, it is a reality where the human body is central. What surrounds it is of secondary importance, similar to the dance modernism of Humphrey and Wigman. This means that it is there to frame the action, the performer, sometimes to underline the concept, but never to be the central focus of the art-product. The analysis of Deren's filmworks undertaken in chapter four will clarify further the importance of corporeality and its surroundings in Derenian theory.

Having defined the raw performing material and its re/construction within the dance and cinematic media, another related issue is the practitioners' attitude towards the theatrical narrative forms of storyline. Prior to these, reference to the

secondary elements – music, costume, set, lighting – incorporated within their practice, will complete the discussion on the representational continuum.

#### 2.4.3.3 Secondary elements: Music, Costume, Set, Lighting

As a result of the formalism of dance modernism, the audio-visual elements incorporated within a performance, such as the scenographic elements, costume, lighting, as well as the music, have often been considered of secondary importance. As Martin acknowledges, dance may employ art forms such as “music, costume, architecture, acting, the painter’s sense of colour in décor and lighting, and in a small way even poetry where his titles are concerned”. However, the ‘actual stuff’ in which the dancer works is movement (Martin, 1965a, 61).

While all elements are treated as parts of a whole, Humphrey, Wigman, and Deren prioritised human movement or dance, therefore it is analysed and discussed in their theories more than any other performing element. Music is the most significant ingredient of their practices among the rest. What follows in taxonomy of importance in their theories are sets and costumes, and at a fourth level, there is lighting. As Humphrey notes, implying by ‘dance itself’ the movement material of the choreographic composition:

Music, costuming, sets, lighting, the title and program notes are primary ones. For the dance, like all theatre arts, is a synthesis, and the proper blending of the elements is the responsibility of the choreographer. But at the core of it all is the dance itself, which now, in the twentieth century, has a body of theory about composition to help and support the choreographer.

Humphrey, 1959, 41

The ensuing discussion, rather than demonstrating a common aesthetic axis, establishes agreement as to the hierarchy of the performing elements while identifying a diversity of approaches.

#### 2.4.3.3.1 ... music

Deren is in favour of music composed especially for each of her films that acts in a complementary way towards the total conception and the final aim of creation. This is particularly demonstrated in her two creations in which film and music were composed simultaneously. Meditation on Violence is accompanied by a music collage that Deren made for the film and The Very Eye of Night (1952 – 1955) had music composed by Teiji Ito. In addition to this, Deren demonstrates a proclivity towards percussion scores. That is not to say that her films are accompanied exclusively by percussion but that percussion is always present, often playing a primary role in the total composition.

Humphrey, without arguing that music is a necessary ingredient of a dance work as her ‘silent’ works Water Study (1928) and Drama of Motion (1930) demonstrate, she envisages the dance-music relationship as a dialogic one. As she writes, dance is “a wordless art of the physical body, always speaking in its own ways of human beings, no matter how abstracted ... it is truly ... [an individual], needing a sympathetic mate, but not a master, in music” (1959, 132). She explains that “The ideal relationship is like a happy marriage in which two individuals go hand in hand, but are not identical twins” (1959, 164). Humphrey called for a productive, creative coexistence where one medium relates to the other but where each keeps its autonomy. Especially in the cases where choreographers use ready-made music not specifically composed for their dance, Humphrey emphasises the importance of respecting someone else’s creation. In her checklist of the most common mistakes that a choreographer makes, she urges “Don’t be a slave to, or a mutilator of, the music” (Humphrey, 1959, 159).

Contrasting with Humphrey, Wigman’s beliefs are in line with Deren’s on musical autonomy. In her 1933 publication Das Mary Wigman-Werk, she emphasises the dance-music unity, or to be more specific, dance movement and music as being parts of a whole and not independent entities.

The musical accompaniment ought to arise from the dance composition. Of course any music thus created can never claim to be an independent work of art. The profound union formed in this way between dance and music leads for both to a total entity.

Wigman, 1975, 122

Another difference concerns the kind of music used for her dances. While Humphrey often used existing compositions, some of them from very well known composers – Robert Alexander Schumann (1810 – 1856), Franz Liszt (1811 – 1886), Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1750), Maurice Joseph Ravel (1875 – 1937) – besides commissioned ones, Wigman, like Deren, had clear preferences for music composed specially for her productions which consisted mainly of percussion compositions – specifically rhythmical folk percussions – rather than other melodic and/or harmonious compositions.

Since dance – according to its very being – lives in an absolute world rhythm, the world most closely related to it is that of the percussion instruments. The drum, the gong, the cymbals, and all their different variations are suited as hardly any other instrument to capture and underline the rhythm of the dancing body.

Wigman, 1975, 124

Wigman argues that the sound palette of percussion has the ability to enter the mental world of the performer to the extent of becoming one with the dancer.

The sounds of these instruments can become one with the atmosphere of a dance, or rather with the mental condition of the dancer, to such a degree that he forgets where the sound comes from and may often believe that his own gesture creates the music.

Wigman, 1975, 124

Accordingly, Deren demonstrates a similar stance to Wigman rather than Humphrey as far as music is concerned, since she uses commissioned compositions with a clear preference for the use of percussion which she considers as subordinate part of the screenwork. The audio-visual relation of Deren's aforementioned sound screenworks, namely Meditation on Violence

(1948) and The Very Eye of Night (1952 – 1955) along with Meshes of the Afternoon (1943), whose music was added in 1959, will be revisited in chapter four.

#### 2.4.3.3.2 ... scenographic elements

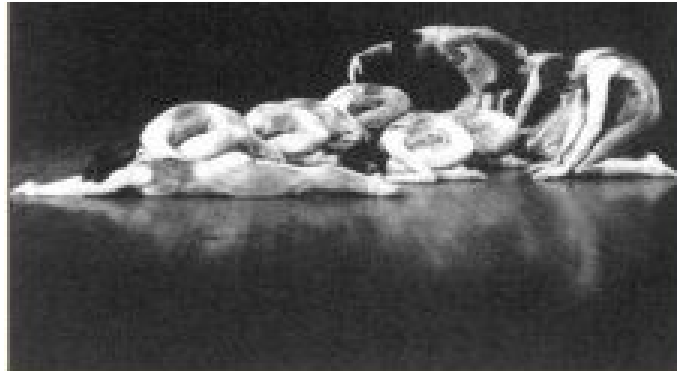
As far as Derenian theory is concerned, neither set nor costume design is specifically developed. What is perceived through Deren's practice is a plurality of aesthetic choices that do not demonstrate a specific axis among her films. As the fifth chapter will discuss in detail, there are instances where both set and costumes are derived from Deren's everyday world, using her clothes for costume and/or a friend's apartment for set and so on. At the same time, there are instances where costume as well as setting are specifically designed for Deren's filmic needs, departing from any references to the everyday world: The Very Eye of Night, (1952 – 1955) is an example discussed in chapter four that demonstrates an attitude close to Wigman and Humphrey's aesthetic approaches towards set and costume.

Regarding the scenographic elements – set, costume, and lighting – there is relatively little theorisation in the literature provided by dance practitioners. With the exception of the chapter on 'Sets and Props' included in Humphrey's The Art of Making Dances (1959) and Wigman's discussion on costume, especially on the use of masks in her works, there are no significant references to the subject.

Humphrey felt that costume design should not detract attention from the choreographic composition of movement in space and time. That does not imply that her costumes were of indifferent design. There are cases when their role is visually strong, especially when they are imitative costumes, hence with strong referential attributes. In The Shakers (1930) for example, costume designer Pauline Lawrence (1900 – 1971) created the "full brown skirts and bodices and white bonnets of the women, the broad-brimmed hats and preacher-like garb of the men" (Lloyd, 1949, 88) in a similar manner to how the homonymous religious sect dressed. In other instances their role is reflective or conditional, as



in Water Study (1928) where Lawrence dresses the performers in leotards that cover most of the body. The result is a degree of unification of the male and female performers, while there is also emphasis on the body structure and movement revealed through the leotards. In every case, their role was not one of extravagance or independence, but carefully blended in the total choreographic conception.



**Figure 2-4: Water Study**

In terms of the set, Humphrey sought designs that did not frame the dancing stage with a background set, but that altered the performing space by introducing levels and planes. She often used a set of blocks that were re-arranged according to the needs of each dance. Their role was similar to that of costume, to frame, reinforce or support the movement rather than to attract attention to themselves (Lloyd, 1949, 91). As far as the set is concerned, there were financial, functional as well as logistic reasons that may have contributed to the choice of limited set constructions. This may have been relevant for Wigman who toured regularly with her company, often within a limited budget.

Accordingly, Wigman was more concerned with costume than set design. She is one of the few modernist dance choreographers who used costume to abstract the human body in its totality, like Loïe Fuller (1862 – 1928)<sup>45</sup>. In the seventh section of Scenes from a Dance Drama (1923/24) called ‘Vision’, the chorus is covered by big draped surfaces of fabric with only an opening that reveals their face, as seen below:



**Figure 2-5: Vision (photograph in Odom 1980, 91)**

Moreover, Wigman utilised masks in the famous The Witch Dance (1914) not a decorative element, but as a conceptual one. In 1933, she writes:

The mask never can and never ought to be an interesting addition or decoration. It must be an essential part of the dance figure, born in a world of visions and transported as if by magic into reality... The mask can hide and reveal, can erase the dancer's sex or underline it. The mask tries to blur the demarcation between the realistic and irrational levels.

Wigman, 1975, 124-125



**Figure 2-6: The Witch Dance (photograph in Odom 1980, 82)**

As with music, all the elements that Wigman incorporates in her dances are there to support the action as parts of the whole rather than as individual entities.

Neither Humphrey nor Wigman discuss the compositional parameters of stage lighting. In The Art of Making Dances (Humphrey, 1959), there is a chapter for “Sets and Props”, but lighting is excluded. Similarly, in Wigman’s case, there are no references specifically to the lighting design and how it should be used. Deren’s discussion of light has very different parameters from the theatrical ones. It is upon the registration of light that film works and thus is integral to film creation. However, she does not expand theoretically on the subject, in spite of the fact that there are scenes in her films that use lighting in a very creative and conceptual manner, for example in The Very Eye of Night as will be demonstrated in chapter four.

Having analysed the action, including the audio-visual elements manifested within the dance modernism practiced by Humphrey and Wigman as well as in Derenian aesthetics, this shows a common body-focused, non-realistic approach situated in the abstract area of the representational continuum. The larger framework in which these elements are synthesized will be discussed to define their aesthetic approach towards narration and to identify their place on the narrative continuum.

#### 2.4.3.4 ‘Proper’ Artistic Form: Narrative Strategies and ‘Vertical’ Processes

As established, in a cinematic context, Deren calls for an autonomous cinematic form free from the reproduction of exogenous art-realities and their conventions. She rejects especially the form of classical narrative in Hollywood cinema practices – organisation of events that are causally related (Bordwell, 1997) – and considers these films as uncinematic, even non-art within her ‘cinematic’ formalist perspective. According to Derenian theory, nothing should be incorporated within a filmwork but that which is specific to the cinematic medium. This does not suggest that her films are non-narrative. Deren’s limits of representation, as established in the cinematic contextualisation (section 2.3) and

the dance discussion above (sections 2.4.3.2 and 2.4.3.3), do not exceed recognisable reality, but rather make use of reality and cannot escape narrative overall. As Aumont argues:

...for a film to be non-narrative, it would need to be non-representational. This is to say that one would not recognize anything in the image and that temporal sequential, or cause-and-effect relations could not be perceived between the shots or the elements of the image... Nonetheless, even if such a film were [sic] as possible, the spectator, being accustomed to the presence of fiction, would still have a tendency to re-inject narrative where it does not exist; any line or any color may serve to engage fictionality<sup>46</sup>.

Aumont, 1992, 71

However, the narration forms that Deren practices depart significantly from the literary modes of mainstream prose fiction to which Hollywood is affiliated. As Sitney (2002) establishes, Deren's dream and ritualistic qualities create films that employ a logic that does not comply with the qualities of Aristotelian narrative established in his Poetics and recreated in post-1930s classical Hollywood form (Hiltunen, 2002; Tierno, 2002<sup>47</sup>). Instead, she calls for a cinema that works on a 'vertical' rather than 'horizontal' axis. It should be clarified, that Deren's axes do not correspond to the RNM model established above (Figure 2-3). As will be explained, Deren's vertical notion is situated in the centre 'thema' area of the narrative continuum.

As Deren first argued in 1953 at the Cinema 16 symposium 'Poetry and Film', film manifests itself along two axes, the 'horizontal' which is that of drama in the sense of action development, and the 'vertical' axis concerned with the development of the invisible qualities, with the meaning and the feeling of that drama. Deren compares her vertical film structure with the structural processes of poetry. To quote her directly:

The distinction of poetry is its construction... it is a “vertical” investigation of a situation, in that it probes the ramifications of the moment, and is concerned with its qualities and its depth, so that you have poetry concerned, in a sense, not with what is occurring but with what it feels like or what it means... its attack is what I would call the “vertical” attack and this may be a little clearer if you will contrast it to what I would call the “horizontal” attack of drama, which is concerned with the development, let’s say within a very small situation from feeling to feeling.

Deren et al., 1970, 174

Initially discussed by Sitney in 1970s, it was argued that Deren’s “theoretical statement... throws a great deal of light on the aspirations of poets making cinema in the 1950s” (Sitney, 2002, 74): a poetic perspective expanded by Millsapps (1986) and revisited by Jackson in 2001 and 2002 through the poetics of Pound, established at the beginning of this chapter.

In reference to the narrative continuum established before (Figure 2-2), Deren’s horizontal development concerns screenworks that are situated in the ‘enactment’ category, whereas the vertical is in the ‘thema’ one. It is debatable whether Deren included cerebral ideas and anti-meaning/objectivist ‘formats’ when she discusses vertical processes. Her screenworks aimed towards ‘vertical’ development, always seeking to communicate some sort of meaning, emotion or metaphysical concern. On these grounds, objectivist processes were beyond her practice and what she discussed as the vertical exploration of a subject.

However, this does not imply that Deren’s narrative film structures are homogeneous in her six completed films. As Sitney (2002) notes, her films demonstrate both abstracted narrative forms as well as an imagist structure, referring especially to her film A Study in Choreography for Camera. According to Sitney, Deren employed an imagist structure, in the sense that she succeeded in creating a “concentrated distillation of both the narrative and the thematic principles<sup>48</sup>. This form resembles the movement in poetry called Imagism...” (Sitney, 2002, 22) The analysis of her screenworks in chapter four will clarify the narrative attributes of Deren’s screenworks in more detail.

In accordance with their formative/conditional, representational modes of creation, both Humphrey and Wigman reject traditional theatrical narrative structures in the same way as Deren. Focusing on a structural composition that is created through formal experimentation with the medium, they employ narrative frameworks that depart significantly from those utilised by classical and romantic ballets. This refers to the incorporation of clear story lines, plots and characters – often set in certain historical periods and geographical locations, imitatively depicted – unfolded according to causality treatment, resembling the Aristotelian narrative that was practised in classical Hollywood cinema. Such examples are La Sylphide (1832), Giselle (1841), The Sleeping Beauty (1890), The Nutcracker (1892) and Swan Lake (1894 – 1895).

Wigman, influenced by her mentor and teacher Rudolf von Laban, was among the earliest practitioners who explored beyond what movement can display or represent and what it can express. Referring to Wigman, Martin notes in 1939:

With Wigman the dance stands for the first time<sup>49</sup> fully revealed in its own stature; it is not storytelling or pantomime or moving sculpture or design in space or acrobatic virtuosity or musical illustration, but dance alone, an autonomous art exemplifying fully the ideals of modernism in its attainment of abstraction and in its utilization of the resources of its materials efficiently and with authority.

Martin, 1965a, 235

A renowned dance critic of the time, Rudolf von Delius, saw in Wigman's choreographies a new form of art which he baptized as 'Körpersprache' (Muller and Wigman, 1986, 49) or 'body language' because of the focus of the work on movement, free from exogenous literary and/or theatrical modes of expression. For Delius, Wigman's dances sought to express moods instead of narratives (Delius and Wigman, 1925). An indicative example is Monotomy (Whirl Dance) (1928), a solo dance "fixed to the same spot and spinning in the monotony of whirling movement" (Wigman, 1966, 39). It was basically a dance about a sound, that of a Chinese gong, and the effect this sound had on Wigman. Similarly, in Seraphic Song (1929), which also negotiated the metaphysics of a musical experience, Wigman aimed through her dance to "paint the mood and

create an atmosphere... the transparency of those tone waves vibrating with light” (Wigman, 1966, 66). A third example is Dance of Summer (1929) which is about love, the warmth and the eroticism of summer but with no specific tale of lovers to unravel, but rather a moment:

...like noon when the still air in the heat of summer starts to dance without any other purpose than to surrender to a feeling of happiness which appears to be without end and yet lasts a moment only.

Wigman, 1966, 59

Therefore, in accordance with Deren, Wigman’s approach is a ‘vertical attack’ that investigates “what it feels like or what it means” (Deren et al., 1970, 174).

Discussing narrative-horizontal and vertical processes as manifested in dance works, Humphrey theorises about form and structure, classifying dance works under five categories. Without excluding those that she did not consider very movement-focused, and therefore contrasting to her personal choreographic approaches, she notes:

Although there seem to be some key shapes into which most dances fall, these by no means rule out new or different ones. They are rather like classic rules for composition in music, and I teach them as the indispensables from which to start. They are five in number, namely: ABA...; the narrative or the story dance...; the recurring theme...; the suite...; the “broken” form...

Humphrey, 1959, 150<sup>50</sup>

Distinguishing between works that use ‘horizontal’ narrative development and those that use vertical processes, the ‘narrative’ form is the only horizontal one; the most commonly practiced throughout the history of theatrical dance up to Humphrey’s times but the least employed form by dance modernism. In her words, ‘narrative form’ is characterized as having “a thread of continuity and purpose running through it... classic dramatic structure of a premise, a development and a conclusion.” (Humphrey, 1959, 151); characteristics of the Aristotelian narrative. The rest of the structural dance forms that Humphrey

observes are derived from structural forms of music that she applies to dance and, rather than demonstrating a linear-horizontal/narrative development, they investigate, in a vertical manner, a certain dancing section or motif and the ways this can be developed, restructured, and deconstructed within a dance work.

Humphrey demonstrates diversity in her works employing narrative structures in With My Red Fires (1936) as an abstracted form of narrative that uses symbolic rather than literal characters (Siegel, 1993; Humphrey and Cohen, 1995), thus in line with her non-representational attitude . However, most of the time she demonstrates a preference for the structural forms that she believed to be more dance-specific formal structures mostly inspired and affiliated with musical structures rather than theatrical/dramatic ones, especially in ABA, Recurring Theme, and Suite. As former Humphrey student and dancer Nona Schurman explains, “It's like.. .Beethoven's Fifth [Symphony], da-da-da-daa. That's the theme. Now, what are you going to do with it?... It's the orchestration that keeps that thing going in your head” (cited in Hausler, 1996, 44). Employing verticality, Humphrey explores the moment, ‘the theme’ through spatial and temporal variations of movement while using the devices of repetition, expansion, inversion, contrast and other theme variations to develop her structure towards an expression of human values. Her affiliation with musical forms results in a choreographic approach similar to orchestration, where a theme – a music motif – is developed, composed through the synthesis of actions-sounds danced and performed by each dancer-musician.

It is noteworthy that Humphrey’s abstracted narrative and the musical structures of her compositional form resemble what Sitney (2002) argues are abstracted narrative and imagist forms, as analysed above. It can be argued that Deren’s innovative ideas on structure are comparable with Humphrey’s revolutionary structures.

The current section has established that, from a Derenian perspective, Wigman and Humphrey’s narrative strategies were governed by ‘vertical’ processes, while from a dance perspective, Deren’s theory presents an ‘expressionist’, ‘musical’ attitude towards the development of material. All three artists dismiss



classical Aristotelian narrative as being non-specific to their art-form, a fact that brings their aesthetic viewpoints closer.

## **2.5 DERENIAN SCREENDANCE THEORY**

Revisiting the screendance typology discussed in the second chapter of the thesis, it has been established that screendance art refers to ‘screenworks that mediate dance within a fictional framework’. Synthesising the results of the cinematic and dance contextualisation of Derenian aesthetic theory and discussing the fictional and dance parameters of her theory, one may conclude that Deren’s writings constitute a screendance art theory more than anything else.

In terms of the fiction parameter, Deren’s essentialist stance towards the cinematic medium calls for deconstruction of ‘realities’ unfolding in front of the camera through the creative use of the multi-level process of cinematic production, namely the camera and the editing stage of creation. Her cinematic creations bear resemblance to both the classical continuity and the dialectical modes of editing, seeking to construct a filmic ‘imaginative’ reality that is free from any form of factuality experienced within the everyday ‘historical world’, to use Nichols’ (2001) terminology.

This new filmic reality, which only exists on screen, is strictly focused on visual spatiotemporal manipulation of filmed reality that manifests itself through the recorporealised actions of human performance, namely dance. In addition to Deren’s dance affiliation, there are fundamental interconnections between her theory and dance modernist practitioners Humphrey and Wigman.

Despite their distinctive choreographic styles, all three share common ground in their attitude towards forms of representation, arguing that abstract, non-imitative, in other words conditional generic and/or specific representation, is the most appropriate practice, since it departs from representative forms bound by theatrical conventions. In line with the formalism demonstrated through their theories, they seek to convey moods and emotions rather than telling stories,

dismissing Aristotelian-based narrative strategies as non-specific to their art forms.

On the aforementioned grounds, this thesis argues that Deren is not merely an avant-garde film theorist but her experimentation seems to have strong affiliation with dance, specifically dance modernism. This, together with the fact that her theory refers to screenworks that fulfil the criteria of screendance art, suggests that Derenian theory can be best defined as screendance art theory. This is noteworthy because Derenian theory, dating as far back as the 1950s, could best be regarded as the first screendance art theory; an aesthetic mode that reflects on and investigates the formal parameters of cinematic art. The analysis of Deren's screenworks will further assess the above-mentioned, theoretical-based adherence, clarifying points addressed in this chapter. Prior to the analysis of Deren's film-practice, the next chapter will establish a multi-layered model of formal analysis designed specifically for the needs of screendance art-products to facilitate the screenwork discussion of chapter four.

### 3 SCREENDANCE FORMAL ANALYSIS; A MULTI-LAYER MODEL

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Having identified the parameters of screendance art in chapter one, the current chapter seeks to identify a formal model of analysis appropriate for screendance art-products. Whereas scattered references that are relevant to the form and structure of screendance art can be located in numerous screendance related articles, for instance Parker Tyler (1967), Ed Emshwiller (1967), Maria Harriton (1969), Allegra Fuller Snyder (1967, 1972), Vera Maletic (1987b), there is no concrete study that establishes a screendance formal methodology. As one of the earliest scholars to stress the need for a formal system of screendance analysis, Sherril Dodds (1997b), in her thesis, identifies how perceptions of the live body's "physical characteristics and movement possibilities" (1997b, 91) are fundamentally altered on screen. A decade later this fact still reigns, as confirmed in the lectures of Rosenberg (2006) and screendance creator and researcher Katrina McPherson (2006b). The same year, McPherson (2006a) authored the book Making Video Dance that provides information on the creative process of screendance and from which information can be derived as to the formal parameters of the art form. Another directly related scholar, whose writings have not reached as wide an audience as the aforementioned due to her untimely death, is dancer, choreographer and film-maker Michele Fox (1966 – 1996). Her master's thesis (Fox, 1991), which focuses on the structural "interrelationship between dance and the media" (1991, 1) and despite its confined length, provides a significant base for the current chapter as will be demonstrated. Furthermore, in light of Deren's body-focused relation to dance and her body-centric, spatiotemporal cinematic theorisation as established in chapter two, this chapter will investigate whether her writings incorporate discussion related to the screendance formal agenda.

Accordingly, in the absence of any fully developed screendance methodology that focuses on the formal parameters of the art form, the current chapter investigates first the dance mechanics followed by screendance production and

post-production and the creative transmission stage. The identified screendance mechanics are then viewed through a dance perspective that specifies the choreographic capacity of screendance art, establishing at the same time a multi-layered formal model of analysis for screendance practice in general and Derenian practice in particular, as will be discussed in chapter four.

### **3.2 THE SCREENDANCE FLOWCHART**

Deren has described the choreographic quality manifested within her screenworks as “the design and stylization of movement which confers ritual dimension upon functional motion” (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 255). Fascinated by the cinema’s great ability to manipulate spatiotemporal reality, she has made a film devoted to the exploration of the subject, A Study in Choreography for Camera (Deren, 1945): which she called a ‘Pas de Deux’, a duet between the film form and the dancer. As she explains in her 1955 letter to film archivist and writer James Card (1915 – 2000), “This principle that the dynamic of movement in film is stronger than anything else... seemed to me marvellous, like illumination, that I wanted to just stop and celebrate that wonder, just by itself, which I did in Study in Choreography for Camera.” (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 192) – this film will be extensively discussed in chapter four.

In an attempt to define the ‘choreographic’ that Deren refers to as a cinematic attribute, the current chapter proposes a model of structural analysis based on the mechanics of screendance which will facilitate the subsequent discussion of Deren’s filmworks in particular, as well as the investigation of screendance works in general. Hence, through the process of formal examination the current approach explores the possibilities and therefore the spectrum of screendance choreography incorporated within screendance works, ultimately aiming at the establishment of a model of analysis that discusses the compositional parameters of screendance art introducing a vocabulary relevant to the corresponding artworks.

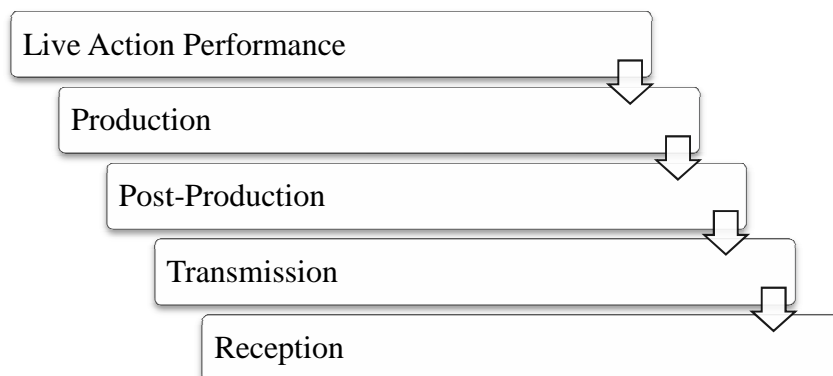
According to Deren, there are two main stages of film creation, the recording process where the artist works with the camera, and the editing process where the filmmaker works with the film. For her, both of these stages are full of creative possibilities that ought to be explored and used towards cinematic creation, as established in the cinematic contextualisation.

Nothing can be achieved in the art of film until its form is understood to be the product of a completely unique complex ... the camera provides the elements of the form ... upon the mechanisms and process of “editing” falls the burden of relating all these elements into a dynamic whole.

Deren, 1946, 46

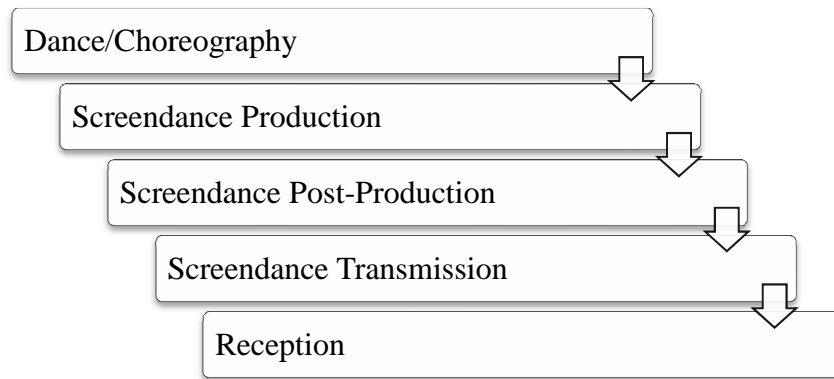
The specific attributes of these two processes, camera and editing, will be discussed later. As a parenthesis, however, it has to be noted that by referring to them Deren speaks generally about the cinematic production and post-production processes which in most cases incorporate both the audio and the visual processes. In addition to Deren’s two-stage cinematic creation, one more final stage is proposed. The transmission time or projection/playback time where manipulation can occur during the actual time of reception<sup>51</sup> both to the projector as well as to the screen, the potential compositional manipulation is infinite, as will be demonstrated later on.

Thus, the cinematic/screen flowchart is the result of the performance that has been registered in the production process, manipulated in post-production, and passed through transmission before being received. In other words it is a multi-stage creation, as shown below.



**Figure 3-1: Screen Flowchart**

Correspondingly by specifying the first stage creation of ‘live action-performance’ as dance, the screendance flowchart is developed as follows.



**Figure 3-2: Screendance Flowchart**

### **3.3 DANCE MECHANICS**

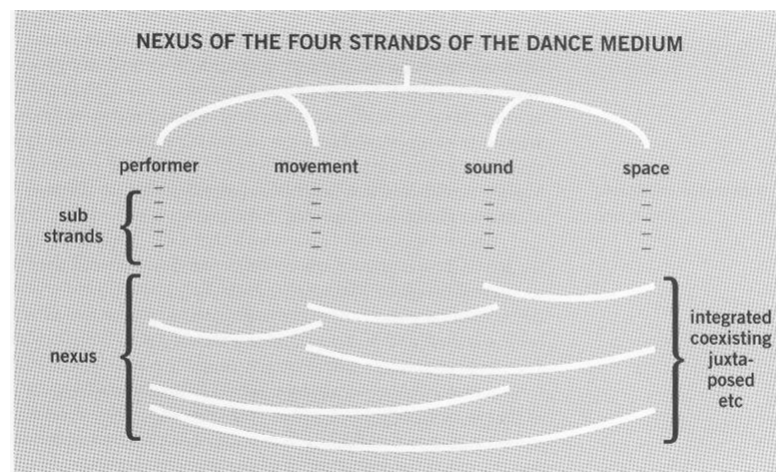


As the research concluded in the first chapter, ‘dance is the form of human expression that uses primarily, if not exclusively, human body movement as its channel of communication’ and that choreography is literary the art of ‘dance-writing’. In other words, it is the synthesis of a performing event that has as a primary medium of expression the human body movement; or as Doris Humphrey defines it in simple words through the title of her book, it is The Art of Making Dances (1959) which contains all the elements beside movement composition. Accordingly, the choreographic process is a composite which focuses on body movement but is also interlinked and interrelated with other elements exogenous to the dancer.

‘Strand analysis’ is to date probably the most widely used model of approach for investigating the elements of dance performance. Originally proposed by Valerie

Preston-Dunlop (1986) and developed by Janet Adshead-Lansdale (1988), it is one of the most significant and systematic approaches for the analysis of the dance medium. Its components are “Movement, Dancers, Visual Settings, Aural Elements” (Adshead-Lansdale, 1988, 21).

Preston-Dunlop (2002) notes that the term ‘strands’ is preferable to ‘components’ because it demonstrates a strong relation among the elements that, in spite of their individual features, are parts/strands of a whole, the dance. They are part of a ‘nexus’ that Preston-Dunlop (2002) calls this interconnection of dance components. The following diagram demonstrates the aforementioned nexus. While alternative terms are used, ‘performer’ instead of ‘dancer’, ‘sound’ instead of ‘aural elements’ and ‘space’ instead of ‘visual settings’, if seen independently these are not synonyms but refer to the same thing.



**Figure 3-3: Nexus of Four Strands (Preston-Dunlop et al., 2002, 43)**

Briefly introducing the above categories, movement refers to the “human possible actions of the body” (Adshead-Lansdale, 1988, 22) and examines the selection of these possibilities as well as how these are combined. In other words it reflects the movement vocabulary used in a dance piece. Dancer/s, or “performer/s”, to use Preston-Dunlop’s terminology (2002, 41), is the second strand and the category that examines the physiology of these agents. The third strand, according to Adshead-Lansdale (1988), is the visual settings. Preston-

Dunlop uses a different order of reference, but this is not of any importance since all the elements are considered as parts of an interconnected whole. This strand concerns what Preston-Dunlop calls “space” and refers to “the set, objects, lighting, smoke screen, dance floor, backdrop” (2002, 42), in other words the visual environment of the dance. Finally, there are the aural elements which, according to Preston-Dunlop, are better described as the “sound” (2002, 42) and refer to any aural manifestations within a dance performance.

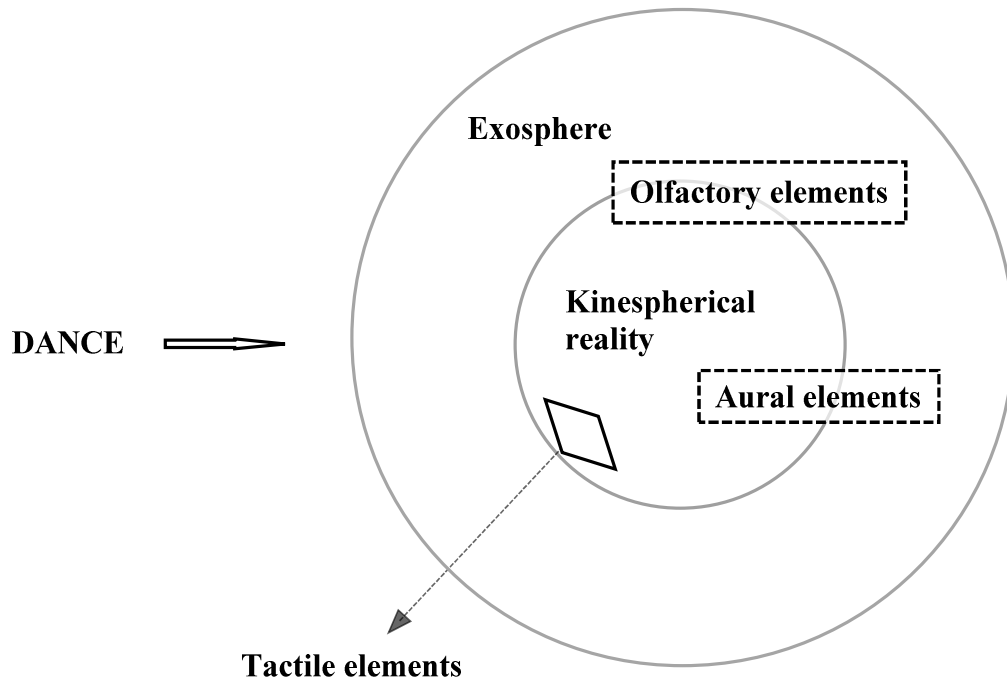
Based on the strand analysis for understanding and evaluating dancing material, this thesis integrates Rudolf von Laban’s spherical analytical way of approaching dance material, expanding on his critical concept of ‘kinesphere’, discussed below. The aim is to establish a model of analysis focused on human body movement interlinked and interrelated with elements exogenous to the dancer which, as will be demonstrated, is more appropriate for screendance analytic purposes. Accordingly, dance is constituted by a two level analysis: the ‘kinespherical reality’ – a term based on Laban’s notion of ‘kinesphere’ – which concerns the performer’s personal space, and the ‘exospherical reality’ which concerns the surrounding space – ‘exo’ means out or outside from Greek ἐξω, outside.

The proposed kine-exospherical model of analysis is in accordance with Deren’s beliefs regarding the art of choreography which is the design of performing movement in relation to its environment. As she asserts in October of 1945, “*Choreography consists* not only of designing the dancer’s individual movements but also of designing the patterns which he and his movements, as a unit, make in relationship to a spatial area” (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 220). As will be further clarified, what Deren specifies as the design of the dancer’s movements, the “unit”, corresponds to the kinespherical reality while her reference to a “spatial area” is the exosphere.



Below is a diagram of the aforementioned kine-exosphere combination – in its simplest form, as a solo where only one performer is present on stage.

– The circles of the diagram are perceived as three-dimensional spheres, and the rectangles as intersecting sections –

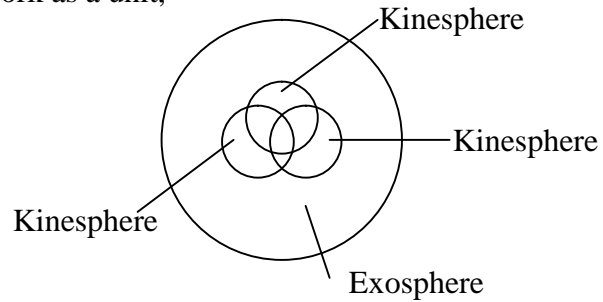


**Figure 3-4: Kine-exospherical Reality of Dance and its Elements**

When more than one dancer is on stage the kinespherical realities are multiplied in proportion to the number of dancers defining the number of the kinespherical realities, which then share the same exospherical reality. In addition there are the cases of group dances, duos, trios, and so on that may benefit from being approached as one combined kinespherical unit within a dance event, although that is a choice that the analyst has to make. There are also instances where, despite the fact that a performer acts within a group and there are several kinespherical realities, her/his actions are worth discussing separately. This happens, for example, when a soloist performs in front of a number of performers who either watch, or accompany the main dancer.

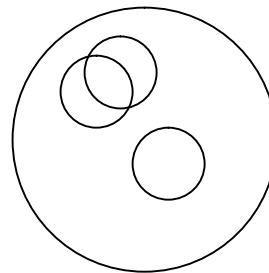
Below is an example of three dancers in a different formation/combination. The biggest circle is to be perceived as the exosphere. The smaller circles are the kinespheres. The diagram below shows some of the possibilities of formation in a three-person composition.

... a trio, where performers work as a unit,



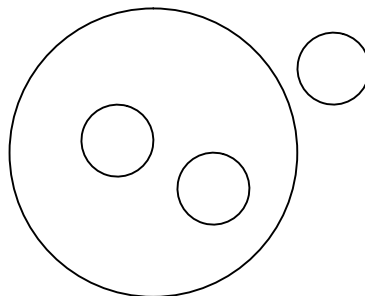
**Figure 3-5: Kine-exospherical Reality – Trio**

... a duet and a solo,



**Figure 3-6: Kine-exospherical Reality – Duet & Solo**

... two performers on-stage, a performer off-stage, or to be more precise, off-exosphere – a notion that will be developed in screendance mechanics.



**Figure 3-7: Kine-exospherical reality – Two Solos on-stage & One off-stage**

As it appears on the analytic kine-exospherical diagram (Figure 3-4), there is a kinespherical reality which exists within an exospherical reality. Within the kinespherical reality are included the tactile elements which correspond to the sense of touch, presented above with a diamond shape. The aural elements as well as the olfactory elements are inter-cut between the spheres because they acquire specific attributes that make their source less easily definable. It should be noted that the olfactory and the tactile elements, though part of a dance performance, exceed the current screendance discussion which is focused on the norm of screening parameters confined to the audio-visual sensory stimuli.

### 3.3.1 Kinespherical Reality

Since the body is a three-dimensional structure moving in a three-dimensional space, it has as inherent attributes the dimensions of Euclidean geometry, namely, length, width, and depth. The sphere, a three-dimensional geometrical figure, is a surface where all points are equidistant from the centre. According to Laban, the spherical surface created by the farthest points reached by a performer is called 'kinesphere' (Laban and Ullman, 1966, 10), basically the space in which movement is manifested; the performer's personal dancing space, thus the term kine-sphere, from the Greek words *κίνηση*/kinesis combined with *σφαίρα*/sphere.

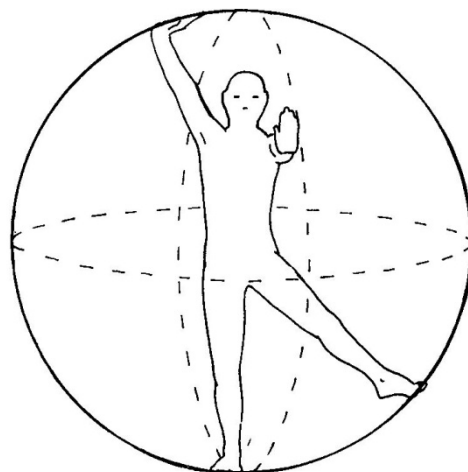


Figure 3-8: Kinesphere Drawing as seen in Bartenieff and Lewis (1980, 25)

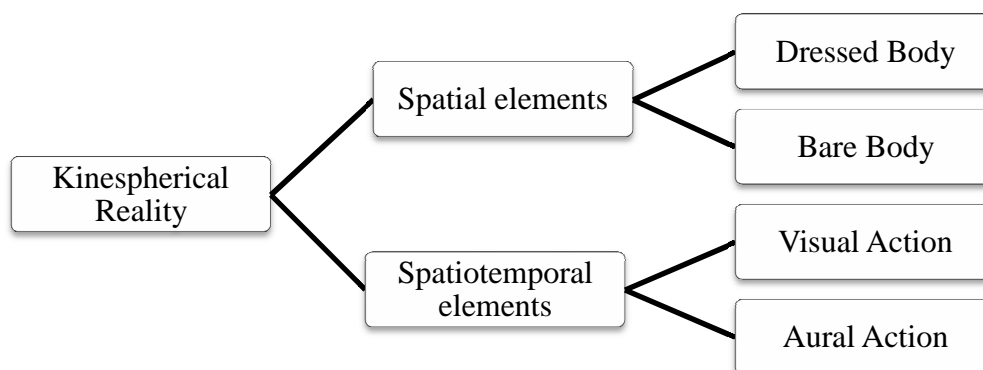
Therefore, what is proposed as kinespherical reality does not solely comprise the movement-action that is manifested within this imaginary sphere but also all the elements included in this kinesphere that move with it.

It is argued that there are two main categories that can be observed within the kinespherical reality. The first category concerns the spatial elements and is a two part discussion around the performer as a spatial entity. The 'bare body' refers to the corporeal physiology of the performer (for example weight, sex, skin colour, hair colour, general anatomy and facial characteristics) to the extent that this is identifiable. The second part of the discussion deals with the 'covered body' or 'dressed body'. The visually constructed-altered body with the aid of the elements attached to it (costume, make-up, hair styling, prosthetics and so on) all considered part of the movement-action of the performer. In that sense, the kinespherical reality is often more expanded in spatial terms than the kinesphere, since it incorporates any movement that the visual attachments, as extension to the bare body, realise.

The second category of kinespherical reality deals with the spatiotemporal elements manifested within a dance work. Similarly, it has two subcategories, 'visual action' and 'aural action'. Starting with the former, it bears resemblance to the movement strand, in that it deals primarily with the movement performed. The significant difference between the strand and proposed spherical approach is the fact that the latter does not separate the costume or any other of the visual elements attached to the dancer, whereas the strand analysis places the 'movement' separately from the 'visual settings'. In that way the proposed spherical approach acknowledges that the performer's visual setting is inseparable from her/his movement; Loïe Fuller's fabric-generated dances discussed in chapter two as well as Graham's Lamentation (1930), are two such examples.

In addition to 'visual action', there is also kinespherical 'aural action' that may be incorporated. In other words, sound originated either internally as from the performer's voice and breath, or any other externally inflicted sound, like footsteps, or clapping.

The following diagram of kinespherical reality is constructed accordingly:



**Figure 3-9: Kinespherical Reality – Elements**

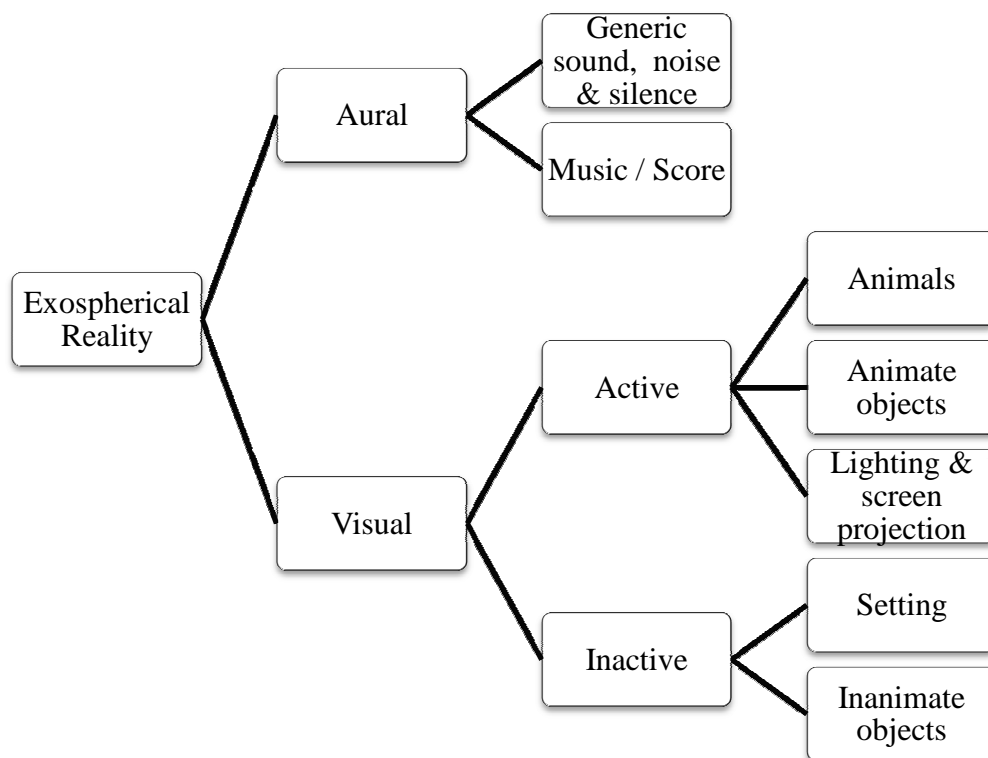
### 3.3.2 Exospherical Reality

Exosphere is essentially the environment not attached and thus not immediately influenced by the kinespherical reality in that it is governed by its own attributes and not by the kinespherical action. There are no rigid boundaries between the kinespherical and exospherical realities. Their main difference is that the former moves with the dancer, being the space around the body and travelling according to the body's mobile orientation. The latter is the area – the surrounding environment – exogenous to the kinespherical reality, what Preston-Dunlop refers to as the “space” (2002, 43) while discussing the strands of the dance medium.

There are primarily two categories observed in exospherical reality; the elements of visual attributes and the aural ones. Starting with the visual, there are two kinds. First of all the category of ‘active’ elements deals with the existence of animals, animated objects and every form of lighting, including the special category of screen projection; secondly the ‘inactive’ subcategory, which deals with the analysis of the inanimate-decorative objects and the setting.

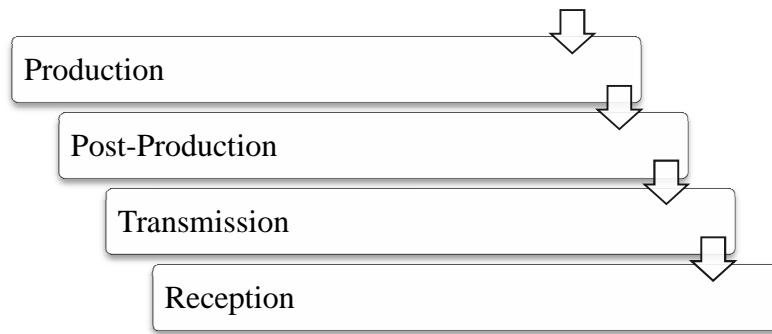
In the second category comprising aural elements of the exospherical reality, one may observe either the existence of silence or noise, or the existence of music or any accompanied score. Whereas at times it is difficult to pinpoint, the exospherical aural environment refers to the sound whose source is not the performer but exogenous to her/him. The discussion of aural elements will be revisited and developed in the ‘screendance mechanics section’.

The above results in the following diagram:



**Figure 3-10: Exospherical Reality – Elements**

### 3.4 SCREENDANCE MECHANICS



Having established the mechanics of a choreographic event required for the current discussion, the above-mentioned reality that constructs dance will be now incorporated into the screendance flowchart to demonstrate the formal possibilities of this combination. Once this occurs, the discussion shifts from spherical to ‘layer’ and a two-dimensional image is constructed by the cinematic apparatus. More importantly it is the point where the ‘video dance bodies’ (Dodds, 2004, 170) start to emerge and the notion of recorporealisation, namely the re-materialization of the body (Rosenberg, 2000a; Broomberg, 2000), is manifested as discussed in chapter one (section 1.5.3). Its special importance in regard to the screendance product and the formal grounds of this recorporealisation will be clarified later.

The following structural analysis of creation is analysed in a linear way that corresponds to the creative stages. Accordingly, production precedes the process of post-production which has to be completed before transmission to the receivers. Accordingly, it defines the compositional activities as separate stages of creation, emphasising their individual formal input.

The discussion does not aim at enumerating in detail the components of the screen apparatus as this has already been undertaken by numerous film scholars, Barry Salt (1983), Jacques Aumont (1992), James Monaco (2000), David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson (2004), Kris Malkiewicz and David Mullen (2005) to name but a few. Instead, it will mostly deal with the audio-visual attributes of cinematic creation, with reference to the combination of screen and dance arts. It will thus investigate and focus upon the cinematic attributes which

are particularly important for the prolific combination of the two. This will then lead to the specification of how choreographic input can be achieved within the screen apparatus for the creation of screendance.

### **3.4.1 Visual Production - The Camera**

The first visual layer of screendance creation, the camera layer or visual production as it is also called, is the stage where material is registered, via the recording process, on a filmstock or any other magnetic or digital recording device. It is significant to note that ‘raw material’, in general, stands for what is prepared during the pre-production process, meaning the staging of the performance that will take place in front of the camera, including all the script and directing decisions materialised with the help of the rest of the production team. In our screendance case, this pre-production material has been specified as the kine-exosphical reality – the dance. Accordingly, the discussion moves on to the next stage of creation, often called ‘production stage’, which in effect is a flattened kine-exosphical reality as selected/framed by the instrument of the camera.

The aforementioned portion of reality, registered by the camera, is described according to its proximity to the framed subject, consequently the scale of the object on screen. Accordingly, in the ‘long shot’, the subject is remote from the camera, in the ‘middle shot’ and ‘close shot’ the subject is depicted closer and closer (Spottiswoode, 1950, 46); to name the most common terminology currently used “extreme long shot, long shot, medium long shot, medium shot or *plan américain*, medium close-up, close-up, extreme close-up” (Aumont, 1992, 28).

Notwithstanding the validity of these terms which have been common language among cinematographers and directors for more than a century and are even applicable to screendance creations as McPherson concurs (2006a)<sup>52</sup>, it is argued that a body specific terminology may at times be more appropriate to describe the framing used in a screendance work. Accordingly, the following terminology proposed is in line with the kine-exosphical approach discussed above; a



'kinespherical shot' frames the visual kinespherical reality of a performer, any shot that enters, intrudes or fragments this kinespherical reality is an 'inner-spherical shot', while framing of a specific part of the kinespherical reality, for example hands, eyes, feet, on a scale that covers the majority of the screen is a 'micro-spherical' shot. The framing of more than one kinespherical reality is called 'multispherical shot' whereas any shot that incorporates large portions and focuses on the exospherical space is correspondingly named as 'exospherical shot' or 'macro-exospherical shot' when the camera is even further away from the subject.

The camera as an instrument is designed to emulate the visual sense of the human eye. Accordingly, it has been developed to register the image's visual attributes: colour, shape, size, depth, and contrast. However, being a machine and not a human eye that works in a predetermined way, the camera has the capacity of manipulating these features.

Consequently, it has the ability to change the shape and size of the recorded reality and thus the perception of depth dimension with the use of a relevant lens that can provide different perspective angles, meaning different focal lengths. As Monaco (2000) notes, the standard lenses for 35mm photography, whether motion picture or still, are the 28mm wide-angle lens, the 50mm normal<sup>53</sup> lens, and the 135mm telephoto lens. The zoom lens is another type of lens that came into general use around the 1960s. Its unique characteristic is that it acquires the ability of a variable focal length and thus ranges from a wide-angle lens to a telephoto. When this variable changes between the shots, the abilities of the zoom lens do not affect the image beyond the spatial arrangement as any lens does; however, the alteration of the focal length during a shot provides a spatiotemporal effect that is similar to the tracking shot, since it magnifies the photographed objects. The difference between the two shot movements will be analysed further down.

What is attached to the front of the lenses, such as filters, and what intervenes between the lenses and the filmstock, the diaphragm and the shutter, define another set of elements. In combination, rather than separately, they define which

areas of the image will be in net focus and which will not, that is the depth of field, as well as the attributes of light, such as colour, and contrast, to name but a few of the most basic possibilities and ways that these can be achieved during the visual production process. With the exception of zoom, when used in a spatiotemporal way, the aforementioned on-camera manipulations affect the attributes of the image registered in a static-spatial way; an overall designing process that deals with the two-dimensional registered image, without incorporating time attributes.

However, there is one more strand with regard to the visual production layer, the camera body and its function as a whole, its position/point of view towards the dance performed and its movement during this recording; two inseparable dimensions that concern the manipulation of the body of the camera. The special importance of the camera-body manipulation, as regards screendance, is that the movement introduced – the camera movement – is exogenous to the movement performed. This results in an extra layer of visual spatiotemporality that is imposed on the performer's movement; an attribute extensively used by Deren who emphasises in 1960 that “*the motion in motion-picture medium can and should refer not only to activity within the frame but to the action of the moving frame itself*” (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 172).

Monaco notes that there are two basic types of movement: “the camera can revolve around the three imaginary axes that intersect in the camera; or it can move itself from one point to another in space” (2000, 96). Discussing the former type of movement, Monaco refers to the three elementary camera movements, that is the pan which is a horizontal movement to the horizon from right to left and the opposite, the tilt which is a vertical movement upwards or downwards, and the roll which is a rotational movement around the perpendicular axis to the other two, also called the sagittal.

This first type of camera movement, which is in reference to its body, resembles the movement performed by a dancer within her/his kinesphere, meaning in line with it. In fact, what Monaco (2000) describes as movement around the axes is the movement on the three planes which are constructed by connecting the six

dimensional compass points as defined by the three axes. It is the exact same planes upon which Laban's kinesphere is based, the horizontal or table plane as is often called; the sagittal or wheel plane; and the lateral or door plane which correspond to the pan, tilt, and roll movements of the camera respectively. Should this movement be in between shots and thus unregistered, what remains is a specific point of view. In this case, the camera-body is static. What is significant in such a case is its orientation towards the exospheric reality; as for instance a low-angle recording or a tilted recording and so on.

The second type of movement which moves the camera across the space can be compared to the action performed in reference to the exosphere. In other words, it does not refer to the space as constructed in the body, but to the way the body moves around the space, such as the tracking/dolly shots and the crane shots which are some of the most commonly used kinds of movement<sup>54</sup>. In addition to the above, the handheld method of filming provides a wealth of movements and sometimes the only way to get specific shot sequences. Emphasising the importance of hand-held camera movement, Deren notes that "*As a supporting structure [for the camera] the human body has no peers*" (2005, 172), arguing that the tripod is an obstacle, both physically and psychologically, to the "*flexibility of the camera*" (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 170).

### **3.4.2 Visual Post-Production – Editing**

A terminological issue has to be addressed regarding the visual process of post-production. The editing process, as seen in Deren's writings, refers to the whole post-production, meaning the film manipulation and the added elements that constitute the final film composition. The distinction is significant because, as Monaco (2000) among others argues, 'editing' is just a part of post-production, with sound 'mixing and looping' and 'special effects' being the others. "Three jobs generally proceed more or less concurrently during post-production: editing; sound mixing, augmentation, and looping (or ADR); and laboratory work, opticals, and special effects" (Monaco, 2000, 129).

Visual post-production processes are concerned with the two-fold manipulation of the framed reality registered in the production stage: the alteration of spatio-plastic and rhythmical elements of recorded kine-exospheric reality – intrashot manipulation – and the synthesis of temporal/chronological attributes of constructed reality – intershot manipulation<sup>55</sup>. The ultimate aim is the creation of the visual framed kine-exospheric reality, namely the film-image which is later projected through or onto a screen.

With regards to plastic elements of the intrashot alteration, it concerns the addition, subtraction or simply alteration of the existing recorded kine-exospheric graphic elements such as colour and contrast. In terms of the capacity of manipulating the temporal elements of the production material, this is a process that deals with the kine-exospheric temporality of the recorded action. Accordingly, it can alter the speed, decelerate, accelerate or freeze the action that has been performed and captured, changing the physical rhythm of the exosphere which is the physical rhythm of the world. In addition, it can alter the direction of the action, namely from forward to reverse. It should be noted that whereas the speed alterations are presented here as a post-production process, they can also be a result of in-camera manipulation, namely motor variation, as was the case for Deren. For example, a decelerated rhythm can be achieved by adjusting the speed of the pull-down mechanism so that it shoots more frames than the standard 24fps – frames per second – overcranking. By speeding up the camera motor at the time of capturing, the slowing down of the action is achieved at the exposure/projection time. The opposite occurs for an accelerated rhythm – undercranking.

In terms of intershot manipulation, there are two ways of shot synthesis, the horizontal and the vertical<sup>56</sup>. The former concerns the temporal synthesis of two shots, one next to the other, in other words the synthesis of succeeding shots with reference to the screen-time which is the physical duration of a film product. The vertical refers to two or more shots or elements of them, simultaneously placed on screen. It is a way of either superimposing images, placing images one next to the other by separating the screen in sections, what is often called split screen, or inserting an image inside another. Through the process of vertical editing, the

editing manipulates the kine-exospherical realities in both spatial and temporal grounds, since there is combination of kine-exospherical spaces.

### **3.4.3 Audio Production (microphone-recorder-recording media)**

Extending from unidentifiable to recognisable sounds whose source is known to the receiver, whether visible or not (Kracauer, 1997, 124), the aural elements – speech, music, and noise/sound-effect (Bordwell and Thompson, 1985, 186; Chion and Gorbman, 1994, 189) – of a screenwork, including a screendance work, are governed by completely different rules from the visual material. As Monaco notes, “While stereoscopic images are subject to special psychological and physical problems that significantly reduce their value” as demonstrated above, “stereophonic sound is relatively free of these problems...” (2000, 127-128). They nevertheless have an interactive relationship with the visual elements, which will be later developed, as well as a similar creative pattern. There is a production stage, where, by process of ‘selection’ (Bordwell and Thompson, 1985, 186), the desired sound is transferred via a microphone or similar devices to a recording medium like tape, or film. Then in the post-production, through the process of ‘combination’ (Bordwell and Thompson, 1985, 187), the totality of acquired sounds are edited and mixed according to the required result and in reference to the timeline of the total film. (Monaco, 2000, 127)

During production, there are two types of recording sound material. One stems from the reality perceived as ‘actuality sound’ drawn either from the performer/s and/or from their environment, – kinespherical and exospherical sounds correspondingly. The other from a reality not perceived or revealed, namely ‘added sound’ such as a sound whose source is not identified within the kine-exospherical space. Note that the space under discussion for ‘actuality sound’ is not the framed kine-exospherical reality but the kine-exospherical reality as a whole. Aumont defines this as “film space” or “scenographic space”, namely the combination of the on-screen and off-screen spaces required for the creation of a homogeneous environment for action (1992, 14)<sup>57</sup>. Accordingly, ‘added sound’ is an exogenous source.

Relating and expanding this terminology to the spherical model analysed above in the formalist dance analysis, the ‘kinespherical aural action’ within screendance works is ‘kinespherical actuality sound’– physiological sounds either verbal or ‘objective-internal’ sounds like breathing and heartbeats, to use composer and theoretician Michel Chion’s term of audio-visual relationships (1994, 76). The exospherical aural elements, in terms of the generic sound/noise/silence<sup>58</sup>, are an ‘exospherical actuality sound’. However, the same does not apply to the music. In order for the music of exospherical reality to be treated as an ‘exospherical actuality music’ it has to originate from the scenographic space, in other words from a visualised source. Otherwise it is an added-exogenous material, what Chion defines as “acousmatic” (1994, 71).

#### **3.4.4 Audio Post-production (editing-mixing)**

Having gathered the audio raw material needed, the post-production processes them according to the needs of the screenwork. Similar to the visual post-production stage, there are two ways of synthesising the aural elements acquired. The first concerns the processes of manipulation/alteration of the aural element’s acoustic attributes – loudness, pitch, timbre<sup>59</sup> – as well as the mixing of more than one element, and the sequential way which refers to the synthesis of these in terms of succession, namely how one aural element connects to the next . The result of this synthesis of ‘kine-exospherical sounds’ and ‘exogenous sounds’ that Deren names ‘film-sound’ is the sound material that will be reproduced along with the framed reality during the transmission of the screendance creation.

#### **3.4.5 Audio-Visual Transmission**

There are two strands of discussion that relate to audio-visual transmission, the audio reproduction and the visual projection. Both exceed the framework of the current research since they do not correspond to the norm of screendance creations as identified in chapter one. However, it is important to note the

following for reasons of clarification and conciseness in reference to screendance mechanics.

As far as audio transmission is concerned there are infinite options as to the manipulation of the transmission sources, in other words we observe the placement of numerous sound transmitters as well as their possible mobility, namely speakers that actually move or are being moved during transmission. The combination of different sources, mobile or not, produce a multi-faceted auditory environment with infinite possibilities. Regarding the projector as a machine, there is the possibility of movement as well as the alteration of the projected image with the appliance of filters or any other adapters that have an effect on the printed image. By that, we do not mean the standard adapters necessary for the anamorphic prints or any of the masks, like the 1.85 American widescreen that theatres should use in order to adapt the print to the projector, but other alterations that seek to have unusual effect on the image projected. Furthermore, the screen can be equally, if not more, versatile. To be more specific, the object on which the image is projected can be of any quality, colour, or shape, while at the same time it can contain movement, with analogous results; it can be for instance a body that is used for screen.

Having briefly established the structure of the medium, its audio-visual dimensions and the compositional processes involved, the following section focuses on filmic movement and film sound and the way it is incorporated within screendance in order for screen-choreography to be defined. In other words, the spatiotemporal manipulation the screen medium is able to provide to the human movement, in order for screendance art to be created.

### **3.5 SCREEN CHOREOGRAPHY: SCREEN CHOREUTICS AND SCREENDANCE SOUND**

The spatiotemporal analysis of the screen image has been high on the agenda of cinematic scholars, especially as much as this concerns the earliest writings that sought to understand the functions of the cinematic medium and established it

through its unique attributes, notably Arnheim (1957), film critic, theoretician and poet Béla Balázs (1884 – 1949) (1970) among others. However, ‘screen choreutics’, despite being in effect the same area of discussion, as will be demonstrated, constitutes a novel notion within screen scholarship that has firstly been addressed by Maletic (1987b) and revisited by Fox (1991).

‘Choreutics’ is the field of theory that studies spatial form and the orientation of movement in space. Initiated by Laban and his study of space and developed by Valerie Preston-Dunlop (1983), it is often used to develop the dancer’s and choreographer’s way of using space, as well as to examine its use once it is formed, either in a virtual or an actual way. Laban himself describes Choreutics as “the art, or the science dealing with the analysis and synthesis of movement...” (Laban in Maletic, 1987a, 57).

Applying the theoretical body of ‘Choreutics’ to the screendance mechanics analysed above, the current section investigates how these dance models of analysis can contribute towards the development of the proposed multi-layer screendance model of analysis which will provide us with a new set of ‘Screen-Choreutics’ to investigate the movement attributes of screendance creations.

Based on the creative stages established in the preceding screendance mechanics’ analysis, the current section will discuss screen choreutics as formulated within each stage as well as the way the spatiotemporal creation relates to the aural elements of screendance.

### **3.5.1 Visual Layer 1: Screen Choreutics: Space and Time in Kine-exospherical Movement**

First the kine-exospherical reality of dance, the material performed in front of the camera, is constituted by movement in the kinesphere and movement of the kinesphere in reference to the exosphere. As clarified by Preston-Dunlop (1983), movement in kine-exospherical reality is manifested either in the shape of ‘line’ that has directional content and/or in the shape of ‘curve’ which has directional



axis. These are materialised and communicated through the dancer in four ways: spatial progression, spatial tension, spatial projection, body design.

‘Spatial progression’ refers to the “spatial pattern perceived through time, ... it has no positional content, only motional content” (Preston-Dunlop, 1983, 82). It is a virtual manner of materialisation since the line or the curve perceived is not present but rather mentally constructed in the spectator’s mind. Secondly, ‘spatial tension’ “is a way of moving or of holding a position which causes a connection to be seen between ... two ends... making perceivable an illusory line.” (Preston-Dunlop, 1983, 83). ‘Spatial tension’ is virtually manifested either within a kinespherical reality, for instance spatial tension between two hands, or between two or more kinespherical realities, spatial tension between dancers, or between kinespherical reality/ies and a point within the exosphere. Thirdly, ‘spatial projection’ is “a line or a curve which continues beyond the body into the kinesphere or into the shared space” (Preston-Dunlop, 1983, 83), in other words it is a kinespherical movement that creates a virtual line which is projected towards the surrounding space. Finally, ‘body design’ which is the only actual manner of materialisation concerns the “visible patterning of limbs, or torso or head” (Preston-Dunlop, 1983, 83). Despite the fact that in choreography the body is in effect always designed, in this specific case the performance “draws the audience’s eye to that design” (Preston-Dunlop, 1983, 85).

Introducing the appropriate terminology for discussing the aforementioned spatial materialisations, there are “innumerable directions [that] radiate from the centre of our body and its Kinesphere into infinite space” (Laban and Ullman, 1966, 17). Nevertheless, there are certain orientations that produce a basis for discussion. To start with there are three levels of movement, “on the floor [low level]... mid-height of the body [medium level]... height of the hands, when raised above the head [high level]” (Laban and Ullman, 1966, 12). Beyond levels, movement can be defined as to its three directions of space, length or height, breadth and depth, to use Laban’s term, each of which has two opposite directions, creating a three-dimensional cross.

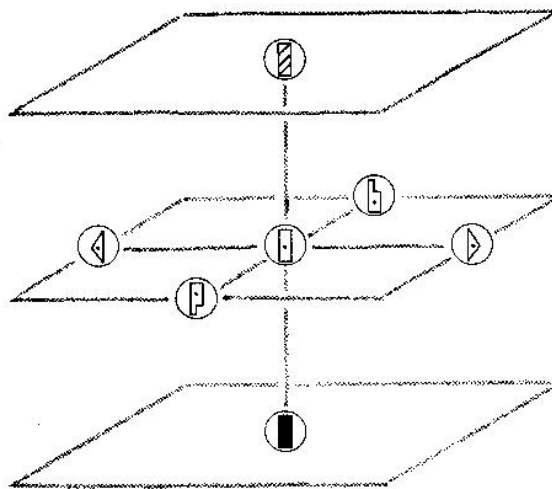


Figure 3-11: The 'Three-Dimensional Cross' (Laban and Ullman, 1966, 13)

Based on the above planes and the three dimensional cross, Laban expands his discussion in two more diagrams. One called 'four-diagonal cross' and the other 'six-diametral cross'.

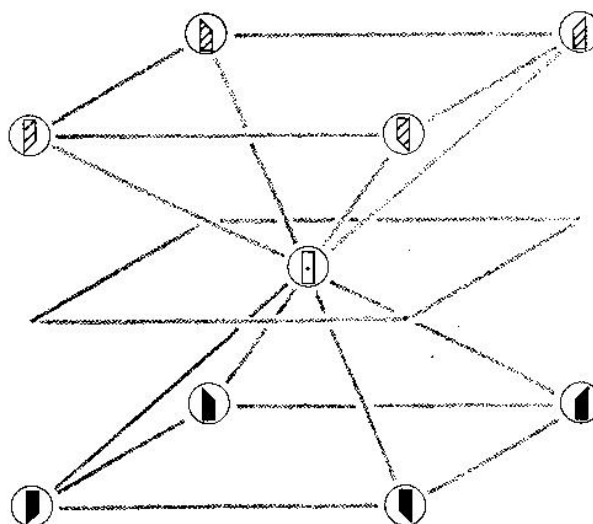


Figure 3-12: The 'Four-Diagonal Cross' (Laban and Ullman, 1966, 14)

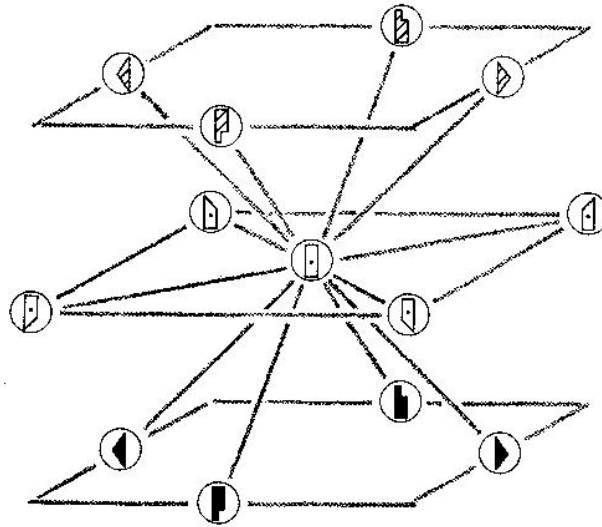


Figure 3-13: The 'Six-Diametral Cross' (Laban and Ullman, 1966, 15)

The combination of these three crosses produces the following diagram which establishes the main directional rays.

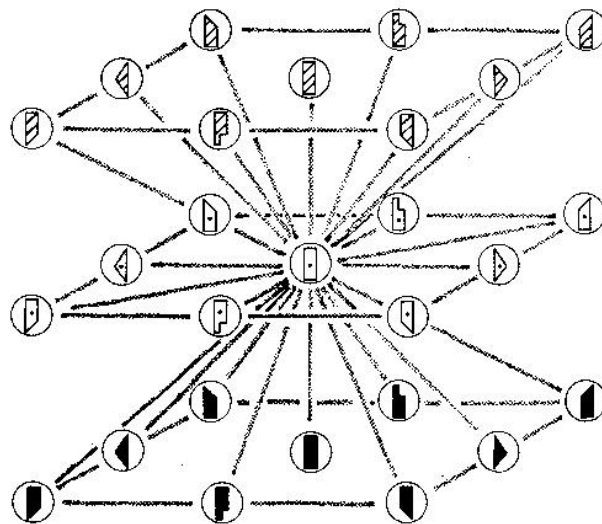


Figure 3-14: The Main Directional Rays (Laban and Ullman, 1966, 16)

Whereas Laban's principles of orientation concern mainly the kinespherical space, the same principles can be applied to the exospherical space, and

accordingly to all three virtual manners of materialisation of movement – spatial progression, spatial tension, and spatial projection. Similar to kinespherical orientations, a performer might move in any direction, limited only by gravity and the exospherical arrangement of visual elements analysed above. Attention has to be given to the point of reference for these directions. As much as the kinesphere is discussed, the orientation is defined by the body's movement in reference to its centre and the direction of the torso, it is therefore movable; in regards to the exospherical directions they are defined by the structural arrangement of the performing space and are therefore fixed.

Regarding the time attributes of kine-exospherical reality, there are two temporal strands of kine-exospherical rhythm of movement that have been identified by Laban through the development of the theories of 'Eukinetics' and 'Effort' (Maletic, 1987a, 93-112). One concerns how fast or slow or even 'static' a kinespherical moment is, the rhythm of the performer's action as manifested within his/her kinesphere can vary from a point of relative stillness to a fast movement. The second strand concerns the rhythm, either stationary, slow or fast, with which a kinesphere travels inside the exospherical environment.

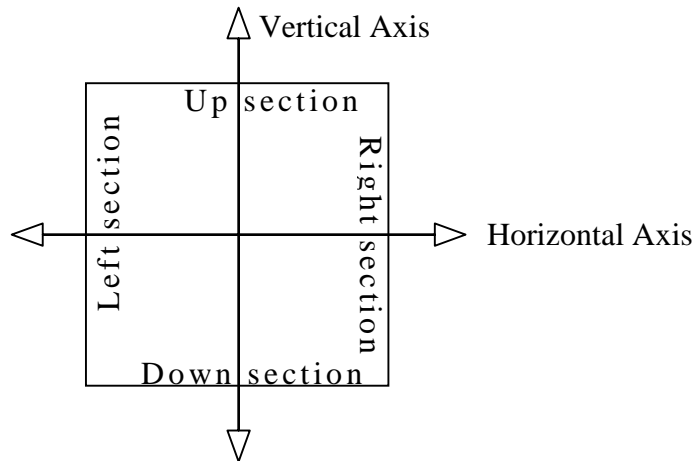
### **3.5.2 Visual Layer 2: Screen Choreutics – Dynamic Camera Space**

Two more spatial divisions exist at the purely cinematic layers, where the spatiotemporal manipulation and consequently alteration of the performer's kinespherical action is introduced. The first refers to the real image, meaning the two-dimensional screen image, and the second to the virtual image, the seemingly three-dimensional image. It is in the combination of these images/spaces that the illusionary movement effect produced by film is situated as Arnheim notes (1957).

The screen image and its dimensions correspond to what Aumont (1997) discusses as the plastic space, the two-dimensional space first used as a medium of expression by the art of painting. Discussing the screen as a flat surface that is relatively vertical to the direction of vision, what one perceives is an image that can be separated in the two upper halves and the two lower halves, in other

words a division of up, down, right and left sections, as divided by the two intersecting axes, the horizontal and the vertical. The diagram below illustrates this first screen spatial division, which will be called 'screen plane'.

A square screen image of 1:1 has been used as an example, but in reality the image could be of any proportions and of any shape.

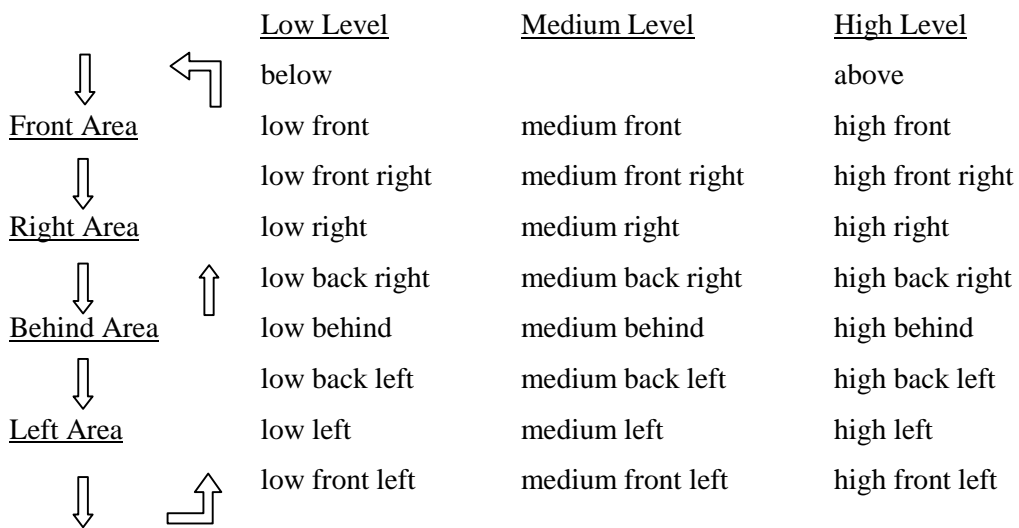


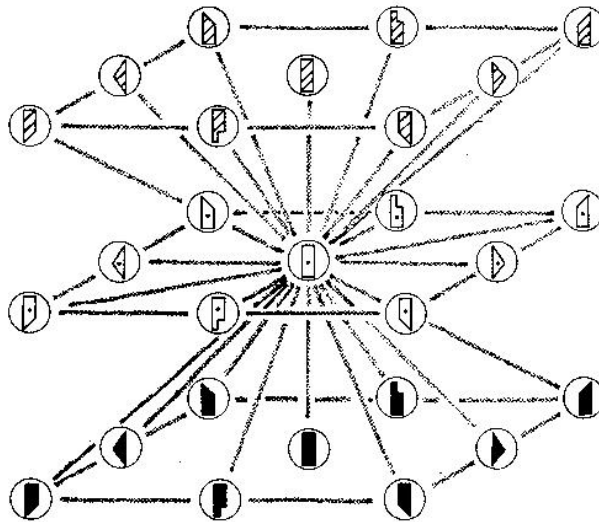
**Figure 3-15: Screen Plane Division**

The illusory image has to be approached as a three dimensional entity, thus a three plane image. Monaco defines these as the geographical plane which corresponds to the horizontal plane of spherical reality, the depth plane corresponds to the sagittal plane, and the frame plane is the lateral plane (2000, 192). Without arguing that Monaco's definition of cinematic space is inaccurate, it is more helpful for the purposes of this discussion which focuses on choreography and movement to discuss the virtual image as the camera's personal viewing space, similar to the principles of the performer's space, meaning the kinesphere.

As mentioned above, the camera's movement is kinespherical and exospherical and, as such, the spatial dimensions of the image recorded should be considered relative to the camera's position as well as to its environment. Accordingly, the camera space can be defined as having the three planes that every kinesphere has, with the human eye-level being the central point of reference, the

intersecting point of the axes and the planes. Therefore, similar to the performer's kinesphere, the camera space, meaning the screen's virtual space, is constructed by the three planes that define spherical reality which separate space into eight sections. However, there is significant difference between the two. The performer defines space in an outward way as previously analysed (Laban and Ullman, 1966), whereas the camera defines space inwardly. While we see the performer from outside towards the analysis of her/his action, we do not see the camera, but what the camera perceives, in other words the camera's point of view which in turn defines space. The camera's point of view is in movement terms spherical, since it exists in the real three-dimensional environment, and it can have infinite positions that correspond to the infinite number of radii of a sphere. However, for reasons of reference it is helpful to define the main directional rays of positioning or to be more precise, the twenty-six points of view, where the camera moves from and towards, defining the centre of the corresponding sphere. The positions are described in a sort of spiral manner directed from 'below' to 'front' to 'right' ending 'above'. Accordingly, using Laban's diagram simply for reasons of visualisation, the main points of view are:

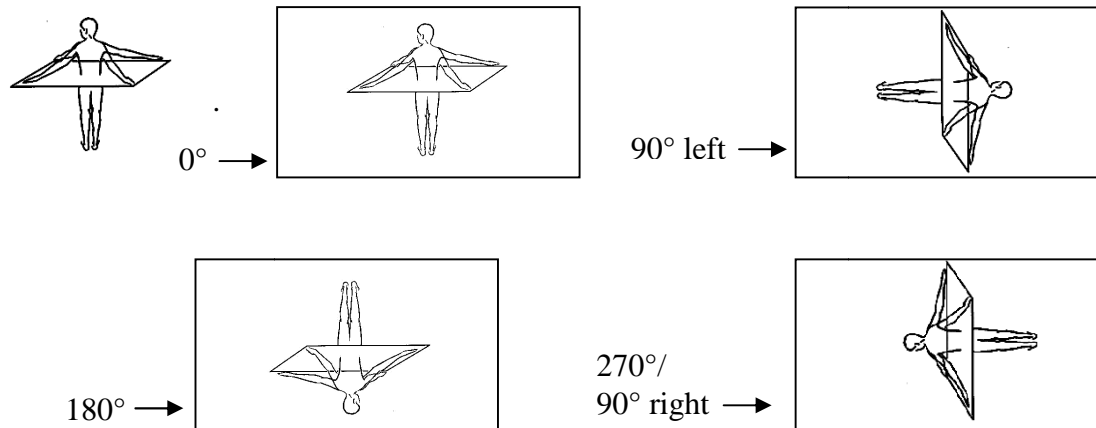




**Figure 3-16: Camera Viewpoints**

Lastly, it has to be specified that distance as well as levelling are also variables of the camera's positioning and/or movement. In contrast to the performer's kinespherical action which defines his/her kinesphere in terms of his/her body reach, the camera's distance from the performer is not confined by human capacity. Furthermore, the levelling, meaning the angle created between what is defined as the horizontal plane of the captured exosphere and the camera's horizontal axis, is a last variable that affects the image perceived. The best way to define this is on a degree scale, referring to the anti-clockwise turn of the camera-body. Hence,  $0^\circ$  angle results in an image captured without any tilting action,  $90^\circ$  turn to the left and the image turns  $90^\circ$  to the right,  $180^\circ$  result in an upside down image, a  $270^\circ$  to the left – which is the same as  $90^\circ$  right turn for the camera body angle – results in an image turned  $90^\circ$  to the left, and finally  $360^\circ$  is a full circle, therefore the same result as  $0^\circ$  <sup>60</sup>. The following pictures demonstrate the aforementioned.

– Figure drawing from Laban and Ullman (1966, 141) to demonstrate the horizontal plane of the performer's kinesphere –



**Figure 3-17: Kine-camera Rotation**

This leads us to the second level of manipulation, the first in pure cinematic terms, the visual production, or camera. This layer which is discussed by Deren contains the following capacity: “the camera can create dance, movement and action which transcends geography and takes place anywhere and everywhere...” (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 252). The exact way this is practised will be investigated in the analysis of Deren’s film practice. What is important to note for the moment is that Deren was highly aware of the cinematic capacity of manipulating movement while at the same time she had spatiotemporal manipulation high in her artistic agenda. Deciphering her words we understand that she talks about the camera’s capacity to change the perception of space, as well as creating movement, as described above in the visual production process.

Regarding the on-camera manipulation, assuming that the performing body is not very close to the camera lens – for reasons that will be later explained – it is a very discreet way of manipulating the perception of the exosphere, and thus it mainly concerns the dimensions of space as perceived by the spectator. The result produced by different lenses is to lengthen or shorten the depth dimension of space as perceived. The wider the angle of the lens, the bigger the depth dimension is perceived, whereas the narrower the angle the shorter the depth, registering in that way the same space in different ways. This affects movement on the exospherical, spatiotemporal realm. For instance, it can make the same



movement seemingly travel a long or a short distance, assuming that the movement travels towards the camera's lens. The only problem with lenses of extreme angles, especially with wide-angled lenses, is the proximity of the subject filmed. Everything that is very close to the camera is distorted, as for example in the case of seminal French filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard's Pierrot le fou (1965) where Anna Karina holds a pair of scissors very close to the camera:



**Figure 3-18: Wide-Angle Distortion (cited in Monaco, 2000, 83)**

With regards to the kine-exospherical camera movement described above, the analysis concerns in a sense the movement of the reception point. It is like having the eyes of the receiver and being able at the same time to move them in reference to the exospherical environment of performance. Alternatively, it is like being able to move the kine-exosphere in any direction with reference to the receiver without affecting either the actual kine-exospherical environment or the receiver as entities, since this happens in a virtual way.

The latter is possibly due to two fundamental interrelated differences between the reception factors of screen image and actual image. As far as the cinematic apparatus is concerned, firstly there is “absence of space-time continuum” (Arnheim, 1957, 20) and secondly there is “absence of the nonvisual worlds of senses” (Arnheim, 1957, 30) – to be more exact absence of the non-audiovisual worlds of sense. What Arnheim mainly refers to are the kinaesthetic factors apparent when in the actual world there is a change of spatial environment. In order for any spatial change to occur, time as well as effort is needed. So whereas it is possible to see a choreographic event manifested inside a factory for instance

where the viewer is encouraged to walk around the event and from room to room, perceiving it in multi-perspective manner, both time as well as effort are needed to travel from point of view 'A' to the next point of view 'B'. In screen choreography this can happen instantly, through editing sequentially perspectives A with B. But even if the case is a single shot that connects 'A' and 'B' screening, all the intermediary travelling – the physical time needed for the travelling is translated in screen time – the spectator's effort, namely the energy needed for the travelling, is absent. Whereas the screen viewer's viewpoint moves in space through the camera eye, her/his physical body is relatively stationary, sitting and watching the film.

The aforementioned applies to the normative model for cinema spectatorship where the viewers remain seated in a fixed distance and orientation to the screen. Despite the fact that it is beyond the parameters of the current thesis, it should be noted that there is also the possibility of non-mainstream film installations where the viewer is free to move around acquiring variable tension towards the screened event<sup>61</sup>.

In total it has to be noted that this second choreographic layer, as well as all of the following manipulations, concerns the virtual environment, as will be explained. The importance of this is that besides the differences of communication discussed above, there is also the issue of proximity between spectatorship and image that needs to be addressed. Irrespective of how close or far away the camera is from the filmed performer, there is distance between the spectator and the screen plane projected. This gives a safety net between the action performed and the sitting position of the receiver who is aware that no matter how close the distance between the kine-exospherical reality and the camera, there is a separating space between the virtual world of the image and the receiver's actual/real world. On similar grounds, Deren identifies this actual-virtual tension as the fundamental difference between live and screen action. As she states:

In the theater, the physical presence of the performers provides a sense of reality [...] Films cannot include this physical presence [...] however] In certain respects, the very absence in motion pictures of the physical presence of the performer [...] can even contribute to our sense of reality. We can, for example, believe in the existence of a monster if we are not asked to believe that it is present in the room with us.

Deren and McPherson, 2005, 117-118

Clarifying now the difference between the zoom on-camera movement and the tracking-shot body-camera movement, the particularity of zoom action is that it is an on-camera manipulation that has exospheric attributes in that it seems to change the perceived exosphere. The result is a movement towards or away from a subject – zoom in, or zoom out, a fact that makes zoom action seemingly the same as the tracking shot. However, what is actually happening is a movement from suppression to exaggeration of the depth perception, to name but the most important alteration. For example if we create two shots, one with tracking movement and another with zoom action when a subject walks towards the camera and we keep the subject on the same relative size to the screen plane, we observe a great difference as to the way the environment surrounding the subject – its exosphere – is registered. In zoom action the further the surrounding objects are from the moving subject, the bigger the proportional difference between them, since objects are magnified when zoom is in telephoto focal length, whereas they are minimised when the zoom reaches wide-angle lens shooting.

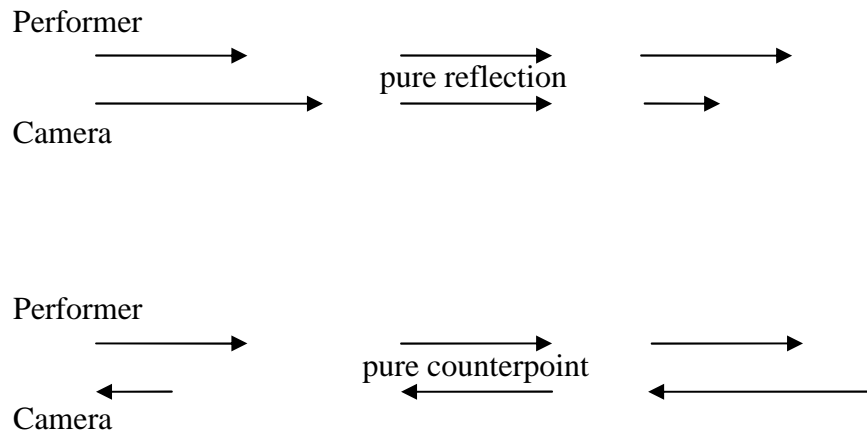
The above camera spatiotemporal manipulations give another choreographic layer to the screendance product. Therefore, in total three choreographic spaces have been identified. The kinesphere, movement in reference to the performer, the exosphere, kinesphere's movement in reference to the environment, the camera virtual sphere, exosphere in reference to the reception point of view or, in reference to the screen plane. In other words the performer is choreographed in reference to three spatial environments – the personal mobile space, the surrounding static space and the dynamic camera space. The compositional possibilities of this three-way spatiotemporal synthesis are infinite and range from having the ability of giving movement to an otherwise static action to

making a kinespherical movement seem still, as the analysis of Deren's screenworks will demonstrate.

Expanding on the dynamic camera space, choreutics are once more the most appropriate tool. An investigation introduced by Maletic (1987b) and revisited by Fox (1991) has demonstrated that the virtual manners of materialisation of space, namely spatial progression, tension and projection, can be creatively applied for screendance analysis. Developing the Maletic and Fox writings, the current thesis will analyse the screen choreutics in a more systematic way that incorporates cinematic discussion on spatial issues of the screen image.

As analysed above, due to the cinematic attribute of discontinuous spatiotemporality, screen creations are able to move the receiver's point of view effortlessly, in the sense of kinaesthetic input, and discontinuously, as far as the space-time continuum is concerned. On these grounds, the camera, which creates the framed kine-exospherical reality, is capable of creating a spatial relationship with the action which is then translated as a spatial relationship between the receivers and the projected kinesphere.

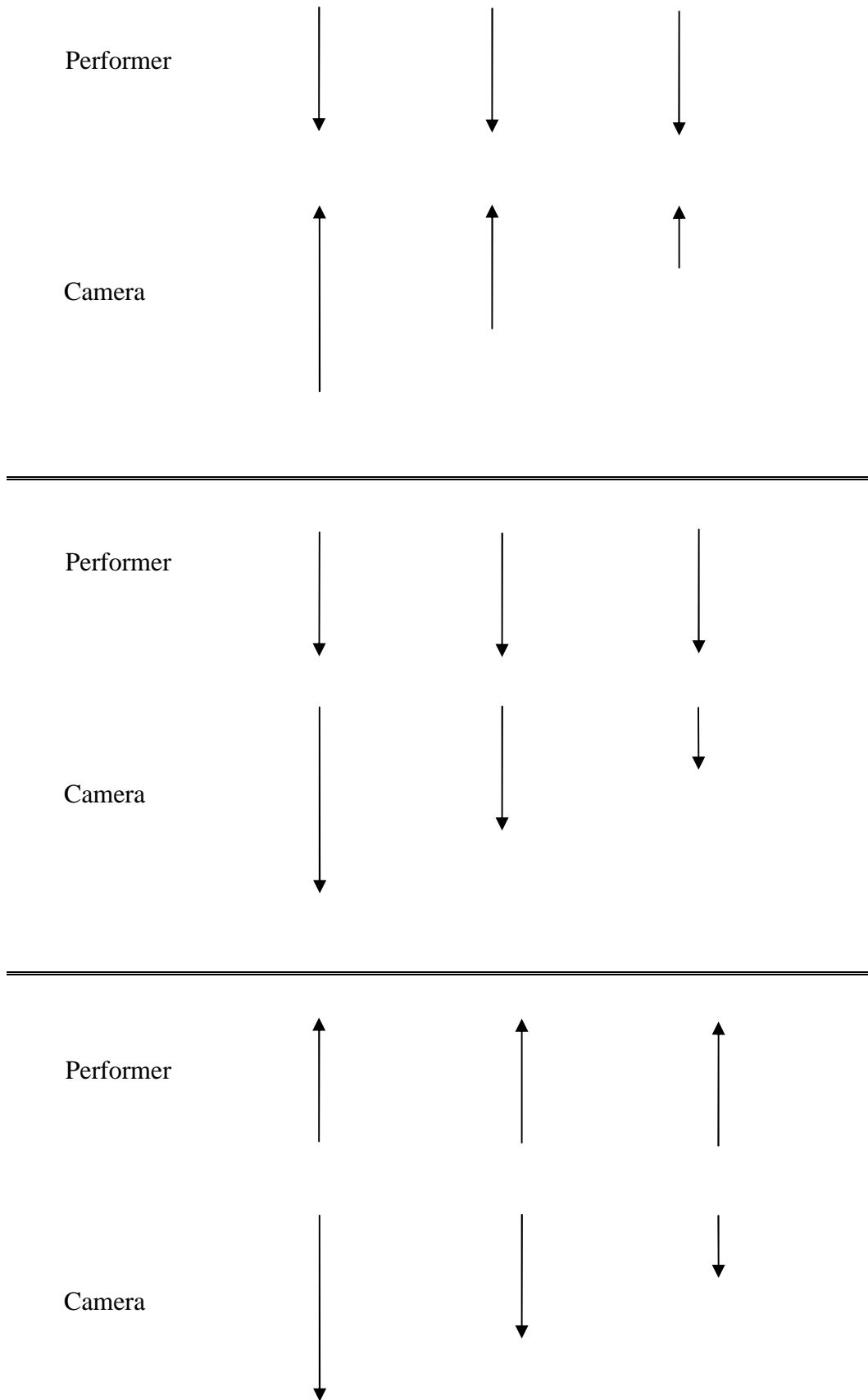
Accordingly, in terms of spatial progression, there are two main relations that can be materialised, either in counterpoint or in reflection to the action (Fox, 1991), meaning either against or with the same direction of the spatial pattern respectively as seen below. Expanding on Fox's (1991) analysis, there are two directions of spatial progression that are furthermore affected by the speed relation between the performer's and the camera's exospherical action. The best way to describe the camera-performer spatial progression is in positive and negative figures, where positive stands for reflection, namely same speed direction, and negative figures stand for counterpoint, namely opposite speed direction. As a result, in reference to the performer's exospherical action, the camera can vary from positive faster to positive slower – same direction that creates reflection. Alternatively, from negative slower to negative faster – opposite direction – that creates counterpoint. Only when equal speed between the camera and the performer is manifested, is there the case of 'pure reflection' and 'pure counterpoint'.



**Figure 3-19: Camera - Performer Spatial Progression**

Spatial tension concerns the virtual connection between kinespherical action and the camera. As previously discussed, spatial tension is materialised between two ends and is the holding or moving position between these two ends. In order for the camera to be part of this tension, it has to be one of these ends. When spatial tension is materialised through moving positions, through exospherical movement of either the camera, the performer or both, it ascends or descends correspondingly to the decrease or increase in the distance between the two ends, with speed and speed direction playing also a significant role.

Accordingly, the two ends may come closer or go apart with the same speed, or move towards or apart with different speeds. Furthermore, there is also the possibility of conflicting spatial tension – chasing – where the two ends, instead of having opposite directions, have the same direction. In other words, one of them goes towards the other while the other goes apart.



**Figure 3-20: Camera - Performer Spatial Tension**

Whereas the camera movement has the capacity to play an active role in spatial tension and progression of the kinesphere, it is not the same for spatial projection. The camera can only relate to 'spatial projection' by describing its course. By registering the line or the curve created by the kinespherical action, the camera can either extend outwards the illusionary course inscribed by the projection, or enhance its course with an inward movement, contradicting the projection.

In terms of the camera's exospherical movement and the spatial relations that could be created between the camera and the kinesphere, the possibilities are infinite and most often the spatial relations are used in combination, while, as established, there is also the capacity of kinespherical movement of the camera.

### **3.5.3 Visual Layer 3: Screendance Visual Post-Production**

The way post-production can add choreographically to the screendance product is through all the aforementioned editing ways in both graphical and temporal terms. The choreographic capacity of intershot editing concerns mainly the synthesis, screen chronology, of two or more exospheres, or two or more perspectives of the same exosphere. As discussed in the camera movements' section, the framing of the camera and its movement provide the spectatorship point of view. This, in turn, gives several segments called the shots, which can be of any nature, since they are discontinuous registries of reality. Accordingly, there can be several shots of the same event, meaning several camera-spherical recordings, while at the same time there can be shots of different kine-exospherical events that belong to different time frames. Thus, there is the choreographic capacity of combining in continuous screen time shots of either different perceptions of the same reality or different sense realities a graphic relation of shots which is also a temporal one in terms of the total passage of screen time. The capacity of intershot manipulation and the ability of duplication of film stock enable repetition, thus the choreographic re-occurrence of screen reality. On the intershot capacity of frame or shot reprinting, Deren bases her

notions of “extension of space by time” where locations are enlarged by means of editing and “extension of time by space” (2005, 124) where duration and chronology is altered by means of repetition, as will be demonstrated in chapter four.

In terms of the choreographic capacity of intrashot, it is the result of synthesis/co-existence of kine-exospherical realities with the ways addressed above. However, there is also the use of optical effects that can alter the appearance of the registered reality, providing another way of manipulating the original choreographic event that physically existed during filming.

Screen rhythm – post-production’s purely temporal manipulation – is a process that seemingly refers to the first choreographic layer, manipulating the kinespherical rhythm of action and its reference to the exosphere. However, as noted before, although what seems to be manipulated is the kinespherical action, it is in fact the whole kine-exospherical event that is manipulated, a temporal manipulation of the reality itself as registered in film stock. Thus, from the choreographic point of view, if only the kinespherical action appears rhythmically manipulated, a relatively static exosphere should be chosen. As a result the physical movement of the surroundings to the kinespherical action will seem unaltered and therefore the effect of a solely kinespherical movement speed manipulation will be achieved.

Speed manipulation is one more issue high on Deren’s agenda, repeatedly analysed through her articles. Arguing against film trickery, she states that speed manipulation “*reveals to us the very nature and structure of movement, the projection of matter in time*” (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 178). When the action is slowed down, namely ‘slow motion’ the “complexities of even the simplest act” (2005, 178) are magnified and therefore revealed; for Deren “Slow-motion is the microscope of time” (1946, 47)<sup>62</sup>. In the case of speeded up or fast motion, Deren uses the extreme example of stop-motion and argues that it works as a telescopic instrument, revealing “metamorphoses whose tempo is so slow as to be virtually imperceptible” (2005, 115) for example like a vine that grows and turns towards the sun.



Synthesising the temporal attributes of each layer, up to and including visual post-production, namely the rhythmical capacity of the performer’s kine-exospherical reality, the rhythmical input of screen choreutics of the production stage, and finally the post-production rhythmical alterations, the following nexus constructed is open to any combination.

– s- stands for slow, n- stands for normal, f- stands for fast, d. stands for duration –

<u>Kine sphere</u>	<u>Exo sphere</u>	<u>Kine-camera</u>	<u>Exo-camera</u>	<u>Intrashot Reality</u>	<u>Intershot Reality</u>
static	in place	static	static	freeze	single shot
s-kine	s-exo	s-kinecamera	s-exocamera	s-forward	long d./slow
n-kine	n-exo	n-kinecamera	n-exocamera	n-forward	normal
f-kine	f-exo	f-kinecamera	f-exocamera	f-forward	short d./fast
				s-reverse	
				n-reverse	
				f-reverse	

**Figure 3-21: Multi-layered Rhythmical Nexus**

### 3.5.4 Screendance Sound

Maletic (1987b) provides a brief and limited generic discussion on ‘videodance’ sound stating that “besides the various aesthetic approaches to the relationship of sound, music or text and dance known in the theatre dance [...] videodance can offer further explorations, particularly in low, whispering volume, and in various juxtapositions of the audio and video” (1987b, 6). What Maletic refers to exactly is not developed, neither the way the theatre dance sound relationships are altered once within screendance creations, nor the ‘further explorations’. Exploring further the sound of screendance, McPherson (2006a) emphasises the impact of the audio once connected with the image and provides the following indicative examples of sound-image relationship. As she states:

the audio can:  
change at exactly the same time as the picture  
change before or after the picture transition  
remain constant throughout the picture transitions  
change whilst the picture remains the same

McPherson, 2006a, 182

Expanding on the aforementioned writings, the current section will first identify the choreographic attributes of screendance sound and then it will discuss the spatiotemporality of sound elements.

In contrast to mainstream narrative cinema where sound is ‘vococentric’ and “almost always privileges the voice, highlighting and setting the latter off from other sounds” (Chion and Gorbman, 1994, 5), screendance is ‘musicentric’, a screen-form mainly concerned with the spatiotemporal relation of music with the image. There are, however, occasions when generic sound elements and/or speech can be treated in order to be perceived as a musical accompaniment of the kinespherical action, namely dance. It should be acknowledged that not one collective way of perception occurs; image, as well as sound perception, are mental and psychological processes, therefore highly subjective and different for every audio-visual recipient.

Chion observes that there are three types of music image relationship. Music can be either ‘empathetic’ where it “directly expresses its participation in the feeling of the scene”; ‘anempathetic’ where music “exhibits conspicuous indifference to the situation”; and finally, ‘abstract’ music which is neither empathetic nor anempathetic, and has “no precise emotional resonance” (Chion and Gorbman, 1994, 9).

Beside music’s emotional character which to an extent is subjective, as previously explained, there is also the issue of rhythm of a musical piece. This generic category basically refers to three subcategories that are related to the parts of a musical piece, the phrases within these parts, and finally the rhythmical structure of these phrases. Accordingly you have a rhythm created by the

duration of the whole musical piece, a rhythm created by the duration of the phrases, and finally the rhythm established from the metre, otherwise known as the time signature; the smallest the durations the fastest the rhythm, and the opposite. Note that there is also the possibility of ametric music that is not based on the western music notion of rhythmical meter.

<u>Musical Piece</u>	<u>Musical Parts</u>	<u>Musical Phrases</u>	<u>Metre's Rhythm</u>
one (full screentime)			
long	long	long	fast
short	short	short	slow

**Figure 3-22: Music's Rhythmical Segmentation**

The importance of the rhythms created through a musical composition concerns the extent of counterpoint or concordance between the visual and the audio rhythm; concordance when the visual rhythms – kine-exospherical, kine-exo camera, intra/intershot – coincide with the audio rhythms, and the opposite for counterpoint. Any combination is possible: for instance a metrically slow musical piece may be combined with a fast kine-camera movement, or a fast intershot rhythm. In both cases the audio-visual rhythm is in counterpoint. Alternatively, certain musical phrases may coincide in duration with interframe changes, in which case there is audio-visual concordance.

In regards to the rest of the sound elements, including voice, there is a temporal relationship between image and sound, which can precede, be simultaneous or succeed the image (Bordwell and Thompson, 1985, 197). Synchronisation or non-synchronisation, the image-sound relation concerns mainly kine-exospherical sounds that are visually located and whose simultaneity or disparity is more apparent. Image magnetises sound in space (Chion and Gorbman, 1994, 69), in the sense that the evidence of the image makes sound associated with the picture. When for instance a visual action makes a distinct noise, e.g. a jump landing on a wooden floor and the noise is not in synchronisation with the image, then an audio-visual conflict is created. At the same time, when absolute

synchronicity occurs, then the action as a whole is more smoothly perceived. As extensively discussed by Chion and Gorbman (1994), sounds are mentally connected with images and vice versa. Accordingly, any sound manipulation that is not in accordance with the receivers' everyday audio-visual experience mentally creates an audio-visual conflict.

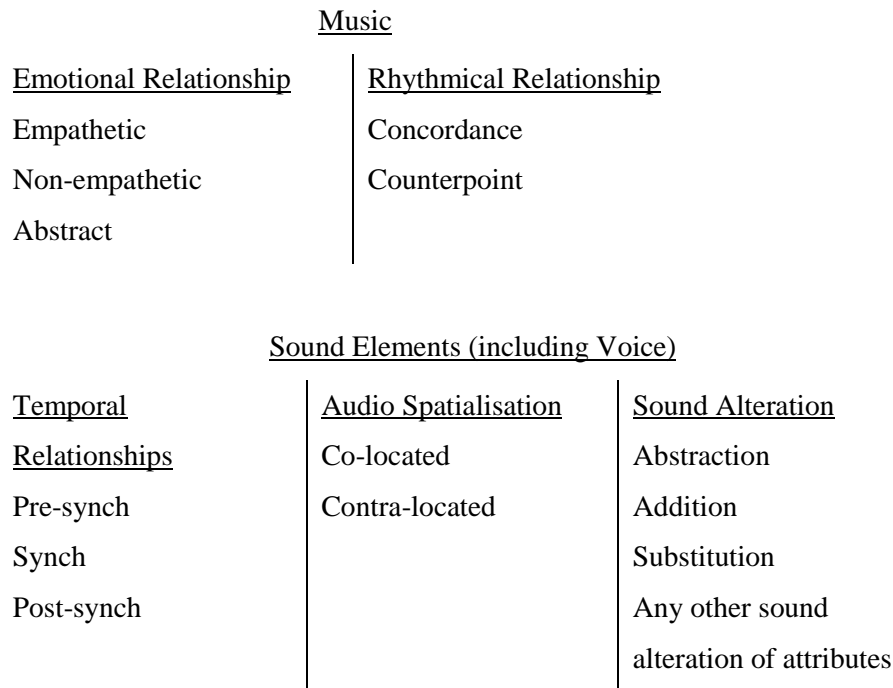
Spatialisation of sound is also a choreographic contribution to the screendance image, namely the audio location of sound in relation to the perceived audio source of the sound. Whereas image 'magnetises' sound, as discussed above, there is the capacity of spatialising or locating a sound within or out of the screendance visual space in coexistence with or in contrast to the image. Taking the same example, a jump that is viewed as occurring on far screen left, and the sound coming from far screen right, or even beyond the screen parameters, namely somewhere else in the viewing environment; this can be also pragmatically manipulated through specific use of speaker placement as will be later explained. Overall, the contra-located sound disrupts the smooth viewing parameters, creating an audiovisual conflict between the image perceived and the non-anticipated sound source.

Finally, concerning screendance generic sound elements, there is also the choreographic capacity of abstraction, addition, substitution or simply alteration of sound elements. An image and a sound may not be in concordance, either because sound elements have been abstracted or because sound elements have been added or their original attributes significantly altered. For instance a jump landing on a wooden floor and a sound where the volume is minimised to an inaudible level, is translated in our minds as a jump that in audible terms has never landed. Substituting the wooden landing noise with a splash, you have yet another audio-visual effect.

Note that in the aforementioned temporal audio-visual relationships, the localisation of sound as well as the sound alteration are mainly concerned with sounds of the kine-exosphical environment and not music. This is due to the dual quality of music that is able to affect and relate to the image at the same time and vice versa, as well as being "freer of barriers of time and space than the

other sound and visual elements... out of time and out of space, music communicates with all times and all spaces of a film, even as it leaves them to their separate and distinct existences” (Chion and Gorbman, 1994, 81).

Consequently, in regard to screendance audio, the following diagram of audio-visual relations are observed:



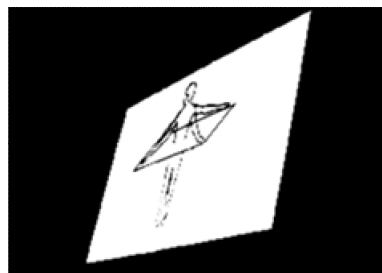
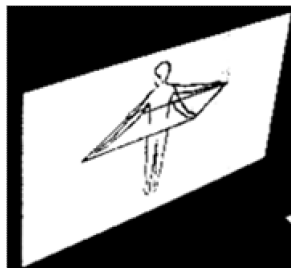
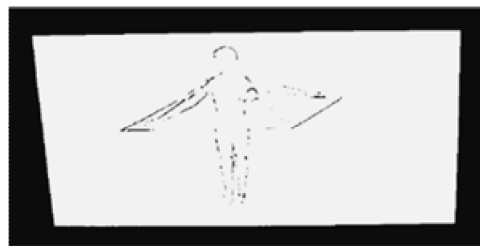
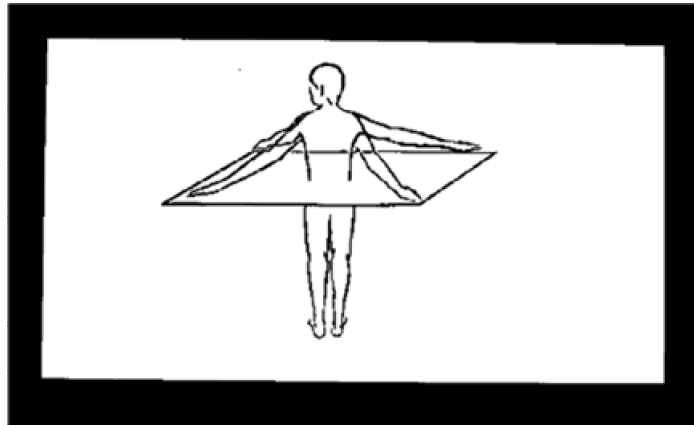
**Figure 3-23: Screendance Audio-Visual Relations**

### **3.5.5 Final Layer: Audio -Visual Transmission**

An additional visual factor that differentiates live and screen receptions, relates to the point-of-view between the two and how this is altered from the live three-dimensional image to the two-dimensional screen image. In a theatre environment, the receiver’s sitting-viewing position is fundamental to the viewing experience. The angle of viewing defines the image perceived and the distance affects the size; accordingly every viewer perceives different images depending on his/her position. Additionally, the two-dimensional projected image is predetermined as to its details, regardless of the spectator’s viewing

angle and distance. The only things altered are the scale and the dimensions of the screen image as it is clarified from the pictures below.

– Actual screen size 14cm (height) \* 24.9cm (width) –



**Figure 3-24: 2D Screen – 3D Reception**

A last creative layer of significant choreographic dimensions that, nevertheless, surpasses the normative viewing parameters of screendance concerns the projection. Its capacity is based upon the fact that the projected image can be both moving and mobile, a distinction of terms that is noted by Aumont (1997). This means that besides being a moving image, in reference to the screen plane, the screen plane can also be mobile in reference to the receiver's environment. There are two ways that this can spatiotemporally affect the aforementioned choreographic layers, and thus one last choreographic input. The first concerns the projector as a machine, and the second the screen.

The movement possibilities of a projector are arguably largely determined by the size and the technology each projector acquires. This, as well as the fact that at present projectors are designed to work safely in a static position, discourages screen artists from manipulation during projection. However, the possibility of being able to manipulate the projected image from its source by giving movement to the actual machine is not to be ignored. The projector, as a directional source of light with defined borders, can contain any kind of movement, providing yet another choreographic layer.

At the other end of the projection process, screen manipulation is equally, if not more, important. Contrary to the projector's limitations, the choreographic capacity of the screen is endless. Not only can it be of any shape and size, affecting the image's projection, especially if it is not in a vertical position towards the light source of the projector, but it can also be a mobile screen. All these manipulations assume that there are no limitations regarding the material of the screen or its fixed position as in the norm of cinema theatres. It can be any material, from a corner of a wall, a moving fabric, water, or even a living body, to name but few of the possibilities. One might argue that this on-transmission manipulation transcends the borders of screen product to the wider spectrum of performance. However, this is largely defined by the extent to which this screen product uses live manipulation during reception. In total, projection acquires choreographic capacity since it can give movement to an otherwise static screen plane.

Finally, all the above are of course multiplied by the number of projections a certain screendance installation utilises. Choreographically, this is translated either as a multiple number of projections on an equal number of screen surfaces, or even a multiple number of projections that are screened on the same screen or a certain part of a screen. Any combination of the above produces an infinite number of variables. As early as the 1960s, Ed Emshwiller experimented extensively with the capacities of on-transmission manipulation at both ends, the projector and screen, defined above. In his "Body Works [in 1965, ...among others ...] dancers on stage, dressed and painted white, serve as living screens on which movies are projected by hand-held projectors" (Emshwiller 1967); of the five projectors, three were directed towards the dancers (Kovgan, 2006 [online]).

In regards to audio transmission, the number and mobility of sound transmitters described under the screendance mechanics section may also provide choreographic input to the expanded screendance creation. Nevertheless, sound transmission manipulation is less common than the visual transmission manipulation, since currently audio has the capacity of reproducing sound movement in space without the need of mobile sound transmitters<sup>63</sup>. Since the use of magnetic stereophonic sound in 1952 to recent multi-channel surround sound systems is available in most mainstream screening theatres as well as in domestic home theatre environments, sound designers have the technological capacity to direct sound all around the audio environment.

Overall, the capacity of screendance installation is vast and is expanded more once combined with live performance where a dialogic relationship or even communication between the live, the screened as well as the audio can be established. In fact a whole new world is opened which, despite being interesting, nevertheless is, as discussed above, beyond the parameters of the current thesis.



### 3.6 THE SCREENDANCE MODEL

The above screendance model deciphers the screendance art-products and establishes the parameters under which screen layers of creation become choreographic elements, or rather part of a multi-layered choreographic creation. It has been demonstrated that interconnection between the live performed choreographic kine-exospheric material, and the cinematic layers has the potential of production of unique realities similar to the ones Deren seeks to promote through her theory.

It is a question of how, by using a dancer, or choreographer, and a filmmaker, you get something that you couldn't get by using either of them alone. This is what I mean by the creative dance film... The creative synthesis is something that is different not in degree but in nature, from what could be accomplished only by dancers or only by filmmakers.

Deren, 1967, 13

The application of choreutics to screen mechanics established a new system of screen spatiotemporality that has been named 'screen choreutics' which analyses the range and wealth of space and time manipulation of the kine-exospheric screen movement. In addition, the musicentric discussion of 'screendance sound' defined one more layer of music and sound rhythmical interaction with the image, in other words an additional screen choreographic layer.

Overall, the current chapter, by specifying the screendance structural components – screendance mechanics – as well as its creative components – screen choreutics and screendance sound, has further clarified the ontological discussion of the screendance form undertaken in the first chapter. It has defined in more specific terms the screendance notions of Derenian theory of films being 'choreographic', as well as 'film-space', 'film-time', and 'film-sound' analysed in chapter two. Most importantly perhaps, the third chapter provided a screendance model of analysis with the appropriate screendance specific vocabulary.

The knowledge acquired will now be applied to all of Deren's completed films in an attempt to assess the validity of screendance choreutics and sound discussion,

while investigating Deren's works from this new screendance perspective. This will establish the extent of concordance between her aesthetic screendance theoretical grounds and her screen practice, testing the thesis' hypothesis that besides being an avant-garde filmmaker Deren is also one of the earliest prolific screendance creators.

## 4 DERENIAN SCREENDANCE? PRACTICE

### 4.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

I am not greedy; I do not seek to possess the major portion of your days. I am content if, on those rare occasions whose truth can be stated only by poetry, you will, perhaps, recall an image – even only the aura of my films. And what more could I possibly ask as an artist than that your most precious visions, however rare, assume, sometimes, the forms of my images.

Maya Deren<sup>64</sup>

As anticipated, the fourth chapter discusses Deren's screenworks from a screendance perspective and according to the formalist model of analysis established in chapter three. Having established Deren's theoretical attachment to dance, especially with the aesthetic principles of Wigman and Humphrey who seek to express emotions – thema – through at times non-linear narrative structures while rejecting highly representative means, this chapter defines the extent of Deren's practical relationship to dance through her cinematic aesthetic and the extent of screendance elements within her works. This, in turn, tests the thesis' hypothesis that Deren's practice is among the earliest screendance practices, reinforcing that her theory is probably the first screendance theory.

Viewed in relation to the ontological definition of screendance in chapter one and chapter 2's contextualisation, this chapter investigates the fictional macro-structural logic inherent in Deren's films. In addition, this chapter assesses whether her films are body-centric, namely focused on human body movement, as well as music-centric, meaning closely related to music or unforced silent in nature, as is common in screendance works. A close analysis of certain scenes of these films will also demonstrate the applicability of the screen choreutics model established in chapter three. This structural-compositional analysis of Deren's practice will identify certain screendance devices employed within her screenworks, leading to a better understanding of Deren's line of practice.

Constituting a screendance reading of Deren's filmworks, the current chapter focuses on the way screendance mechanics, discussed and analysed in chapter three, function within each film. Being both body-centric and music-centric, this analysis investigates the physicality manifested on screen as being recorporealised through the cinematic medium, as well as the recorporealised action's relationship to music.

## **4.2 MESHES OF THE AFTERNOON: Introduction**

Maya Deren's first film, Meshes of the Afternoon, hereinafter called 'Meshes', was completed in collaboration with Alexander Hammid in 1943 as a silent film but is today best known through its 1957 music version<sup>65</sup>. As the first of the three films with narrative development and one of the three with music – the remaining two being non-narrative films – it investigates the personal world of feelings and thoughts manifested through a dialectic relationship between “the imaginative and the objective reality” (Guggenheim and Deren, 1946). The following structural analysis will identify the way Deren created a multi-layered mesh construction through recorporealised bodies, deconstructed spaces and a commissioned soundtrack. Despite the fact that the sound version is a later version and therefore belongs historically to the last period of her career, its discussion will be incorporated here for concision and comparative reasons.

### **4.2.1 The Circular Meshes: A Macro-Structural Exospherical Approach**

The screenwork is best segmented macro-structurally in terms of an exospherical arrangement, notably in terms of the visual inactive setting. Besides two brief sections incorporated into the film '4 Strides' and 'Mirror & Sea', the whole film unravels using the interior of Hammid and Deren's home in Hollywood, where the majority of the film was shot, as well as the outside road and the stairs leading to the front door of the house. The main exospheres employed as demonstrated below through screenshots of the film are:

xA: outside pavement/road



**Figure 4-1: Outside pavement/road**

xB: outside staircase which links xA with the front door of the house



**Figure 4-2: Outside staircase**

xC: the living room which is located on the left side of the front door



**Figure 4-3: Living room**

xD: the dining room/table which is located on the right side of the front door – opposite the living room



**Figure 4-4: Dining room/table**

xE: the inside staircase opposite the front door which leads to the upper floor and to exosphere F



**Figure 4-5: Inside staircase**

xF: the bedroom



**Figure 4-6: Bedroom**

xCii: the armchair, which forms in fact part of the living room [C] but in most of the film is shown as a separate room.



**Figure 4-7: Armchair**

As Sitney notes in 1974, the film “has an intricate spiral structure [...] and it has a double ending” (2002, 7), referring to the order of appearance of these exospheres, as will be demonstrated. Expanding on Sitney’s viewpoint, it is argued that the film is best described as circular rather than as spiral. An exospherical pattern is observed starting with exosphere A and finishing with exosphere Cii three times with small variations. This is followed by an expanded last scene-cluster which starts with A and includes two concluding scene-clusters that, as will be demonstrated, constitute thematically a double ending. The scene concludes with Cii. Accordingly, the research conforms to the following macro-structural diagram.

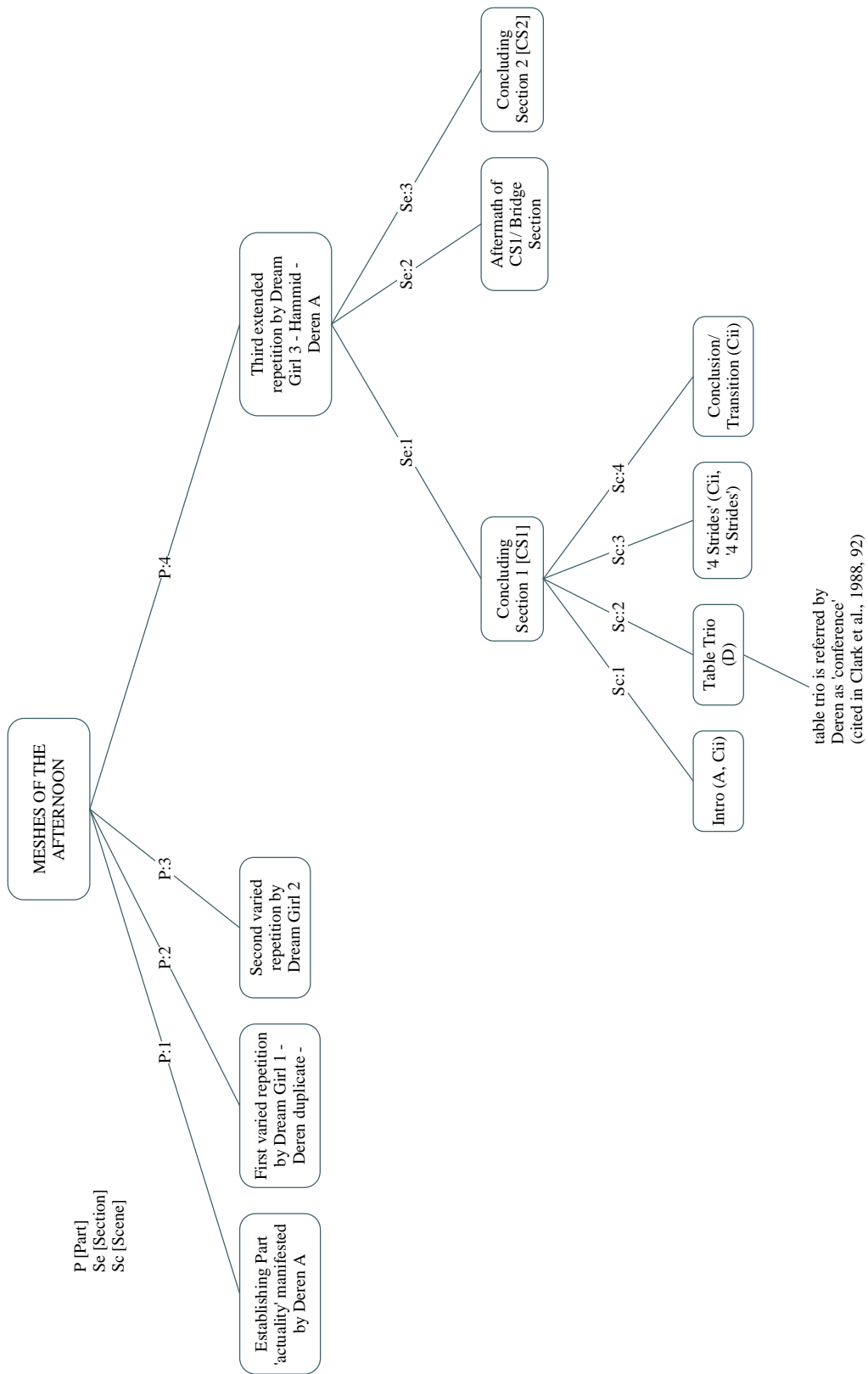


Figure 4-8: Meshes Segmentation



Deren has stated that “The very first sequence of the film concerns the incident [...] Everything which happens in the dream has its basis in a suggestion in the first sequence” (Deren, 1965, 1). As illustrated above, considering the first part as the establishing pattern, the second and third parts are repetitions with small structural contractions and variations; meaning they resemble the first part but are not exactly the same while also excluding a few elements of the first part. The fourth part is structurally more complicated since it includes three sections, in contrast to the one-section parts preceding it, while it also incorporates two scenes – ‘4 Strides’ and ‘Sea Mirror’ – that introduce exospheres different from those established in the first part. The fourth part is a varied and extended repetition of the preceding parts. While the beginning and the end of the part conforms with patterns A to Cii, there are new exospheres introduced as well as a re-ordering of the established ones. In addition, there are two micro-circles incorporated that correspond to the first and the third sections. They can also be considered contracted repetitions, since they begin at A and conclude at Cii, though without visiting exospheres E – inside staircase – and F – the upper floor / the bedroom. Interestingly, section two focuses on these two spaces, completing in a sense the missing elements of sections 1 and 3.

Overall, this exospheric circularity creates a sense of domestic enclosure. With the exception of the two segments that, in a sense, break free from the domestic environment of the film – ‘4 Strides’ and ‘Sea Mirror’ – the rest of the visited exospheres are related to the house. Notably, even the outside exospheric shots do not have the sense of open space due to the pathway performed by the characters. With the exception of the ‘black figure’, whose identity will be discussed later, both the female and male characters are always drawn to the house. Whereas the road seems to extend beyond the house, it is not a road that leads to many spaces, nor does it originate from many others. There is no exit from the house, there is no passing outside the house, there is only one directional pathway inscribed by the performers which starts from the road, left up the stairs and in the house. Only in the first part does Deren go down the stairs but even this occurs because she drops the key down the stairs, in other words this occurs in order for the pathway to be fulfilled.

This domestic entrapment concerns mainly the characters played by Deren who always chase the black figure down that pathway, they never cross the house's stairs in order to keep pursuing the black figure. Accordingly, both macro-structurally as well as in terms of performance, the characters are in a sense enclosed within this space, this 'Mesh'.

#### **4.2.2 Corporeal and Non-corporeal Agents of Movement**

In line with Derenian aesthetics established in chapter two, Meshes does not incorporate any form of painted animation or any form of text, neither verbal nor written, for instance through intertitles<sup>66</sup>. The film communicates its dream-actuality, dialectic relationship through movement as manifested through different agents which are primarily three human performers:

Character A is a woman of average height in plain dark colours, possibly black, wearing: a long-sleeved top with round neck, tight enough to outline her upper body; long, loose and wide, straight-cut trousers made of a lightweight fabric held by a wide belt of the same colour; and sandals. There is only one scene where the character wears two silver balls on her eyes that operate as small spherical mirrors. This character, played by Deren, with her bold features and shoulder length, dark brunette hair, is duplicated three times, in dream girls no. 1-3 (cited in Clark et al., 1988, 89-92).

Character B is a man of average height and slim figure, dressed in light coloured, straight-cut trousers and a darker plain shirt with the top button undone. This character is played by Alexander Hammid with short, dark coloured, straight hair and gentle facial features.

Character C is a tall, black, hooded figure, possibly genderless, male judging by the height, although mostly referred to as a woman. Notably Kracauer (1997, 190) and Clark (1988, 80) discuss the figure as a 'woman' and a 'black woman' respectively. However, Deren's shooting list made for the purpose of adding the soundtrack, refers to the figure as 'mirror figure' or 'darkly draped figure' (cited

in Clark et al., 1988, 87). The caped hood covers the whole head and extends as a second layer above the shoulders and down to the waist. The face is covered by an oval mirror connected to the hood. Under the cape the upper body is covered by a long sleeved top, and gloves cover the hands. Loose fabric covers the rest of the body and black shoes complete the costume. It is important to note that no flesh is visible. Neither the gender nor the performer is revealed. The black hooded figure is possibly an 'it' rather than a he or she.

Whereas there are three performers, the number of characters involved in the screenwork is negotiable primarily because character A is duplicated, while character C is disguised. In total, the film seems to include seven characters, namely the main female character; her three identical duplicates, named by Deren as 'dream girls' (cited in Clark et al., 1988, 85-95), one duplicate with silver balls for eyes; the male character; and the tall, black hooded figure. However, according to Deren's shot list, in which she refers to the silver eyes character as the "Girl no.3 [who] turns towards the chair, revealing her round, mirror eyes" (cited in Clark et al., 1988, 92), the total number of characters is six. Alternatively, it is argued that the 'dream girls' and the main female character should be approached as one character, representing the same person in different phases, bringing the total down by three more. Another issue is that the male character is also duplicated, seen in two different sections of the film as having his real or dream duplicate – depending on how one interprets the film. That is to say the man who caresses the female character in Part 4 Section 2 – P:4.2 – is not the same person as the one that enters the house in the final section of the film – P:4.3. Finally, the black hooded figure can be considered as either the disguised female or male character, but not as an individual character.

In addition to the aforementioned body-centric movement agents, the objects in the film are also agents that acquire movement attributes. Deren argues that, "part of the achievement of this film consists in the manner in which cinematic techniques are employed to give malevolent vitality to inanimate objects" (Deren, 1965, 1). Adding to the unrealistic atmosphere, the objects disappear, transform, move and are moved, creating intriguing relationships within the film. Their structural significance will be presented both individually for each object

as well as collectively in the following diagram. The list demonstrates the order of appearance and their screening parameters. Due to the complexity of the diagram the explanatory comments are included for reasons of easier reference. They are presented in screen chronological order from top to bottom and then from left to right. Different colours in the diagram correspond to different objects for easier visual reference.

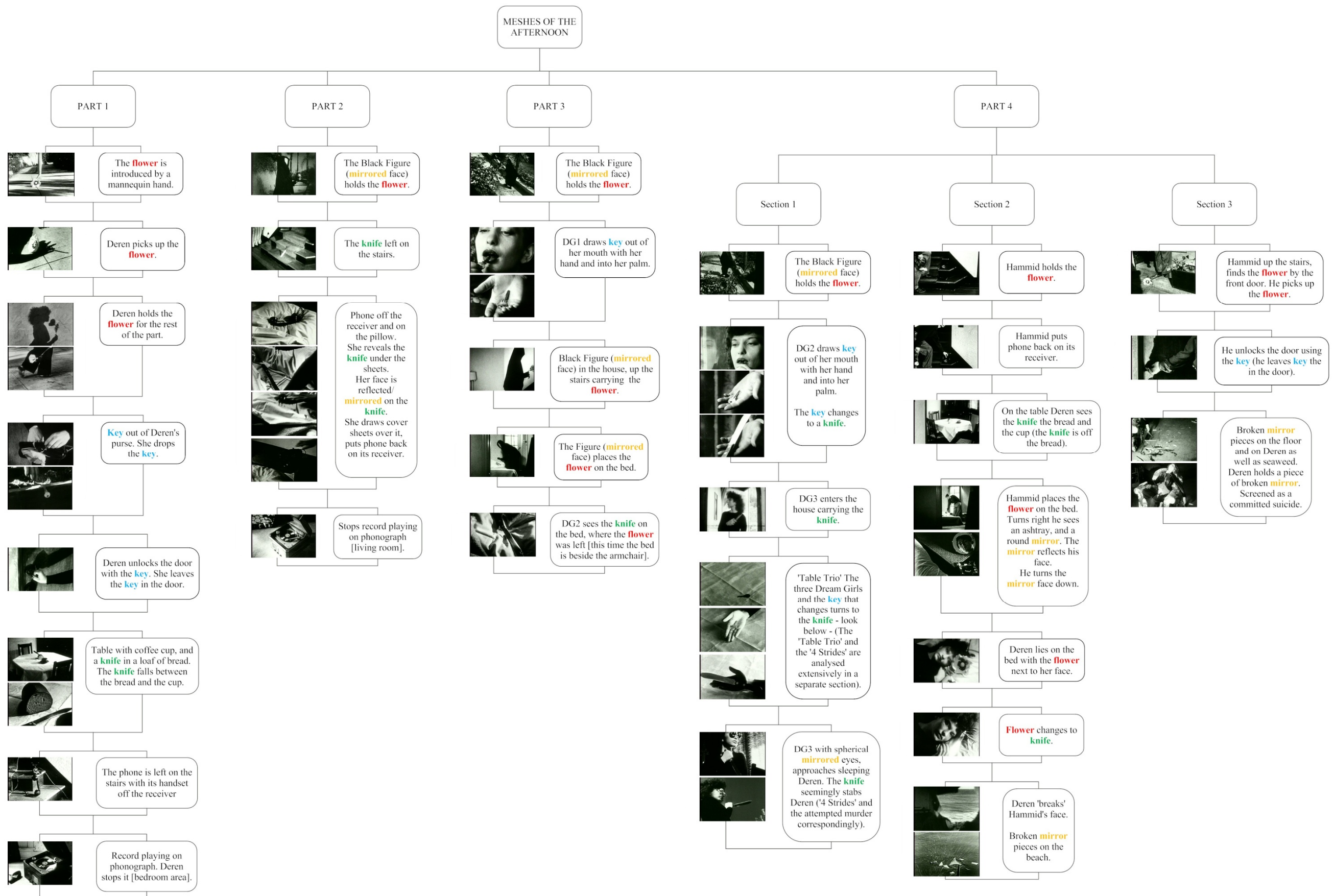
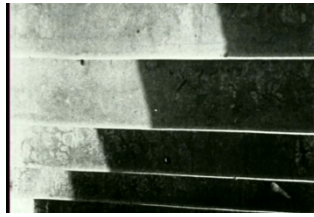


Figure 4-9: Meshes Objects

As illustrated above, the objects of the screenwork are ordinary objects which, besides their everyday characteristics, acquire additional attributes through particular placement and usage in the film. They often present an active and responsive to external stimulus self. They have the ability to disappear, transform and move without external help. They are, in a sense, musicalised and choreographed, while they also acquire a significant macro-structural role. From their screening parameters, they could be categorised as objects of primary and secondary importance. Accordingly, the flower, the knife, as well as the key and the mirror – used either to replace a character’s face or as a domestic object – are considered the most significant objects within the screenwork, while the telephone and the record player play secondary roles. Furthermore, a loaf of bread and a tea cup are used which do not play any immediate role in the action, but rather are merely decorative. Macro-structurally, they produce a sense of circular pattern and closure, since they complete a kind of circle by appearing at the start of the film and then, almost at the end of it. Finally, in addition to the aforementioned objects which signify a scene difference and the intervention of someone or something, there are objects that simply create atmosphere and/or supplement meaning to the action, such as the newspaper which is lying open on the floor.

#### **4.2.3 Exospherical Agent: xB – Inside Staircase – & xE – Inside Staircase –**

As already established, the screenwork constructs a repeated circular pattern. Within the visited exospheres, there are two spaces that designate transition and are extensively explored and emphasised by Deren, the outdoor and indoor staircases, xB and xE respectively. With regard to the former, xB is emphasised by Deren in the first part with the key drop segment analysed above. Later on, the common framing draws connecting lines between DG1 that introduces the beginning of the dream sections, P:2, and the concluding section CS2, which is the return to actuality. At the same time, the tension between the male and the female characters of the screenwork, namely Hammid and Deren, is emphasised. The screenshots under discussion are as follows.



**Figure 4-10: The Key Drop**



**Figure 4-11: Deren and Hammid on xB**

With regards to xE, apart from P:1 and CS1 which in a sense belong to the ‘actual’, on thematic grounds, part of the screenwork, the rest of Deren’s indoor staircase transitions are spatiotemporally altered. Distinctively, in screen chronological order, in P:2 Deren moves up the stairs in ‘slow motion’ while she concludes her ascendance entering the bedroom through a curtain that resembles the window rather than the door of the room. Specifically, DG1’s kine-exosphical reality is slowed down while in a static background, namely a background that does not acquire identifiable speed factors in order for the effect to be more believable, as explained in chapter three. In that way, Deren, as creator, manages to separate the action from the corresponding exosphere. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that while the registered reality is slowed down and therefore is more time consuming, by contrast, the kinespherical action is running. As a result, DG1’s staircase ascendance consumes screentime duration and resembles the ‘actual’ one of P:1.

In an equally manipulative manner, the spatiotemporality depicted during Deren’s descent deconstructs Deren’s base framing of the performer in a weightless and floating way that places DG1 all over the ‘tube’ encircling the inside staircase. Notably, as also shown below, the concluding framing of the descent places DG1 airborne. Deren, as creator, chooses to refrain from showing

the viewers an establishing shot that would otherwise help them to understand and spatialise the shots. Furthermore, she employs unconventional angles of registration along with tight inner-spherical framing and a fast cut, intershot manipulation, succeeding in defamiliarising an exospherical space which has already been introduced earlier in the screenwork.



**Figure 4-12: Airborne Deren**

Similarly, when DG2 tries to ascend following the mirror figure, she seemingly pulls the edge of the stairs, initiating in a sense the rocking stairs section. A counterpoint progression between the camera and the performer is observed: when the former moves towards one side of the stairs, the other moves oppositely. In regards to the kine-exo camera movement, it is a hand-held shot that uses both rotation and a slight exo-camera movement through Hammid's delicate, handheld camera treatment. The result is an active or possibly a reactive staircase which creates obstacles to DG2's exospherical pathway and pursuit. As Deren notes in 1946:

an ostensibly inanimate staircase conspired [...] to frustrate a girl in her effort to arrive somewhere. The figure that preceded the girl climbed the stairs with ordinary ease. But those same stairs became active and seemed to throw the girl back when she tried to follow.

Deren and McPherson, 2005, 134

The following sets of pictures are indicative screenshots of the rocking stairs section discussed above.





**Figure 4-13: Rocking Stairs**

Finally, one could argue that the screenwork also employs the stop motion effect, in other words a single frame shooting. The scene which appears to be treated in that way is the staircase segment, when DG2 moves or, seen differently, is being moved up and down the inside staircase, while retaining her body design. In a magical way, DG2 is passively transferred rather than moving on her own in different places on the stairs which do not move in the frame.

What is under discussion is whether this scene employs fast editing or single frame shooting, meaning whether it is achieved through a cinematographic or a photographic way. The fact that the character is transferred quite fast from one position to the next prevents the viewer from recognising whether there is action in between. However, a frame-by-frame analysis reveals a small hair movement as well as a minute facial movement/aliveness. Accordingly, the fast, intershot treatment makes use of extremely, short-length shots rather than multiplied single frame shots, which create the stop motion effect.

Notably, while all the staircase scenes emphasise transition and create certain spatial progression paths, the last case emphasises the lack of it. With no pathway created, what is left is a visual impression which outlasts the length of DG2's appearance, multiplying in a sense the image, a fact that is relevant to the multiplication of the characters.

With regard to the spatial progression, an equally interesting fact is the pathway virtually inscribed by the performers which differs among the performers and the macro-structural parts. The pathways of the Mirror/dark figure and Hammid are not recorporealised and are always direct and upwards. Furthermore, they share a common pathway: in P:3, when the figure is pursued by DG2 in the rocking stairs discussed above; and in CS1 – P:4 – when Hammid is followed by Deren

who has seemingly just woken up. The above conclusions prompt the receiver to draw connections between Hammid and the hooded figure, which could be Hammid in disguise. At the same time, the figure-Hammid unification separates Deren from the rest of the characters. She is the only one to be spatiotemporally altered, the only one forced to use flexible pathways and an extraordinary effort while climbing up and down the stairs.

#### **4.2.4 Deconstructed Time-Space Continuum: ‘Table Trio’**

The Table-Trio is one of the most music-centric and body-centric sections in the screenwork. Shot with innovative intra- and intershot treatment, as will be later analysed, it is structured on a choreographic pattern repeated by the three Derens, otherwise named as ‘Dream Girls’. These share the same space, a circular table, with the circular having a substantial macro-structural as well as micro-structural significance.

Engaging in a sort of ritualistic movement cluster, the three Derens basically perform four movements in a two shot sequence and one transition shot. The first [A] movement – 1<sup>st</sup> shot – is a body caressing, “languorous movement over face [...] self caress” (cited in Clark et al., 1988, 92). The right arm starts from the face – mouth area – passing over the neck which is exposed due to the leaning of the head diagonally high back, and moves downwards to exit through the bottom right corner of the screen. In the next shot, a disembodied arm enters diametrically opposite, meaning from the top left corner, creating spatial consistency, picks up the key, with the palm down – movement B –, and the key is revealed by turning the hand – movement C. The sequence concludes with the arm being pulled away towards Deren, movement D. The transition shot is exospherically exactly the same as shot two, and therefore seems as the same shot. In the shot, the key ‘magically’ resumes its position – mE – in order for the next Deren to start engaging in the same action. Just before the third ‘Dream Girl’ starts the movement sequence, there are two parenthetical shots that re-establish the seating position and the character tensions among the three characters. In the first parenthetical shot – P1 – ‘Dream Girl 3’ engages in a

sequence of conditional spatial eye tensions, first with the key; then with DG1; next with DG2; and finally back to the key. In the second parenthetical shot – P2 – DG1 and DG2 also engage in conditional spatial eye tension towards DG3, while towards the end of the shot, DG2 turns her spatial eye and body tension towards the key. Following these two shots, DG3 engages in a repetition which contains a compositional contraction; movement A is not screened and the arm of DG3 enters screen right to pick up the key – mB –. When she reveals the key, there is a repetition with variation, since her hand is black and the key turns into a knife – mF. When the knife replaces the key, the first two Derens react identically with a defending reaction of fear, as seen in movement G.

This concluding movement for ‘Dream Girls 1 and 2’ is in total contradiction with the introductory movement A, and is also introduced by a graphic inversion. The black palm is the inversion of the white palms of DG1 and 2, and for the first time the key is orientated diametrically opposite the holder, meaning that in the first two times the key points inwards, whereas now it points outwards. Reinforcing these inversions, the key turns as mentioned above into a knife, also pointing outwards, meaning towards DG1 and 2. Keeping the contradictory aspect, in terms of movement quality, while the caressing in the beginning of the sequence is performed in a sustained mode of action, the fear reaction is sudden. In terms of movement direction, the first one moves downwards, while the second one moves upwards. Finally, while in movement A the palm of the hand is turned towards the body, which along with the body design and the exposed neck, communicates a relaxing and self-centred, if not erotic, atmosphere – notably the same caressing movement used when Deren concludes the ‘actual’ P:1. By contrast, in movement G the palm of the hand is turned outwards, creating a spatial projection towards the off-screen third Deren, therefore a conditional spatial tension, protecting this time the neck and the face. At the same time, eye contact is retained with the third Deren, communicating a hostile situation, where the defenders – Dream Girls 1 and 2 –, facing the life threatening Dream Girl 3, assume an alert position of self-preservation. Notably, the same reaction also takes place further down in P:4.2, when Deren seemingly wakes up and reacts to the silver ball eye of Deren/Hammid, right after the ‘4 Strides’ scene, while movement A has already been introduced as early as in P:1

conclusion – exosphere Cii –, which is also considered the beginning of the character's dream.

There is an additional graphic detail worthy of attention. In contrast to the circularity of the table, as well as the circularity created by the micro-structural repetitiveness, the tablecloth's folding lines, the key placement-orientation, the Dream Girls sitting position as well as their performing actions, create harsh lines and angularity. The following frames are in screen chronological order, although not necessarily successional as repetitions are omitted.

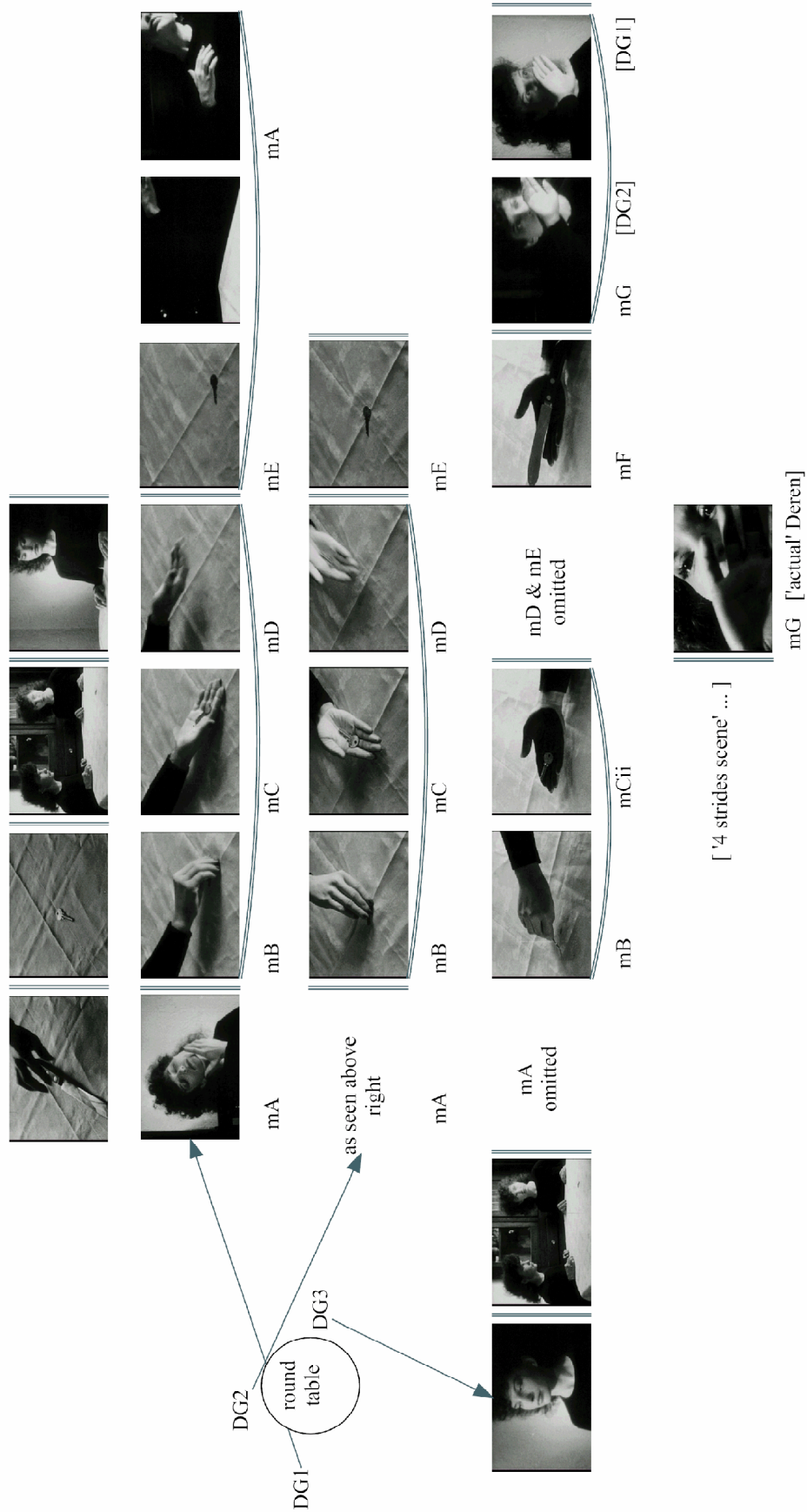


Figure 4-14: Table Trio Movements

The following table demonstrates the micro-structural, screen choreographic pattern. As illustrated, there is a pattern repeated twice in exactly the same way and a third time without the introduction and with a different outcome – Cii and F – which initiates the reaction G as performed by DG2 and DG1, whereas on screen one only sees the final body design – Gii – by DG1; a gesture that has a two-fold function, it concludes the trio through a double accent, while being the transitional movement for the ‘4 Strides’ section.

Discussing the music-image relationship, P:4.1 is a highly music-centric section in that its kinesiology is choreographed in synchronicity with the music, being rhythmically concordant while also being empathetic. The following diagram demonstrates the micro-structure of image analysed above, in reference to the music, whose analysis will follow in section 4.2.7.

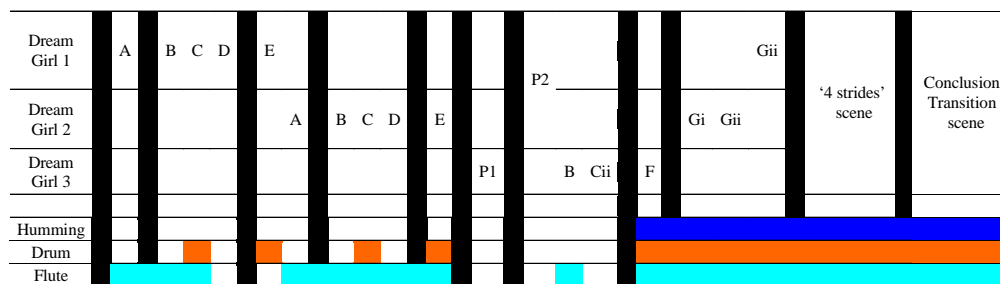


Figure 4-15: ‘Table Trio’ Audio-visual Micro-structure

#### 4.2.5 Deconstructed Time-Space Continuum: ‘4 Strides’

Continuing with the ‘4 Strides’ scene, there would be in fact five of them, if we were to count from the first outdoor step to the first step back into the house (Figure 4-16). As analysed thematically by Deren in 1955, this scene seeks to communicate a metaphysical travelling through certain exospheres that are distant and disparate.

The first step in sand (with suggestion of sea behind), [there is an additional step here, see below] the second stride (cut in) is in grass, third is on pavement, and the fourth is on the rug, and then the camera cuts up to her head with the hand with the knife descending towards the sleeping girl. What I meant when I planned that four stride sequence was that you have to come a long way – from the very beginning of time – to kill yourself...Those four strides... span all time.

Deren and McPherson, 2005, 191-192

Introducing a screendance device that will be reused extensively in her future screenworks, Deren uses kinespherical action to unite disjunctive exospheres. Just before DG3 starts walking, she rises from her chair in the house and finishes her action outdoors in the open space. Kinespherically, there is spatial consistency as the body orientation and the body design coincide, while the medium-shot framing is of the same distance, and the screen placement of the body, which is screen centre progressing up the vertical axis, is common along the two shots. What dramatically changes is the background of the action, namely its exosphere.

On similar grounds, and while the music keeps a constant high volume accompaniment throughout the scene analysed in 4.2.7, drawing attention away from the visual cuts, DG3 starts a normal pace walking. Constant in pace with no movement alterations throughout, this walking is screened constantly from the right side of the performer, following the spatial progression of the performer in pure reflection throughout the strides. In addition, the framing is constantly in close up and, whereas the orientation is not exactly the same for each shot, the camera keeps spatial consistency among the shots, inscribing a slight diagonal from low level to mid level camera, while always looking towards the feet.



**Figure 4-16: Four (Five) Strides**

Providing an overall kinespherical consistency that makes possible the unification of the disparate exospheres, the character is shown to be able to cover a great distance in an instant by merely walking. Notably, while there is nothing non-realist in regards to the shots individually, the intershot process used produces a non-realist reading that reinforces Deren's initial aim to produce a dream-actuality dialogue.

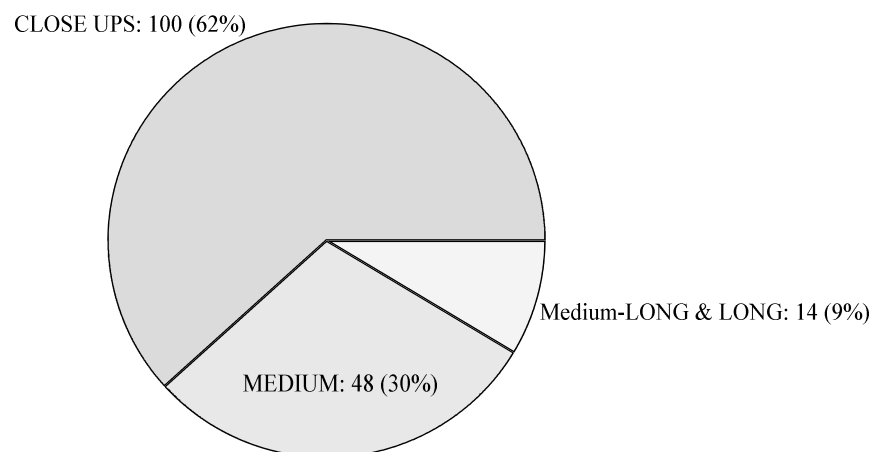
With the '4 Strides' section, which is immediately after the Table Trio, the dream section, micro-structurally completed with the above mentioned reaction movement – mG – of the 'Table Trio', also comes to an end, drawing connections between the two sections. In addition, it is noteworthy that the Table Trio movement cluster starts with mA and finishes with mG, exactly the way the dream section starts and ends. In the first instance, it is a matter of micro-structural analysis, while in the second, the movement concerns macro-structural changes. In addition, the dream segment encircles the Table Trio in the same way as the 'actual' mA and mG encircle the 'dream' mA and mG. In that way, further to the connections drawn between the two depicted worlds, actual and dream, there is a complex, circular sense created through repetitions within the initial and concluding movements of that movement cluster.



#### 4.2.6 Framing Mesh: Kine-exo Camera, Intra- & Intershot Treatment

Meshes is a screenwork that is connected with the dream reality in which the subconscious governs the action. Likewise, the film uses screening devices that result in an illustration of a private world which is read, viewed and perceived, mostly from the main character's point of view. This world is achieved through specific framing and kine-exo camera treatment as well as certain optical intrashot effects.

In line with the circular and therefore confined exospherical pattern, the screenwork employs shot types that project an overall restricted view. Despite the fact that the film includes medium and long shots, the majority of the film depicts the action through close-ups and extreme close-ups. From the total of one hundred and sixty-one shots, the close up shots which frame only a small portion of the performer's kinesphere correspond to approximately one hundred, followed by around forty-eight medium shots, and just fourteen medium long and long shots where a substantial part of the screen is covered with an exospherical reality. Accordingly, the proportion favours the close ups, in other words inner-spherical or micro-shots, as illustrated at the following diagram:



**Figure 4-17: Shot Types**

As a result, relatively small objects are defamiliarised as to their viewing parameters. Being often projected in full screen, their size seeks to attract the viewer's attention and signify their importance within the film. In terms of the characters' framing, they are often shown as fragmented. Especially in regards to the main character played by Deren, she is not shown in kinespherical/full body shot till the second part of the film, namely when the film has already thematically started the dream cycles. This also applies to the face of the performer, whose identity is revealed in the second part when Deren walks up the outdoor stairs. Up till that point, the character has been screened in fragmented/inner-spherical shots and from 'behind' angles when her head is shown. Furthermore, she is often depicted through her shadows that describe in an immaterial way her body; even then, only her upper half is shown and the emphasis is on the object.

By withholding information from the viewer and invading the performer's kinesphere, the camera brings the viewer to a position where intimacy as well as nervousness and threat are mixed. At times the receiver is brought close to private scenes such as the characters' caressing movements, while in other instances to a threatening and/or violent activity.

In addition to the framing distance, the kine-exo camera position and movement in relation to the action depicted reinforce the personal qualities of the screenwork as well as the sense of dream and actuality. There are two main kinds of framing used. First of all, there are many scenes shot from the character's viewpoint, namely through subjective camera use where the viewer has the sense of experiencing visually what the character is. The second kind of framing aims to depict an oneiric environment, using very low and high angle positions as well as an unconventional capturing movement that defamiliarise an otherwise domestic environment. Two of the most obvious segments that employ unconventional framing and kine-exo camera movement are where DG1 appears freed from gravity and floats between the indoor rooms, and later when DG2 tries to maintain her balance while climbing extremely rocky stairs.

Beyond the kine-exo camera treatment, there are certain intrashot devices that reinforce the oneiric as well as the personal sense that the film aims to depict. Overlay, fade out, camera overcranking and double exposure are the most obvious effects that are used in the screenwork. Starting from the first two devices at the beginning of the dream part P:2, the viewer watches the main character's eye closing with sleepiness while at the same time the walkway view is getting dimmer. Simultaneously with the fading, there is also a camera withdrawal, similar to a zoom out effect. The interesting point here is the use of a dark tunnel in a form of a cone-shaped frame that surrounds the action. The window view of the walkway is receding through this tunnel, resulting in an image that no longer belongs to reality; this shot resembles the so-called 'iris shot' which is basically a shot framing the action in an otherwise black circle. Interestingly, beyond the shot shape which in both instances is framed circularly, the eye effect is also relevant to the performer's action.

As regards the camera overcranking, the device results in the slowing of the kine-exospherical action, as analysed in chapter three. A distinctive segment that makes use of this effect occurs when DG1 climbs the stairs after having seen the knife placed at the bottom of them. According to Maya Deren's shot list (cited in Clark et al., 1988, 87), the actual use of exposure speed varies from a slow to an extremely slow motion, with an overall effect of a time-consuming running that is read by the viewer in every detail in terms of speed, suspense and effort.

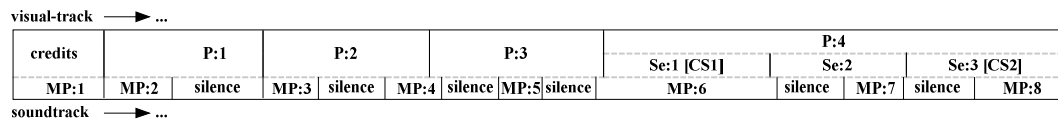
The double exposure is an additional intrashot device employed. There are two screenwork segments based on the effect: firstly, when DG1 assumes a sitting position by the side of the armchair where the main character sleeps and, secondly, at the table scene when the three duplicates sit together at the 'Table Trio'. As Hammid explained to Miriam Arsham in 1976 (cited in Clark et al., 1988, 97), he shot the scenes on the same film by covering part of the lenses with a black paper. The double exposure is possibly the strongest intrashot/optical effect included in the film for creating a dreamy, unreal environment. Besides the fact that the viewer may already have figured out the multiplicity of the main character, the simultaneous double image results in the viewer's confirmation of the hyper-reality on which the film is based.

#### 4.2.7 Musical Meshes: A Macro/Micro Structural Audio-Visual Approach

As already explained, the sound Meshes is the second version of the film; arguably a different film in which the viewing experience is considerably affected. Along with the rest of Deren's sound films, it makes use only of 'acousmatic sound' – sound exogenous to the kine-exospheric space – and specifically, music; accordingly, neither a kinespherical aural action, nor an exospheric aural environment are originated from the image.

Specifically for Meshes, the music by Teiji Ito was composed long after the premiere of Deren and Hammid's film. As Deren noted in her brochure the 'Art of the Moving-Picture' (cited in Jackson, 2002, 201), the composition was based on the traditional Japanese Bugaku form<sup>67</sup>. The score begins with the credits and ends with the last image of the screenwork, lasting around 14 min. Arguably, the first part corresponds to the length of the credits. The second part starts with the first shot – the mannequin hand deposits a flower – and ends when Deren, in shot 19, stops the phonograph. The sound part three which is divided from the second, as in all music parts, by a part of silence/pause, coincides with the beginning of P:2 in shot 28, when the image is screened through a tunnel and the black figure enters. It ends in shot 36 when DG1 arrives at xB – the outside stairs. Music part four starts in shot 46, when DG1 pulls back the sheet cover and reveals the knife and ends when DG2 enters the house, shot 66. The following part, which as explained is separated from the preceding one by a part of pause, starting with shot 76 when the black figure places a flower on the bed, and ends with shot 95, when DG2, having looked at the knife on the bed-sheets, looks up. Just before P:4, the 'Third Extended Repetition', music part six begins in shot 97 when DG2 looks out of the window, lasting for the whole S:1 and for the beginning of shot 131. Music begins again in shot 136 when Deren starts ascending the xE, designating the seventh music part, and ends with the end of S:2, in shot 154, which is the last view of the sea, just after the mirror pieces are drifting away. The eighth and last music part starts just after Hammid's entrance in the house in P:3.3, in shot 160, when the camera pans around the room for the last time. It

ends with the very last frames of the screenwork just before the ‘end’ title comes on screen.



**Figure 4-18: Audio-visual Structure**

Specifying certain similarities between the parts, it should be acknowledged that there are four clearly defined sound sources: a - a flute, possibly Ryūteki, which is a Japanese transverse flute made of bamboo, b - a plucked string instrument, possibly a guitar, c – percussions of indefinite pitch<sup>68</sup>, possibly Haitian drums, and d - other instruments that provide certain harmonic humming sounds. In regards to the music-image relation Jackson notes that...

a shrill flute pierces the air as Dream-Girl #1 falls backwards [...] an eerie humming accompanies every appearance of the mirror-faced figure [...] later the same hum associates the lover’s identical ascent up the steps to the bedroom with that of the androgynous figure; a mad cacophony of dissonant sounds begins when the key that Dream-Girl inside the house #3 picks up off the dining table turns into the knife; the scream of similarly jarring musical sounds accompanies the lifeless image of the woman in the living room chair.

Jackson, 2002, 202-203

Referring also to the soundtrack, Haslem adds that ...

[Teiji Ito] makes Meshes appear like a music video before its time, the drumbeat is synchronized to movement and to the cut. When Deren takes one of her many short journeys along the path or up stairs, the sound of her steps is overlaid by Ito's drumbeat metonymically standing in for and amplifying her movement.

Haslem, 2002 [online]

Expanding on both Jackson and Haslem’s brief notes, there are further relationships that are noteworthy. At times rhythmically concordant and at others in counterpoint, the sound-image relationship can be considered generally empathetic, in the sense explained in chapter three (section 3.5.4). In macro-

structural terms there is a rhythmical concordance between the visual and audio parts, as discussed and graphically illustrated above. Investigating the micro-structural audio-visual relationship, there are certain distinctive music-centric points.

Starting from the beginning, the screenwork starts with a guitar introduction which lasts as long as the credits. With the first image of the disembodied mannequin's hand, the guitar stops and a flute sound now accompanies the action. Right after a brief drum hit, the mannequin hand disappears as if it was reacting to the sound. Following that, Deren picks up the flower to the sound of flute and guitar, with the guitar remaining for the rest of Deren's outdoor walking. The flute re-enters for around four seconds along with the guitar with the screening of the black figure, while the guitar sound does not stop accompanying Deren until she enters the house.

In the meantime, an action initiates another distinctive audio-visual treatment. When Deren drops the front door's key, the fall of the key down the stairs is accompanied by drum beats which seem rhythmically to coincide with the key's bouncing on the steps. However, to be more accurate, only the first two bits have rhythmical concordance, giving the impression that the key's knocking on the steps produces the sharp, brief drumming sound. The rest consists of irregular accelerated drum beats, accompanied by a more intense guitar and, while they do not visually coincide with the key drop, they resemble the rhythmically irregular falling. As soon as Deren catches the key and stops its fall, the drumming sound ceases.

Having unlocked the door, Deren enters the house. Her two first steps initiate the first and only rhythmical pattern of the screenwork, as shown below, in an otherwise generally ametrical music lacking downbeats and upbeats. Note that all of the following score excerpts are not the original; they are instead audibly derived from the screenwork and therefore might not be exact. They do however correspond to the rhythmical pattern under discussion.



Ito, using the same drumming sound with the key drop, creates a rhythmical pattern whose speed and persistence runs for approximate one minute, resembling a heart-beat sound while increasing the tension of the screenwork. Notably, the rhythm, while constant in speed, does not run irrelevant to the image, often demonstrating rhythmical concordance with the visual action. After the two aforementioned entry steps, the next shot enters through cut intershot treatment on exactly the second beat. The camera is static and then starts to move with the next first beat. Shortly after, and while it pans right, the camera arrives at the next focus point on the second beat of the pattern. The next shot, a close-up of the knife on the table, is synchronised with the first beat. The second beat initiates the movement of the knife which falls on the table on the first quarter rest. After the following two drum beats, the camera moves fast, focusing this time on the stairs – xE – again on the first quarter rest. Deren starts walking up the stairs and her first step is taken on the second beat. Deren's fourth and fifth steps are taken on the following two beats. A few seconds later, one more shot change occurs, close up to the bed of xF, on the second beat. Two measures later, the motif ceases just before Deren stops the phonograph. Accordingly, in this section, an audio-visual communication is identified in both intershot and kinespherical levels. In addition, the fact that Deren initiates the rhythmical motif and also brings closure through a sound-related kinespherical action provides an immediate association between the sound and the image which confuse the boundaries of actuality and exogenous sound.

Shortly after, as Deren leads the viewer from the actual depiction of the world to the dream world – beginning of P:2 – Ito introduces a distinctive humming sound which plays a significant structural role throughout the screenwork. After establishing the connection between the two worlds, the humming sound accompanies the black figure every time s/he is screened. Shortly after, Ito re-uses the sound when the knife is revealed under the sheets, drawing connecting lines between the knife and the black figure whose relation is verified later on the screenwork. Then, similarly to P:2, the beginning of part three and the screening

of the black figure are accompanied by humming. Within the same part, the humming accompanies the black figure's action of leaving the flower on the bed sheets where the knife had previously been revealed. Part four, along with the black figure's outdoor screening, is once more introduced with the same characteristic sound. However, this time, the humming is also used when the key transforms into a knife in Deren's hand and is chronologically extended up to the point of the 'Table Trio' section, P:4.1. Ito uses the sound for the last time in the concluding section 1 – P:4.2, accompanying the screening of Alexander Hammid whose kine-exospheric movement resembles the black figure's previous path once inside the house in P:3, up to the point of the 'slashing' of his face. This last audio-visual treatment prompts the reader/receiver to make connections between the black figure, Hammid, the knife, and the flower, creating a threatening interrelated cluster, whose significance is identified above in section 4.2.2.

Going back in screen chronological terms, while DG1 ascends in slow motion running in silence, she descends with the accompaniment of a relatively long section of flute and drums of approximately a minute. This section lasts until the beginning of the next part when the humming resumes. It is noteworthy that the high pitched flute sound along with the fast but irregular drumming is empathetic to the unconventionality depicted during DG1's descent. Notably, when DG2 passes through the inside staircase, she ascends in silence but when she descends she is accompanied by drum beats. These beats, as in the case of the key bouncing in P:1, start in rhythmical concordance with the images and then are irregularly accelerated.

Shortly afterwards, the drum beat relates to the 'key to knife' change, which is also emphasised through the Table-Trio section. As illustrated in Figure 4-15 above, there is structural concordance between music and image up to the point of reversion – mCii. In an empathetic, synchronised and concordant manner in line with the overall circularity of the image, the flute introduces the fluid and sustained action for all three Dream Girls with exactly the same music, although with different durations. The longer version is the second one, followed by the first, both of which are musically resolved, and the shorter is the third, which is interrupted by the graphic inversion and reversion of mCii. In terms of the drum



beats, coinciding with the angularity and harshness of the image described above, these are sharp, very brief in duration, and high pitched. They accompany movements C and E for both DG1 and DG2, while in DG3's case the percussions are withheld in light of the break of the visual pattern. Thus, the score responds to the image variation with music deprivation. A powerful pause leaves the flute music unresolved and the palm movement Cii remains unaccompanied for the first time. A contradictory musical outbreak follows this high tension pause which concludes musically the 'Table Trio' – movements F, Gi, Gii –, while connecting the following scenes – '4 Strides' and the 'Conclusion/Transition' scenes.

This 'outbreak' consisted of the drum sound along with the humming and a high pitched flute that create a dissonant cacophony which seeks to emphasise the threatening figure of DG3 during the '4 strides' section, analysed above (section 4.2.5). Finally, it is very significant to stress in macro-structural terms that the same polyphony is used during the concluding images of the screenwork which depict Deren committing suicide. Accordingly, this polyphony prompts the viewer to draw connecting lines between the key, the knife, and Deren's duplicate, while providing a second closure to the '4 strides' scene, by linking the first section of P:4 with the third.

Besides the above mentioned audio-visual empathetic relationships, there are also distinctive instances of sound deprivation. Here actions that, under normal circumstances, are accompanied by specific sounds are neither synchronised with an actual sound nor with any other empathetic sound. The first instance is at the beginning when Deren knocks on the door, and the second when she seems to speak or shout at the top of the stairs, while the recurring screening of the record player is audibly unaccompanied. Arguably, all actions produce sound, yet the instances under discussion are screened in close up, bringing the screenwork receiver's sensory organs – eyes and ears – closer in a sense to the action<sup>69</sup>. This enhances the absence of actuality sound which is ignored by the soundtrack and in contrast to other instances, as for example in the key drop discussed above.

#### 4.2.8 Conclusion

Overall, Meshes of the Afternoon is a fictional screenwork that uses primarily corporeal agents as recorporealised through the medium and their interrelation with surrounding objects as well as the music, in order to communicate an atmosphere of entrapment or meshing between the conflicting dream and actual worlds. Aiming at the merging and confusion of these, Meshes employs colloquial movement which is manipulated through kine-camera and exo-camera processes in a close dialogue with post-production processes, resulting in a recorporealised movement, namely screendance choreography.

Within a certain confined exospherical and repetitive pattern that is shared between the two worlds depicted with no clear differentiation in between, Meshes often denies the physical laws of action and existence. The time-space continuum is deconstructed, creating the feeling of doubt in the viewer about what s/he is viewing and how this image could be read and applied to logical, conventional and familiar frames and reading. Otherwise everyday objects acquire distinctive qualities within the screenwork that reinforce the dream-actuality negotiation, providing one more layer of the mesh and the interconnection between characters, objects and their multiple and multiplied appearances. Finally, through acousmatic sound, which is nevertheless closely related to and seemingly interdependent on the visual elements of the film, Meshes creates an empathetic music-image relationship, both in micro- and macro-structural levels that provide one more layer of rhythm to the screenwork.

On the basis of body-centricity as recorporealised through the stylisation of the characters' kine-exospherical actions and the music-centricity of the later version of the film, which is not simply an atmospheric sound but an actively participating musical composition, it is argued that Meshes is the earliest of Deren's screendance works.

### 4.3 AT LAND: Introduction

Maya Deren:

At Land has little to do with the inner world of the protagonist, it externalises the hidden dynamics of the external world, and here the drama results from the activity of the external world. It is as if I have moved from a concern with the life of a fish, to a concern with the sea which accounts for the character of the fish and its life.

Deren and McPherson, 2005, 194

Deren's second completed film premiered in 1944 and is the earliest of her three unforced silent/unaccompanied screenworks. This time, as the sole creator of the film, Deren wrote, directed and played the main role. The film depicts a woman's travel through different and spatially unrelated spaces, both natural and artificial, experiencing various situations. Having already explored the merging boundaries of imaginative and actual reality in Meshes where a woman hovers between her conscious and subconscious selves, Deren is interested in another dynamic relationship that is “the integrity of the individual identity... to the volatile character of a relativistic universe” (Guggenheim and Deren, 1946). In At Land, she seeks to create a form that counterpoints these two forces “with all its emotional and ideological implications” (Guggenheim and Deren, 1946), presenting a woman this time not with reference to herself but to her environment, ‘the’ and ‘her’ universe, as will be explained.

#### 4.3.1 Macro-structural Framework: Expanding-Updating Deren’s Segmentation

According to Deren (cited in Clark et al., 1988, 174-175), the film splits into eight segments. In screen chronological order these are: A, "The Seashore", which starts on a deserted seashore where the main character is beached up, and finishes when the main character struggles to raise herself from the seashore using a piece of driftwood; B, "The Table", in which the character climbs on a banquet table, crawling towards the other end where a man plays chess by himself. The section ends when the main character moves towards a fallen white

chess pawn. C, "The Rock River", is firstly about the main character following the fallen pawn as it drifts downstream across the rocky terrain and is secondly about the same character walking along a country road talking to four men that magically interchange as they walk by her side. D "The Dying Man in the Room", is about the main character entering a white painted house and confronting a man lying on his bed, seemingly in great discomfort and possibly terminally ill. The following scene, "The Mirrors", was never filmed but according to Deren it was supposed to be about the character and the possibilities of image reflections produced by the mirrors in a bathroom (cited in Clark et al., 1988, 174-175). E, "The Rock and the Sea Stones", finds the main character on a large rock overlooking the shore and the sea. Once she clammers down, she travels through sand dunes and, when she arrives at the shore, she starts picking up sea stones. F "The Black and the Blonde at Chess", is about a chess game between two ladies, a brunette and a blonde. The main character at first witnesses the game and then goes and strokes the hair of the players; the section ending when the main character grabs the queen and runs away. H, bearing no specific title from Deren, is the concluding section of the film where the main character, holding the chess queen, revisits the places she has departed from and arrives at "The Seashore", running to the point where she is no longer visible.

Without deviating much from Deren's scenario, which is definitely not her final since it includes un-filmed scenes, a more accurate segmentation of the film is proposed based on the final screenwork. The first obvious difference lies simply in the fact that "The Mirrors" was not filmed and therefore is excluded from the current segmentation. The second difference is in the film's structural focus on exospherical changes and their interrelations. The whole film is divided into small scenes taking place at different exospheres and, accordingly, section C is best understood as two scenes rather than one. In the first section, the character follows the fallen pawn and in the second section the character speaks with four different men or, according to Deren, with a man of four identities. The name proposed for the second section is "The Four Men". On the same principle, "The Rock and the Sea Stones" section can be best described as three, since there are three distinctive different exospheres that correspond to three performing actions. Accordingly, the following segmentation is proposed, "The Rock", "The Sand

Dunes”, and “The Sea Stones”. Finally, in regards to the section entitled “The Dying Man in the Room”, the main character first investigates a room/s, secondly finds a dying man on his bed, and thirdly exits the house through a multiple door maze, thus the section can be read as a three-scene section – The House, The Dying Man, The Doors –, since there are three clearly defined scenes, one that introduces the incident, the incident itself, and the exit from the incident.

On the grounds of the exosphere-section correspondence, it is not surprising that many of the sections named by Deren are in fact exospherical descriptions. Accordingly, the exospheres projected are firstly a ‘seashore’ (xA) and then a ‘driftwood’ that seems to belong to the same environment, therefore xAii. Then follows “The Table” section which is performed mainly on a ‘banquet table’ (xB) with exospherical shot interruptions of what seems to be thick forest which is difficult to traverse (xC). Next comes the “The Rock River” section which is self-explanatory as it concerns what seems to be a river streaming down on big rocks (xD). The next projected exosphere is the tree-lined ‘country road’ (xE) leading to a ‘country house’ (xEii). Exosphere (F) is inside a seemingly unoccupied house where all the furniture is covered with white sheets except one chair, and where there is this ‘dying man’. The main character finds herself in a maze of doors which is probably part of the same house, (xFii), and the next three sections are titled after their exospheres. ‘The Rock’ is exosphere G, ‘Sand Dunes’ is exosphere I, ‘Sea Rocks’ is exosphere Aiii, since it seems to be part of the initial ‘Seashore’ exosphere. The only exosphere that does not correspond to a section, and in fact seems to be in between sections and in between exospheres, is exosphere H which depicts very briefly a modern construction of unidentified use as seen below. The following pictures are screenshots of the aforementioned exospherical analysis.

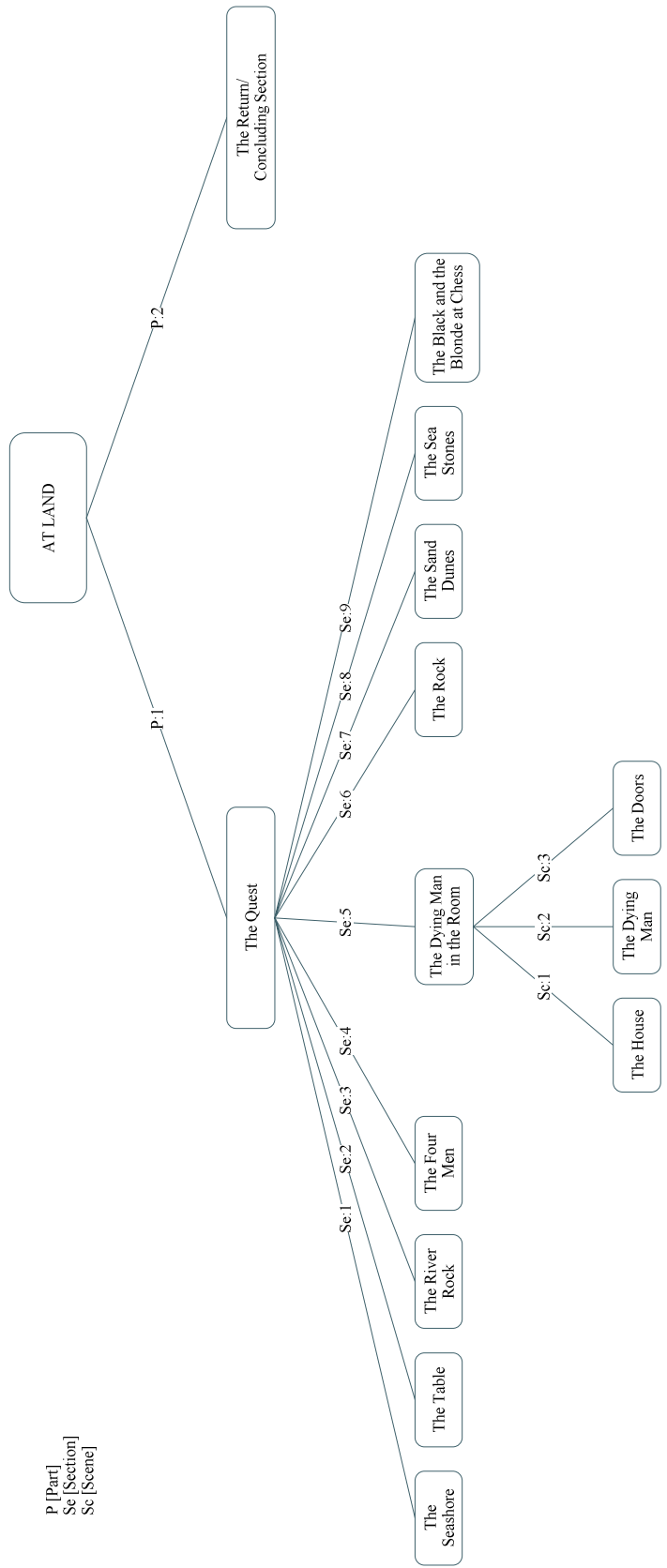


**Figure 4-19: At Land Exospherical Spaces**

In addition to the aforementioned segmentation, two larger parts separate the first nine sections; – part 1: The Quest in which the main character is partly motivated by curiosity but largely in her pursuit of a chess pawn which at the end she succeeds in capturing, and part 2: The Return that depicts the character's triumphant return back through the same exospheres to the Seashore. It has to be noted that the two parts are not balanced in screen duration. 'The Quest' is about thirteen minutes and fifteen seconds, whereas 'The Return' is about one and a

half which corresponds more to the screen duration of a section or a scene for this particular screenwork. Nevertheless, there is a clear thematic shift from progressing towards something to the character's route reversal. Reinforcing this shift, there is a stylistic change in terms of intershot manipulation. In part 2, the shots are much shorter and, as a result, the editing rhythm is faster too. In addition, the exospheric references presented within 13 minutes screen duration are now compressed into one and a half. All these parameters support the idea of a definite separation among the concluding section and the former ones.

As Renata Jackson notices, At Land, unlike Meshes, has “the progression ... of forward movement that seems to double-back on itself.” (2002, 196). Expanding on her argument, a closer look demonstrates that At Land contains more than a forward and reverse progression. Unlike the circular repetitive pattern employed in Meshes, here the main character's route moves from one place to the next, to the last one, and back. That is not to say that the action is repeated or reversed in kinespherical terms, namely in a backward motion. What is reversed is the exospheric route. The character revisits a succession of spaces she has occupied in the first part, in the reverse order, while she is being watched by her other selves or by herself, as will be later explained. In addition to this forward and reverse movement what is also presented is an exospheric circular pattern within each part which starts and ends at the same exosphere xA, the Seashore, adding a circular attribute to the linear quality of the film. Finally, what is also presented is a constant shift from outside to inside spaces with sections of similar duration, especially regarding the first part that creates a rhythmical periodic pattern, and which reinforces the argument of circularity. In approximate values, in the beginning the main character spends two minutes outside in xA and xAii; then two minutes at the banquet, although with snippets of outside exosphere in xC; followed by three minutes outside in xD, xE and xEii; then two minutes inside in xF and xFii; and finally for the first part four minutes outside in xG, xH, xI, xAii with xH – the modern construction presented above – being outside but also being highly artificial, in contrast to the rest of outside spaces. Below is a diagram of the analysed macro-structural framework.



P [Part]  
Se [Section]  
Sc [Scene]

Figure 4-20: At Land Segmentation



### 4.3.2 Corporeal and Non-corporeal Agents of Movement

Similar in aesthetic parameters to Meshes, At Land, although body-centric, a woman's journey through space and time does not employ any form of text, neither verbal nor written. Instead, it is based on pedestrian movement like walking, crawling and running that the main character performs in relation to her exosphere, the surrounding objects and the accompanying performers. As far as the corporeal agents are concerned, besides Maya Deren who plays the main character wearing only a plain cut striped sleeveless dress shown in the figure below, there are numerous other performers that play a more or less significant role. However, whereas in Meshes the main character had a highly interactive cause-effect relationship with her doubles as well as with the two other characters – the Black Figure and the male character – in At Land, the main character seems to have the leading choice.



Figure 4-21: Deren's Outfit

Upon this difference of inter-corporeal dynamics between Meshes and At Land, Sitney argues that the latter, in contrast to the former, is a pure example of 'Trance Film' and the earliest within American film tradition. As established in chapter two, a fundamental part of its nature is that "the protagonist remains isolated from what he confronts; no interaction of characters is possible in these films" (Sitney, 2002, 18). In xB, both in P:1 and P:2, while Deren co-exists with other corporeal agents, she is isolated and in a sense ignored by the group, when at the same time she seems to acknowledge their presence. However, the rest of the group and duet sections are highly interactive. In 'The Four Men' section, the protagonist converses with several young men; in the 'The Dying Man in the Room' she exchanges intense looks with the man lying on the bed; during 'The Black and the Blonde at Chess' section the two players react pleasantly when she

caresses their hair; and finally there is conditional eye tension between Deren and herself or the other selves as will be explained later.

The difference between Deren's first two films, in terms of the main character with its multiplication apparent in Meshes and implied in At Land, does not lie so much on isolation, but rather on the kind of interpersonal dynamics between Deren and co-performers. While in Meshes, the protagonist is often led, in At Land she appears largely as the choice-maker. Without arguing that there is no interaction between the characters and Deren, their roles seem more secondary as well as replaceable. With their brief screen appearance, they live and die by the section or scene, the rest of the characters playing an anonymous role. The sense of 'anyone' rather than 'someone' is projected and at the end of the film there are few faces that can be recalled beside Deren's.

To expand on the notion of anonymity and replacement, 'The Four Men' is perhaps the section that is more explicit than anywhere else in the film. In this scene Deren is depicted walking down xE along with a young man. While walking and chatting side by side, the man is substituted by another man without the rhythm of walking being disturbed. This man substitution occurs three times. There are two factors that reinforce the 'anonymity-replacement' reading. The first regards the intershot treatment. Deren changes the partner's identity midway during a pan shot. Whereas a pan camera movement (short for panoramic) is often employed to reveal information – as seen in Meshes when Deren enters the house, a panning shot reveals the interior – here Deren uses it in contrasting manner, namely to conceal the identity change. While the camera pans from screen right to screen left where Deren stands, the performer changes and when the camera returns/pans towards screen right the new identity is revealed, in other words the shift happens off-screen. However, that is not to say that the whole 'silent dialogue' is a one shot section. In fact, from the very first cut when the first co-performer is revealed to the cut when the fourth emerges, the section includes six more cuts, therefore the segment under discussion is constituted by seven shots in total before the last shot of the last identity starts. The first identity comes in with the first cut, the second between cuts three and four – meaning during shot three, the third identity change occurs during shot five, and the last in

cut eight. The following diagram illustrates the aforementioned intershot treatment.

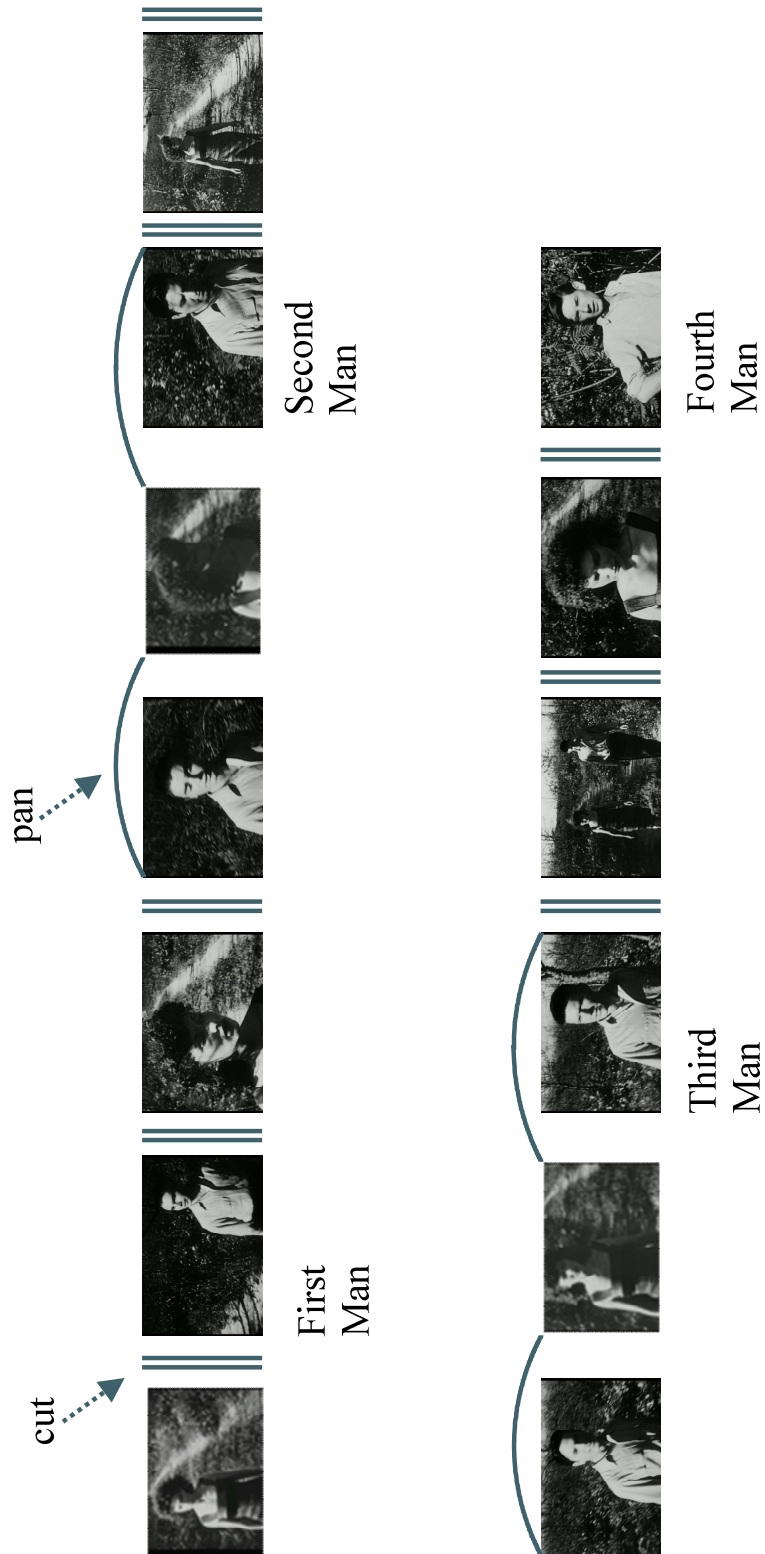


Figure 4-22: Four Men

The second factor related to replacement regards the protagonist's kinespherical action, or to be more specific, her reaction to the change of identity. The character's apathy to the fact that her companion changes identity four times provides fluidity to the section that is in conflict with the radical change of interpersonal dynamics. Deren retains her walking pace and style and keeps chatting towards screen right without acknowledging the physical change in her co-performer. It seems that there is no issue of who is beside her, arguably it could be anyone. Perhaps the only parameter established by the physicality of the co-performers is their common gender; they are all males, seemingly of similar age close to that of Deren of similar body build and all relatively slim. However, the multiplicity seems to have no beginning or end, thus, enhancing notions of anonymity and replacement.

Discussing the aforementioned section from another point of view, it is noteworthy that the previously analysed use of intershot and the off-screen continuous changes of identity conceal the performer alteration. Furthermore, the fact that the four men, as Deren states (2005, 173), are intentionally of similar features, similar hair length, and wear identical clothing, making the shift even more bewildering. Especially since the first and the second man are also very close in facial features, as shown in the diagram above. Accordingly, Deren does not seek to provide an easy way of reading the change and the multiplicity of partners. Instead she employs her creative screen aesthetics in combination with cinematic capacity to produce a subtle change that challenges and questions screened actuality.

The next significant agents in the screenwork are two non-corporeal, one corresponding to an object and one to an element and its manifestation. Beginning with the latter, water seems to play a primary role. The sea and the waves, and, by extension, the seashore, the river, the sand dunes and the sea rocks are all related and accompany many of Deren's actions as demonstrated in the exospherical analysis above. However, among them, the sea, the waves and the seashore, are perhaps the fundamental ones. To start with, again referring to

the aforementioned macro-structural analysis, they introduce and conclude each of the two parts as well as the screenwork as a whole. It is important to note that the discussion is not about the open sea but about the point where the sea connects with the land, this ever-changing curvy line that seems, at least rhythmically, regular and constant but is never the same in shape or structure.

The opening section specifies immediately the significance of the sea and its relation to the land as well as to the main character. The waves arrive, bringing with them the main character; then seen in reverse motion, they appear to be withdrawing further and further away from the shore, therefore making the main character appear to move further inland. The activity of the waves seems to be the extraneous force that moves the character's body which is otherwise powerless.

Discussing the opening section in spatiotemporal terms, whereas the sea sequence cannot be considered as dance due to the lack of human performance, the way Deren has conceived the filming and the editing of the sequence is certainly kinetic. In the first two shots, the waves are only screened as to their forward action, and when they reach the shore, which is the point that they should start receding, Deren uses close-ups of her face to seamlessly connect the next shot. From that point onwards the reverse speed is applied and the wave, which would normally recede in a couple of seconds and cover a short distance, keeps receding for around forty seconds. In the meantime, Deren's body seems to be further and further away from the sea while kinespherically it holds the same body design, inferring stillness.

The ingenuity of the sequence is not simply found in the way Deren seamlessly places the body further and further away from the shore, while the performer seems unconscious, but also in the way that a reverse speed has been applied on the wave action. Bearing in mind that the wave action is a periodic action, the wave coming to the shore and receding ceaselessly, it therefore involves a forward and reverse movement. These two parts of the movement are not identical. They acquire a different duration as well as distance coverage. However, they acquire a similar speed and form. Understanding these

parameters, Deren screens the first part of the wave at normal forward speed movement then she uses the first part reversed for the receding action. She retains its speed, although in reverse direction, in order to conceal the filmic manipulation. In that way not only she makes use of the distance covered of the first part of the wave movement, she furthermore multiplies its effect both in duration and in distance by intershot treatment that connects the first part of seven wave scenes.

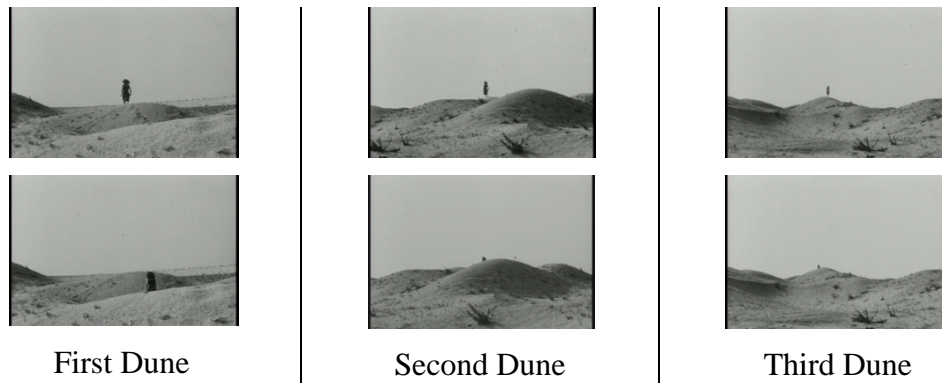
The aforementioned, in addition to the absence of other exospherical reference to indicate reverse speed, results in a subtle and at the same time obviously manipulated effect which hovers between actuality and unreality. It is noteworthy that micro-structurally, this opening sequence of wave action engulfs the macro-structural framework of the screenwork that puts the protagonist in a forward and reverse travelling, as discussed above. The sequence is resolved and the universe seems to have recovered its initial state when a shot of birds flying in normal forward speed is screened.

The 'Sand Dunes' section is related to the '4 Strides' device. However, while in the latter there is an exospherical matching of a drastically different spatial environment through kinespherical continuity, in the case of 'Sand Dunes' the surrounding space keeps its integrity while the action does not. The scene basically depicts Deren walking away from the camera with her back towards it and crossing the sand dune landscape. When she disappears, descending behind a sand dune, the camera stops recording, Deren is then placed behind a further sand dune while the camera is off. The camera resumes recording at the identical framing of the exospherical image while it pans towards the left. It stops the panning while Deren starts her ascendance from her new position. Accordingly, what is projected is the protagonist having covered a certain distance without the corresponding movement for such an action. As Deren notes, the continuity of space, which does not allow the spectator to notice the shot cut transition, "has integrated periods of time which were not, in reality, in such an immediate relationship" (Deren, 1946, 51) The time needed for the performer to travel from one sand dune to the next has been omitted through intershot manipulation, while the exospherical match among the shots has ensured a seamless projection of a

visual and seemingly uninterrupted shot, since the intershot cut connection has been manifested while the kinespherical action, namely the protagonist, was out of frame.

For this particular section, Sitney argues that the matter at hand is ‘temporal ellipses’ (2002, 21). This is arguable on the grounds that, while there is a kinespherical ellipsis of Deren’s body, temporally there is a screen time included. In other words, Deren has retained the temporal attributes of the spatiotemporal transition and excluded the spatial/visual elements while at the same time the spatial progression of the performer is smoothly, conveyed via the kine-camera movement. In approximate values, Deren ascends the first dune and descends behind it in eight seconds, next the camera pans for five and a half seconds, Deren then reappears for seven seconds and, in the same manner as in the first instance, the camera pans for four seconds, and then Deren is seen crossing the last sand dune for twelve seconds. It has to be noted that the screen duration is not identically divided and that Deren’s walking is longer in screen duration than in the camera’s kine-camera panning. Yet, neither are all sand dunes identical, nor are all of Deren’s transitions. In addition, the kine-camera movement is smooth and of invariable rhythm, like Deren’s walking.

Finally, there are screening parameters that make Deren’s spatial absence and reappearance even more discreet. As shown in the screenshots below, they are macro-exospherical shots, resulting in the minimisation of Deren’s appearance and gradually her disappearance. This is also enhanced by the fact that Deren uses deep focus. The vast sand dunes as well as the scattered dry plants appearing in the foreground draw the attention away from Deren who blends in scale as well as in shape with the background. The first three screenshots show Deren when she is most visually distinct, black against the white background. Immediately below are screenshots of the corresponding sand dunes where Deren blends with the background. Note that even when she is most visible, she still comprises a very small part of the screened image.



**Figure 4-23: Sand Dunes**

The objects, the chess game, and especially the white pawns of the game play a primary role in the development of the film. They are screened one section after the beginning and one section before the end of part one through to the end of the screenwork. The chess game initiates at first Deren’s crawling from one edge of the long dinner table to the other where the chess game is laid out. There, as had briefly happened with the knife that has fallen from the bread in the first part of Meshes, the chess pawns move by themselves – although one may argue that Deren actually moves them through some kind of telekinetic eye power. Finally, one pawn ‘falls’ metaphorically from the opponent in the game and also falls literally over the edge of the table. This provides the causal motivation for the main character to transit exospherically from the banqueting table down to the rock river (xD), trying to catch the pawn. Finally, the pawn exits on low screen right and Deren leaves also screen right, although higher, either because of the restrictions of the landscape or because she has temporarily abandoned her pursuit.

The intermediary sections, from the time the main character loses the pawn from sight till the time she rediscovers it, are thematically parenthetical and in screen chronological order they demonstrate: partnership – ‘The Four Men’ described above; curiosity – ‘The Dying Man in the Room’, where Deren enters a seemingly deserted house; journey – ‘The Rock’ and ‘The Sand Dunes’ as previously analysed; and mania – ‘The Sea Stones’ where Deren picks stones from the seashore in a frenzied way, up to the point she confronts the two chess players in the section entitled ‘The Black and the Blonde at Chess’.



Drawn immediately to the chess game, dropping every one of the ‘precious’ stones she was gathering so frantically, Deren engages in a cunning caressing action in order to steal a white pawn. This time she captures the white queen, concluding her trip through the distant and often non-contiguous exospheres. Immediately afterwards she starts her return. What happens next concerns both the main corporeal character as well as the non-corporeal agent, the ‘white queen’. Holding the ‘white queen up’ like a victorious spoil and engaging in a distinct body design with lateral symmetrical hands at right angles, Deren seems to re-enter most of the previous exospheres while at the same time is also being watched by her past.

By mixing the screen chronology of the past with the present, Deren has either been multiplied or what has already been shown concerned many Derens and not one; what is projected recalls the ‘Table Trio’ segment in Meshes, when one of the Derens is ‘chosen’ to magically acquire the knife and pursue the suicide. Similarly, in At Land, only one succeeds in acquiring the white queen and travelling rapidly through spaces in an instant. The rest of the Derens just observe the outcome. Whether it is the ‘knife’ or the ‘white queen’ in Meshes and At Land respectively that lead the action or Deren, is open to subjective interpretation. What is certain is that, in both instances, there is a strong causal motivation stemming from within both objects, defamiliarising dramatically their everyday usage.

This scene, which as mentioned above is considered the second part of the screenwork, is also a last minute alteration of the viewing experience and the single character film development. If we are to consider that many ‘Derens’ are in fact projected, then the question is ‘how many?’. Attempting such a clarification is even more complex than in Meshes because on one hand there is no coexistence of characters, while on the other there are no distinctive places within the screenwork that this separation takes place. In fact there are only two points prior to the concluding scene where both kinespherical and exospherical changes occur that would justify such a separation. After ‘The Rock River’ section, and also in the final scene of ‘The Dying Man in the Room’ where

Deren exits the house looking up right, the next section starts with Deren on the top of a cliff looking down left. However, even in these two instances the multiplication is debatable. In terms of the first, seeing a certain character in a different place with no kinespherical connection is a common cinematic device that generally does not infer anything other than that the character is seen at a different time and place and that a certain time has elapsed. What may provoke the viewer to see it differently is that all the exospherical changes have been manifested so far with kinespherical continuity, namely in the manner the ‘4 Strides’ have been screened. In terms of the second instance, the same could be inferred. However, because of the conditional eye tension between the two Derens, multiplication is also possible to be perceived; the reading is open to subjective interpretation.

### **4.3.3 Conclusion**

By employing colloquial kinesiology, At Land, like Meshes, communicates spatiotemporality which negotiates actuality and unreality. Meshes incorporated revision and expansion of a past incident and, similarly, At Land revisits the past but at the same time keeps the protagonist in a continuous present development; in other words two conflicting timelines co-exist. For Deren, “not different periods of time but different orders of time can be made to seem to occur simultaneously...” (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 148). Furthermore, in line with Meshes, the non-corporeal agents, including objects as well as specific exospherical elements, play a leading role in screenwork, having acquired, through Deren’s spatiotemporal manipulation, unique attributes.

Along with the conflicting timelines, Deren explores through At Land conflicting ‘realities’ and her notion of ‘controlled accident’; “the maintenance of a delicate balance between what is there spontaneously and naturally as evidence of the independent life of actuality, and the persons and activities which are deliberately introduced into the scene” (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 118). A notion applicable to most of Deren’s films that make use of location filming here goes one step further with scenes such as the ‘introductory waves’, the ‘four

men' and the 'sand dunes', where the constructed event makes use of a restructured actuality while at the same time "retain[ing] the authority of reality" (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 119) with the subtle yet highly meaningful results described above.

Finally, being also a body-centric screenwork, it questions the physicality of the protagonist and the co-performers through the filmic recorporealisation of the actions in space and time. In that way, Deren succeeds in producing a screendance work that places the protagonist in a relativistic universe, while the notion of self is questioned through the deconstruction of actual movement, and the rigidity of actuality is challenged through the kinetic manipulation of the surroundings. As she states:

The universe was once conceived as the passive stage upon which dramatic conflict of human wills was enacted and resolved. Today man has discovered that that which seemed simple and stable is, instead, complex and volatile;... he can no longer travel over a universe stable in space and in time... rather each individual is the center of a personal vortex; and the aggressive variety and enormity of the adventures which swirl about and confront him are unified only by his personal identity.

Guggenheim and Deren, 1946

#### **4.4 A STUDY IN CHOREOGRAPHY FOR CAMERA: Introduction**

Maya Deren:

In this film, through an exploitation of cinematic techniques, space is itself a dynamic participant in the choreography. This is, in a sense, a duet between a space and a dancer—a duet in which the camera is... creatively responsible...

Guggenheim and Deren, 1946

A Study in Choreography for Camera (Deren, 1945), hereinafter called Study, was the first film that incorporated a professional dancer. For Deren, Study "was an effort to isolate and celebrate the principle of the power of movement, which was contained in At Land" (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 194). It is primarily an

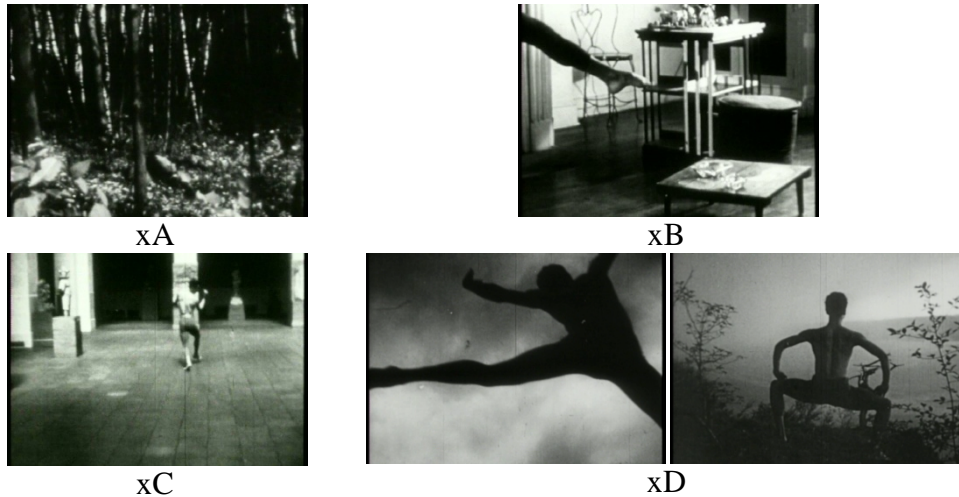
exploration of the possibilities of camera work and editing in combination with dance and vice versa, which is why Deren also called the film Pas de Deux, a partnership between the camera and the choreography. It is first and foremost a technical piece of creation pre-occupied with the exploration of screendance's formal attributes that gave Deren the opportunity to identify and evaluate these in order to incorporate them thematically in the future. Examples of these are seen in all three of her subsequent creations.

#### **4.4.1 Macro-structural Analysis**

There are two approaches considered for the segmentation of this two and a half minute film. The first one is based on the exospheres projected and the second on the kinespherical action manifested within the film.

With regards to the first one, Talley Beatty's performing platforms, namely the visited exospheres, are four in number, but two in type – two indoor and two outdoor spaces – featured in a somewhat circular order, from outdoors to indoors and back to outdoors. The order and corresponding parts of this segmentation are xA, xB, xC, xD: xA stands for an outdoor forest location; xB is, by contrast, an indoor private space, a relatively small living room – namely the apartment of Buffie Johnson, painter and friend of Deren; xC is an indoor space but for public use and large in size – the Egyptian Court of the Metropolitan Museum of Art; and finally, xD an open air outdoor space of high mountains.

Analysing the film in kinespherical terms, which is Deren's way of segmentation, the film is divided into five rather than four parts. The difference lies in the fact that in xC there are two parts included. Therefore, Deren's scenario (cited in Clark et al., 1988, 266-267) starts with the 'Opening Sequence' which takes place in xA; followed by the 'Intense Interior Movement' which corresponds to xB; then comes the 'Metropolitan Museum' which along with the 'The Pirouette' are manifested in xC; and finally the 'Rising into a Leap' which takes place in the same sort of space in which the whole film started<sup>70</sup>.



**Figure 4-24: Study Exospherical spaces**

Without arguing against Deren's segmentation, if one was to focus on the choreographic content, namely the kinespherical action of the film, despite the transitions among drastically different exospherical platforms, it could be considered as one continuous movement cluster that covers the whole duration of the film, excluding the credits. There is of course further segmentation of this choreography which provides distinctive parts of movements or movement clusters. These are:

- the introductory spiralling action
- a sequence that moves from an expansive and open, backward leaning position to a curled and contracted closed position – contraction movement<sup>71</sup>
- the high leg full body extension, thus body opening, and the lowering of the leg
- a section of spiralling action followed by the 'repeated' contraction
- in a contrasting manner a chest projection leads to a diagonal back and left spatial progression accompanied by movements that are strong and bound
- the return from the same pathway with jumps and turns, leading to
- the non-stop stationary multi-speed turning which is resolved by the concluding movement of the film, the hyperphysical jump, as will be later discussed.

When synthesising Deren's segmentation, the above mentioned kinespherical analysis and exospherical segmentation in the following four part structure is

constructed in 'Forest Opening', the 'Intense Interior', followed by the 'Metropolitan Museum' and the 'Mountain Conclusion' – the double contraction action is emphasised for reasons that will be explained later.

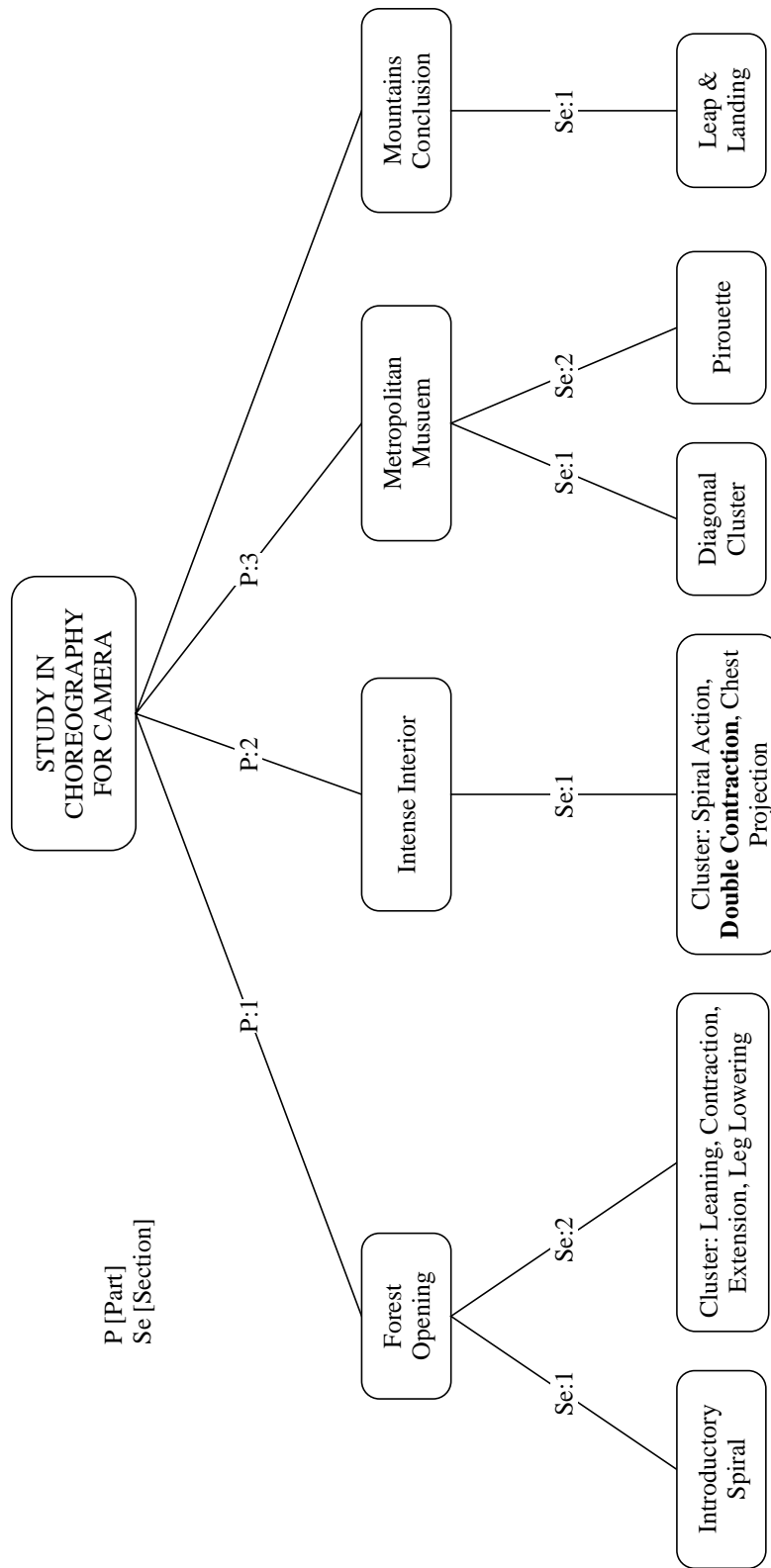


Figure 4-1: Study Segmentation

#### 4.4.2 Corporeal Agents of Movement

Study is a screendance solo work performed by Talley Beatty. In contrast to Meshes and At Land, Study incorporates movement that can be classified under the broad umbrella of modern dance kinesiology. Beatty's body posture and body designs, his contractions, leg and arm extensions, high arches, the pointed feet, the *tour en l'air*<sup>72</sup>, the pirouette and even his costume, a simple leotard all project a well-trained, modern dancer performing with exemplary virtuosity. However, the film tries to draw attention away from the identity of the performer to the movement performed. As Deren states, she aimed to lead

...the entire concept a step further... the identity which unites space and time is not the personalised identity of a given, individual character... it is the identifiable nature of his movement which constitutes the compulsive continuity... we are not so much concerned with who he is as with how he moves, and such a transfer of identification seems to me to constitute a progress away from the theatre concept of personalized character and towards a more cinematic concept, based on movement.

Guggenheim and Deren, 1947

Deren's notion of 'how' relates not only Beatty's movement but also to how his movement has been spatiotemporally treated within the screenwork. What is presented in the film is a collection of screendance devices, some of which had already been presented in a scattered manner in Meshes and At Land, but others employed for the first time in Study.

The aforementioned Study can be considered in kinespherical terms as one continuous choreographic piece because the transitions from one shot to the next, and most importantly from one exosphere to the next, are kinespherically connected, despite moving in actuality through unrelated and physically non-contiguous spaces. Beatty's performance seems uninterrupted, keeping continuity in movement regardless of the space alteration. Accordingly, the leg lowering of exosphere A – the forest – is completed in xB – the apartment –, the running initiated in xB is developed in xC – the Metropolitan Museum – and the



movement that is built up in xC is finished in xD – the mountains. With this treatment, which ensures “Continuity of the identity of the figure, along with the uninterrupted integrity of the movement” (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 173), Deren gives the impression that the solo’s screen time is also its actual time and that Beatty has a hyperphysical ability to travel through space without needing to include time or movement for his transition. Overall, by questioning the materiality of the performer, Deren succeeds in her aim to “place a dancer in limitless, cinematographic space” (cited in Clark et al., 1988, 262) and “giving him the world as a stage” (cited in Clark et al., 1988, 265).

Apart from these transitional points, there are four additional points worth attention in terms of their screendance attributes. The ‘Introductory Spiral’, the ‘Diagonal’ spatial progression performed in the Metropolitan Museum, the ‘Pirouette’ section, and the ‘Leap’. With regards to the first, Deren employs a screendance treatment which resembles the ‘Four Men’ and the ‘Sand Dunes’ sequences in At Land. The sequence in Study begins with the camera already rotating horizontally as if surveying the forest, which meets the recurring image of Beatty. The issue here is that Beatty’s reappearance, within a seemingly continuous take, happens while Beatty is kinespherically moving performing a spiralling action but is exospherically static. What is projected is that, as soon as he is offscreen from screen right, he emerges from screen left. Since the space recorded seems to be continuous, Beatty’s reappearance suggests that he can either travel without any transitional time or movement or alternatively he can exist in more than one place at the same time.

To materialise this sequence, Deren stopped the camera when Beatty was offscreen, giving him time to change his position at the opposite offscreen side. Then she rotated the camera a little backwards towards screen right and resumed the recording from the same camera’s exospherical position, using the same camera angle, level and height as well as the same kine-camera movement in terms of speed and action. At the same time Beatty performed and developed the same spiralling action which, in effect, Deren recorded each time at a later stage. The fact that Deren recorded twice and in an identical manner certain sections of the forest provided her with the ability to connect seamlessly two shots.

Identifying the identical frames – the ones recorded twice – she places two chronologically different shots together while concealing the connection. This kine-camera and intershot combination, in close interrelation with Beatty's kinespherical action which develops from one shot to the next, resulted in a 'seemingly' long shot of a single movement as far as the viewer is concerned. Because of the fact that the frames cut together are in total graphic, rhythmic and spatial continuation, what the viewer confronts is ultimately an hyperphysical event structure. Here Deren once more uses the pan shot action with innovative results. Her aim is neither to reveal the normative pan seen in Meshes, nor to conceal its alternative use in At Land but to confuse the viewers, introducing them to the unique spatiotemporal attributes of the screenwork.

In terms of the 'Diagonal', Deren uses in-camera treatment, namely a lens choice to alter the perspective of space. Beatty travels diagonally back and screen left and returns from the same pathway and towards the camera which seems spatially fixed. Deren plays with the realms of actual space reproduced on screen and the filmically manufactured one, using a wide-angled lens to alter the perception of the room's dimensions, particularly its depth. As Beatty moves outwards and towards the camera, his action appears on screen as considerably bigger, at least in terms of distance. While Beatty performs small leaps and running steps, what is recorded through the wide-angle lens is a body that covers a relatively long distance for the screen time given, when at the same time his body size on screen decreases and increases at a relatively fast speed. The result produced by the wide-angled lens is the illusion and exaggeration of an action recorded and projected as performed but perceived through a camera lens that alters reality's dimensions, or the naked eye's perception of dimensions.

'The Pirouette' section is a screendance device first used in Study. Deren aimed to create a hyperphysical pirouette which transcends the physical laws, both in terms of speed and duration, that would climax in the concluding section of the film. It is a multi-layered approach which employs speed alteration, tightly framed kinespherical movement/s, and cut-in action intershot treatment. In terms of speed alteration, Deren uses different camera speeds, 64fps to 8 frames per second, in order to accelerate the action from slow-motion to fast-motion – note

that 24fps was the industry standard for rolling projection in Deren's times and continues today. With regards to the framing of the actual action, in the first shot Deren records Beatty's upper body in an inner-spherical shot, followed by a head micro-spherical shot which covers the majority of the screen and finishes with a micro-spherical shot of the lower leg concluding in an action of spinning. With the fragmentation of the upper and lower body, Deren succeeds in concealing the fact that Beatty performs eighteen revolutions on two-feet instead of the expected one-leg pirouette. By editing from the head shots to the feet shots, without providing any full-figure shot, she presents a spinning one-leg footwork that the viewer connects with the preceding spinning upper body/head shots; what is known as the 'Kuleshov effect' where a "[...] series of shots that in the absence of an establishing shot prompts the spectator to infer a spatial whole on the basis of seeing only portions of the space" (Bordwell and Thompson, 2004, 305).

Another detail is the multi-headed statue framed at the background of the action. As Sitney noted as early as 1963 – 1964, there is a parallel between the background and the foreground<sup>73</sup>:

...in the corner of the screen there is also an Indian statue, a Janus-headed bodhisattva. The implied metaphor identifies the dancer, whose twirling head seems to face all directions at the same time, with the statue and relates to the theme of the ambiguity of space (here, direction).

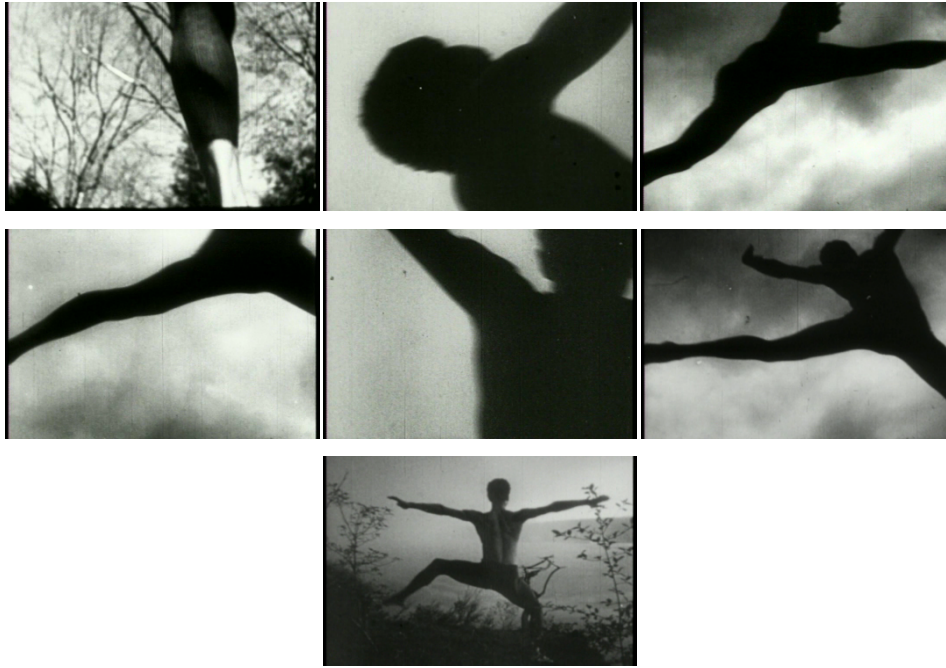
Sitney, 1970, 188

Expanding on this argument, an antithesis is identified between the white statue made from a solid, stone-like material and the black dancer, who ceaselessly moves throughout the screenwork, emphasising his hyper-physicality as this is recorporealised through Deren's treatment.

In the concluding part of the film, immediately after the pirouette scene, Beatty is seen performing a high and hyperphysical long-lasting leap. The issue with this particular scene is that it is in reverse, in slow-motion, and multiplied. In terms of the leap's screen duration, Deren employs slow-motion and actuality repetition. By filming Beatty against a relatively neutral background – the open sky – Deren

achieves kinespherical speed reduction, while in fact the speed of the registered kine-exospherical reality as a whole is reduced. The difference between the leap and the preceding 'Pirouette' scene is that the former's speed is constant. It is not a slowed down or speeded up leap, it is just a leap long in duration. With no other screen references for comparison, the leap is only comparable to the actual parameters and physical laws of space and time. As Deren noted in 1951, slow motion is a double exposure of time, one projected and one that we adhere to the identified action, "counterpoint between your own pulse and time on screen" (2005, 214). Explaining that "it is, ...something which exists in our minds, not on screen, and can be created only in conjunction with the identifiable reality of the photographic image" (2005, 121), this is why abstract images such as a triangle drawing on film can go fast or slow but not in slow motion. In fact, any image screened within a non-referential exospherical framework, for instance an image surrounded by black screen which does not have a corresponding equivalent in the physical world and therefore lacks a comparative framework, can only be slowed down or speeded up, but it cannot go in slow or fast motion. These speed alterations are cinematic manipulations of actual reality and can therefore exist only by using elements with actuality-related attributes.

Expanding on the second elongating factor, the 'actuality repetition', Deren revisits a device used in Meshes with Deren's running while she and her duplicate were chasing the black figure in the outdoor alley; Deren was shot three times from different angles in order to conceal the fact that "the identical area is being covered" (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 124). Another example of the same device is apparent in At Land during Deren's driftwood transition from the seashore to the table. Based on her notion of "extension of space by time" (2005, 124), Deren stretches the leap's screen duration by screening the action in a non-continuous manner which revisits past actuality. Although very difficult to identify under normal viewing parameters, a frame by frame analysis of the movement depicted demonstrates a multiple timeline which can be broadly separated into two group-framing parameters. One is the 'micro-inner-spherical shots' – second and fifth –, and the other is the 'inner-spherical shots' – three, four and six. The first shot is the rising into the air and the seventh the landing.



**Figure 4-25: The Seven Shot Leap**

In terms of the intermediary shots, two to six, Deren screens firstly shot ‘2’ that demonstrates the leap’s ascendance and is cut just before the descent, followed by a different framed shot which also pictures a segment of ascendance, followed by the fourth shot that shows Beatty’s travelling from screen left to screen right, then a close-up shot that shows his travelling and descent without landing, then similarly a shot which includes more travelling from screen left to right with a slight descent, and finally the landing. Accordingly, in kinespherical terms, it is not one leap projected but several performed leaps pictured as one. By overlapping kinespherical action in the aforementioned strategic way, Deren succeeds in unifying these multiple actualities into one.

Having identified slow-motion and repetition of actuality – extension of space by time – as the two reasons that expand the leap to unphysical parameters, around six seconds duration, there is also the issue of screen time reversal. Writing about this treatment, Deren aimed to produce a leap that is “released from gravity rather than [...] an effort against it”<sup>74</sup> (Clark et al., 1988, 268). Despite the fact that the projected outcome is radically different from the one performed, a fall instead of a leap, the reverse effect is hardly noticeable. The rapid intershot rhythm – seven shots within six seconds of screen time – different recording

angles, with alternating framing distances that often invade the performer's kinespherical action, and fragmentation of the body and thus the actual movement performed, contribute to the concealment of the reverse speed effect. Accordingly the viewer is left with a sense of anti-gravity and a leap action that seems effortless in relation to its volume.

It is noteworthy that the film investigates a dialogic relationship of the circle and the line, manifested both kinespherically and through a kine-exospherical movement. In the beginning there is a circular underlining manifested in the spiralling action of Beatty while the body design is straight. Next Beatty performs a curved pathway with a straight arm. Then from a straight body, he contracts to a circular body design and after that extends to perform a curved pathway with a straight and stretched pointed foot. Then a double torso contraction is performed which has both micro-structural as well as macro-structural significance.

Expanding on the double contraction sequence, in micro-structural terms it is significant to note that this is again a repeated actuality sequence. Although it is a double screened contraction, most probably filmed and therefore performed twice, it is screened as one action that is filmically repeated. It is perhaps the first and only time that Deren seeks to draw attention to the filmic apparatus of the screenwork. In contrast to the seamless intershot transitions used throughout the film – even between exospheres – in this case Deren chooses to use a conflicting intershot device which jumps seemingly to past chronology. Shown in profile, the action is repeatedly screened but, in contrast to the leap where the repetition is concealed through no clearly overlapping sections, here the action starts and completes with the first shot, and in the second shot is again screened from the mid-part of the contraction to the end. Therefore, what Deren seeks to achieve is not a long-lasting contraction but an emphasised one. To demonstrate how well she understood movement, Deren focuses on the stomach area where the contraction begins and, in the next shot, screens the upper body where the movement of 'contraction' develops.

In regards to its macro-structural significance, the 'double contraction' separates the screenwork in exactly two parts of equal screen duration, a fact that highlights it to a greater extent. Accordingly, it does not only concern the movement itself and the corresponding section but also the screenwork as whole. From a straight body to a contracted and curved one, Beatty, as reincarnated by Deren, communicates in a few seconds the choreographic substance of the whole screenwork, namely the dialogic relationship of the circle and the line discussed above.

Returning to the curve-line identification after the double contraction, Beatty performs a turn with open arms that leads him to the Metropolitan museum. There, the diagonal that is performed, creates a straight path of spatial progression. Yet, the way this is implemented is either through a spiral movement or turns. Then follows the multiple turn – The Pirouette – which explodes to the extended leap. The film concludes with a bilateral, angular symmetry, which is full of straight lines.

What is revealed is a further dialogic relationship between the introduction and the conclusion of the screenwork. To start with, the circular beginning conflicts with the straight and angular final leap that concludes with a very distinctive body design which conflicts with that seen at the beginning. While the opening sequence finds the performer already moving, at the end he brings himself to a relatively still body design, before the screenwork fades to black. In the beginning, there is a 360 degrees view of Beatty's body, at the end only his back is screened. In the beginning, the body is seated, curved and, one could argue, vulnerable as it is surrounded by the thick plantation of the forest and the shadows of the trees. At the end, Beatty adopts a 'second position' with arms also in 'second position', resting on the knees, full of angularity, heavy and strong. Overall, Beatty demonstrates supremacy and domination by positioning himself on top, i.e. on a very high point, seemingly at a mountain peak.

#### 4.4.3 Conclusion

Deren uses once more the cinematic apparatus to deconstruct and reconstruct the body. Focusing this time on screendance's formal attributes with the aid of a professional dancer and choreographer, succeeding in producing a screenwork that is full of screendance devices. Non-corporeal agents such as costume and surrounding objects play a secondary role of no great importance and the only thing that seems to be partly significant is the exospherical, performing platform. Yet the focus is on movement and specifically on technical, dance movement recorporealised through Deren's spatiotemporal filmic manipulation. It is this screendance corporeality that attracted the attention of the dance critic John Martin who wrote, "in her approach we have the beginnings of a virtually new art of 'choreocinema' in which the dance and the camera collaborate on the creation of a single work of art" (cited in Clark et al., 1988, 286). Arguably, this can also be applied to Meshes and At Land which are equally expressions based on recorporealised movement. The analysis of the rest of Deren's completed screenworks will identify whether this is also applicable to Deren's remaining works.

#### 4.5 RITUAL IN TRANSFIGURED TIME: Introduction

Maya Deren:

[...] the external world itself is an element in the entire structure and scheme of metamorphosis: the sea itself changes because of the larger changes of the earth. Ritual is about the nature and process of change.

Deren and McPherson, 2005, 194

Originally conceived as Ritual and Ordeal and planned to be an hour long, when premiered in 1946 it was substantially shorter, around 15 minutes, while a few months later its name was changed to Ritual in Transfigured Time. With the photographic help of Hella Heyman, Deren played a protagonist role, along with Rita Christiani and Frank Westbrook with the latter also being choreographic collaborator for the film. Deren states that



... on the basis of the fourth [Ritual In Transfigured Time], I feel that all the other elements must be retained, but that special attention must be given to the creative possibilities of Time, and that the form as whole must be ritualistic...

Deren, 1946, 5

#### 4.5.1 Macro-Structural Analysis

Segmenting Ritual in Transfigured Time is a challenging process because of the length and the density of the film. In addition, the main role is played interchangeably by two performers while neither kinespherical action nor exospherical change pinpoint a clear section change. Valuable information can be extracted from Deren's various scripts, as constructed by her writings<sup>75</sup>. However, these should be cautiously approached, bearing in mind that the film was originally conceived differently.

The two versions available as numbered and titled by Deren are first in chronological order:

- |      |   |   |
|------|---|---|
| I    |   | The Entrance and the Winding of the Wool                |
| II   |   | The Party   |
| III, | D | The Lascivious Folk Ballet                              |
| IV,  | E | The Statue Game (and Maypole)                           |
| V,   | F | The Impossible Pursuit                                  |
| VI,  | G | Underwater Interlude (or Underwater Interval)           |
| VII  |   | The Reiterated Journey Ending in the Moment of Decision |
| H    |   | The Moment of Decision; Rita's Moment of Decision       |
| I    |   | The Child at Play                                       |

in Clark et al., 1988, 477

The second one, which is probably more accurate since it is based on the 1946 premiere, is:

- I The Entrance and the Winding of the Wool
- II The Party
- III The Duet
- IV Statues
- V Pursuit
- VI Port Jefferson [Under the Pier]
- VII Negative

in Clark et al., 1988, 477

Comparing the above, it is clear that the first two parts are the same. The third parts coincide in screen terms but they are named differently. The significant difference between them is not so much the accompanied adjectives ‘lascivious’ and ‘folk’, but the fact that the focus for the director changes from a ballet to a duet when actually the scene involves five performers. ‘The Impossible Pursuit’ of the first script version is divided in the second version as the ‘Pursuit’ and the ‘Port Jefferson’ segments. The ‘Underwater Interlude’ and the ‘Negative’, first and second scripts respectively, most probably refer to the same underwater scene which is projected in negative. Finally, the remaining three segments included in the first script version were intended to be included in the film but they never materialised.

Based on the above, a more precise segmentation of the film is proposed. Part one introduces the two main characters of the film which play an interchangeable role – ‘The Entrance and the Winding of the Wool’. While they interact, a third person, writer Anaïs Nin (1903 – 1977), stands between two exospheres, one shared by the three performers and one not yet seen, introducing the next scene which involves both an exospherical change as well as a change of atmosphere. The second part – The Party – in contrast to the relatively empty exosphere which is shared only by the two protagonists, transfers the receiver to a crowded, seemingly noisy room, since the film is silent, and to a vibrant gathering. This change of atmosphere is also underlined by Christiani’s significant change of costume. The third part is easily defined by the drastic exospherical change from indoors to outdoors and the change of quality of kinespherical action, as will be later analysed. According to Deren’s segmentations, there are two parts that are screened outdoors, namely parts III and IV. However, because of the nature of these two scenes which share the same exosphere, have the same performers, and

with similar kinespherical action throughout, these scenes arguably belong to the same part, under the proposed name ‘Outdoor Dancing’ with the ‘The Statues Game’/‘Statues’ scene as more of a development of the action rather than a separate part. On the same grounds, the next part, ‘The Pursuit’, includes the pursuit of Christiani, who changes into Deren, and the ‘Port Jefferson [Under the Pier]’ sequence. Accordingly, Deren’s earlier segmentation, that considers the whole pursuit to be one part, is proposed as more precise. The final part, which is named differently by the two Deren-based segmentations – Underwater Interlude – and – Negative – but refers to the same part, is also clearly defined from the employment of a completely different visual texture, action, as well as exosphical environment. Consequently the segmentation proposed is the following:

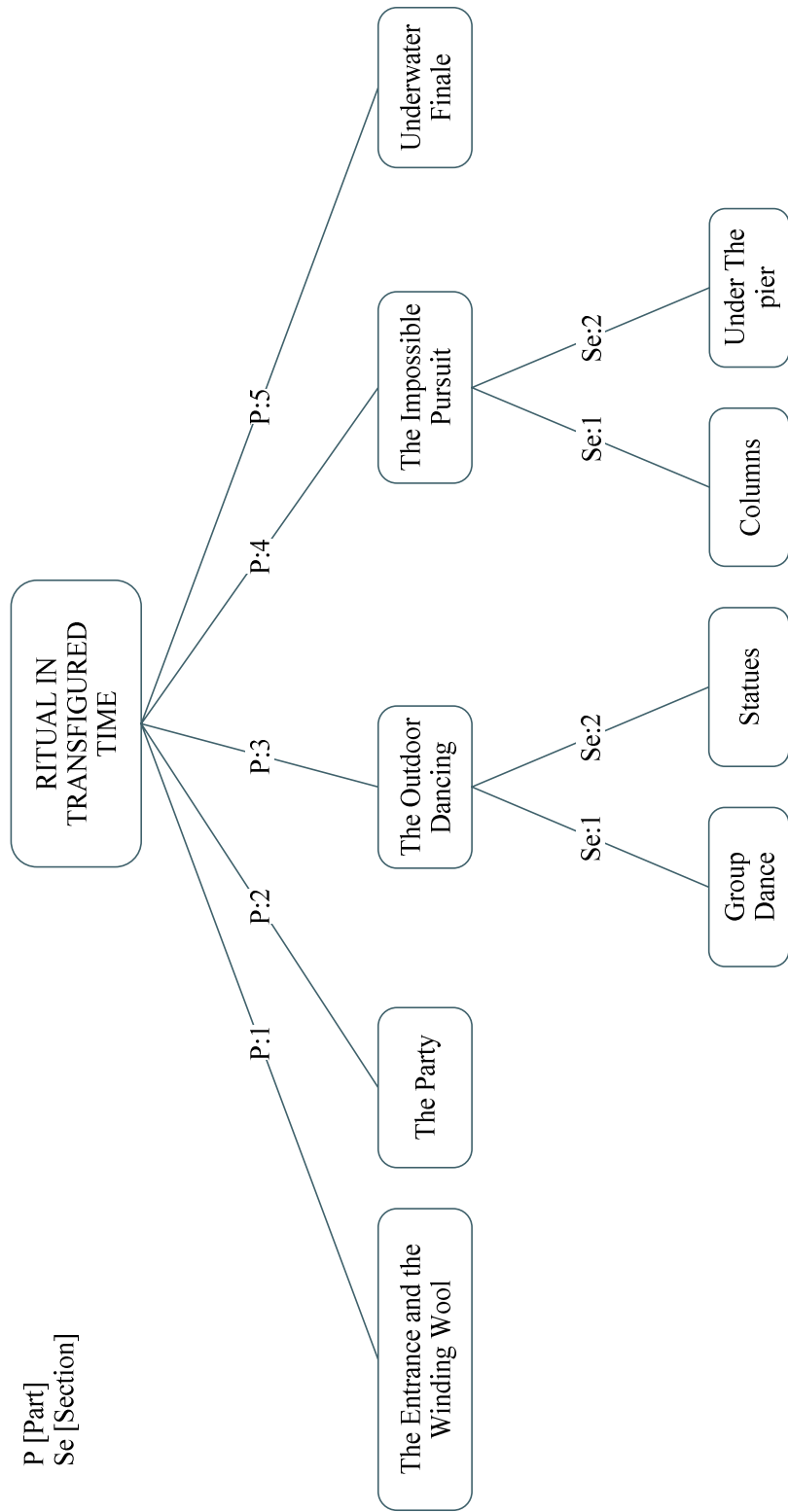


Figure 4-26: Ritual Segmentation

#### 4.5.2 Corporeal Agents of Movement

Ritual is based largely on a dual male-female relationship where the male is played by Westbrook, and the female by either Deren or Christiani. In Meshes, Deren multiplied the protagonist, in At Land the protagonist meets herself while visiting her past, and in Ritual, the protagonist is incarnated through two bodies. The self is not identified as one or the other. Instead, the constant interchange recalls the 'Four Men' treatment. However, in At Land the brief appearance of the four men and their underdeveloped role as individuals leaves the impression of 'anyone' as established in the corresponding analysis. In Ritual, the two individuals share the protagonist role. It seems that the self changes appearances as it would change clothing. The self is depersonalised through multiple appearances, yet it concerns a certain female individual. It is not the case of 'anyone' as in At Land, but rather an unidentified 'someone'. As Deren notes about herself and Rita Christiani, they appear interchangeably "as if... [they] were merely different aspects of a single personality" and she continues by specifying that they do not represent conflicting personalities; instead they just "appear a little different to the world" (cited in Clark et al., 1988, 472).

Most of the characters, both males and females, wear casual to formal clothing, as shown in Figure 4-27 (a), both in 'the Party' scene as well as in the 'Outdoor Dancing'. With regards to the protagonists, the issue is more complicated. Deren and Christiani start with similar costumes in the first part (b) and, while Deren keeps the same appearance throughout the screenwork, Christiani changes to a nun-widow costume seen below (c) in 'the Party', then back to the first appearance in the 'Outdoor Dancing' and the 'Impossible Pursuit' (d) and back to the nun-widow costume in the 'Underwater Finale' (e). A similar macro-structural change of costume is employed by Westbrook who wears formal clothing in (f) 'the Party' but changes to semi-naked clothing in the 'Outdoor Dancing' and the succeeding parts (g). It is noteworthy that the dual female protagonist is barefooted throughout the screenwork, as is Westbrook in the 'Outdoor Dancing', in contrast to the rest of the performers who seem to wear shoes. Specifically for 'the Party', it is obvious that Anaïs Nin wears shoes and

the same could be inferred for the rest of the participants due to their overall formal appearance. In the 'Outdoor Dancing', the womens' group is also in shoes, separating themselves from the Westbrook - Christiani duet. The barefoot choice delineates the protagonists from the co-performers as well as the everyday environment, especially as regards 'the Party'. In addition, it unites the protagonists as well as all their appearances. It is the first time that Deren, as filmmaker, chooses to have visually drastic costume changes that have strong connotations, especially regarding the nun-widow costume, as will be later explained.



**Figure 4-27: Clothing; Macro-structural Changes**

Regarding the movement material performed in Ritual, Deren brings together the devices of recorporealised, pedestrian movement used in Meshes and At Land along with the screen re-compositions of choreography seen in Study. One being a continuation of the other, they are interrelated and interconnected as if they were one multi-faceted entity; an approach which resembles in its duality the Deren-Christiani metamorphic self, as will be discussed.

#### 4.5.2.1 Entrance and the Winding of the Wool

The Deren-Christiani connection is established early on with the ‘winding of the wool’ sequence, where Deren sits facing Christiani; the former feeding wool from a skein to Christiani who rolls it into a ball. As a result, a spatial tension between the performers, who are also connected through the wool thread, is created as well as a giver-taker relationship. Most importantly, this relationship is not static in terms of dynamics but a constantly evolving one. As the action progresses so does the balance alteration between the two. Deren’s skein becomes thinner and thinner till it ends while Christiani’s wool ball gets thicker and thicker and, accordingly, the energy moves from one performer to the other. In kinespherical terms, this development is enhanced by the manipulation of Deren’s movement. What Deren performs is a repetitive and symmetrical opposite action with her arms moving up and down, slightly circular, in a diametrically opposite way to the centre of the skein, meaning that when the left arm is up, the right arm is down and the opposite. Towards the end of the sequence, a very distinctive and repetitive head movement is added, from left to right and back, which emphasises the horizontal axis. Accordingly all three axes are kine-exospherically emphasised; the vertical one by Deren’s arm movement, the horizontal by Deren’s head and hair movement and the sagittal one from the wool thread that connects the performers.

Expanding on the sequence development, it is a giver-taker balance that shifts from Deren to Christiani. Deren’s weakening part is particularly emphasised towards the end of the sequence when a distinctive head movement starts. Deren, as filmmaker, manipulates her kinespherical movement by slowing down the

registered action. Therefore as the wool becomes thinner and thinner, she gets slower and slower in order for Deren and the wool to reach their corresponding end: on one hand the end of the thread and on the other the reach of near stillness and then non-existence which are materialised through a shot of an empty chair where Deren was previously sitting. Deren notes that in this section there is a kind of “death by time [...] the girl getting slower and slower until she isn’t (instead of thinner and thinner)” (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 193).

Notably, there are two rhythmical conflicts within the sequence. To start with, there is a conflict between the two performers’ speed of action, since Christiani’s rhythm stays at a normal speed whereas Deren is projected gradually slower. According to Deren’s notes, the filming speed alternates from 24fps, to 48fps, to 64fps and finally to 128fps, which in projection has the result of normal speed, to half (48fps), to 25% of normal speed, to 12.5% (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 149). Moreover, there is a visual conflict between the head and the hair movements. A slow turning head with raised hair movement is seen, meaning with a hair movement that corresponds to a fast moving head. This is achieved by slowing the speed of an actual fast performing turn of the head. By using an action that can also be performed at slower speed, as the turn of the head and without much kinespherical difference as to its attributes apart from the hair movement, Deren succeeds in materialising on screen her notion of ‘double exposure of time’. This is explained in the Study analysis, with the hair being the identifiable reality that is slowed down and the head the ‘triangle’, in the sense discussed in section 4.4.2 on page 215. Accordingly, the visual conflict is achieved from the co-existence of a seemingly normal speed head movement which produces an unnatural slow-motion hair movement.

#### 4.5.2.2 The Party, Non-dancing dance

The next part, ‘the Party’, features Christiani walking around a crowded room where a party gathering seems to occur. There, in a form of guided improvisation, Deren provided the performers with interpersonal instructions on



the ‘Movements and Variations’ under which they should interact, as well as kinespherical ‘Details of Action’.

Movements and variations. Groups

1. Talking together, then back-to-back to other people
2. Talking together, then opposite sides to other people
3. Introduce people and greetings
4. Talking back over shoulders at each other, and across each other
5. Pointing out someone
6. Turning away to put out a cigarette or drink and turning back

Details of action.

1. Describing the shapes of things, high, low, etc.
2. Agreeing and disagreeing
3. Bending forward to hear, or to confide
4. Admiring the jewellery or clothes of someone
5. Lighting a cigarette and shaking out a match
6. Drinking, etc.

in Clark et al., 1988, 452

As derived from the guidance and seen on screen, Deren chooses to emphasise the transitions of social interaction, namely the movement from and to a conversation rather than the conversation itself. In other words, if for instance two people are meeting to discuss a subject, what Deren is concerned with is the approach and the departure from the dialogue rather than the content of it. In choreographic terms, what dances is in a sense not the performer but the group, through its spatial and rhythmical relations. Instead of primarily choreographing a performer’s kinespherical action, composing in space and time his/her body parts, as seen in Study in collaboration with Beatty, Deren alternatively creates a spatiotemporal composition through choreographing each performer primarily in relation to the rest of the group. In the sense of “two and two may make five, or, preferably, fifteen” (Deren, 1946, 24), as analysed in chapter two, the individual is here used as an element that, once in the structure, contributes to a whole that “transcends, in meaning, the sum total of its parts” (1946, 24).

Along with the aforementioned choreographic approach of colloquial movement and social interaction, post-production processes have been employed to

reinforce the choreographed elements of the scene's action. In terms of intershot manipulation, Deren cuts, reprints, and rearranges at a micro-structural level the order of a shot's content, what she names 'extension of time by space' – repetition/reprinting of shots in a sense extends time (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 124). She starts by showing, for instance, the end part of a shot and, at a later moment but still within the Party's screen time, she shows the shot in its entirety. In that way, Deren creates sequences that stand on the thin line of 'repetition' and 'flashback' techniques. While an action is repeated, the 'repetition' comes through an action unseen before. The particularity of the whole scene is that this repetition-flashback effect concerns actions that are very short in duration and shots that are very close to each other. In addition, this technique is applied to multiple shots, a fact that makes it difficult for the viewer to identify a clear chronological line of events. The result is visually rather complex and disconcerting while, in a contradicting manner, the actions projected are visually familiar. Deren has named this intershot treatment as the 'déjà vu' effect, as she notes in 1946: "I would sometimes use only the end of a movement the first time, and then the whole of it later, for that peculiar shock of discovering the history of an episode which one imagined one already knew completely" (cited in Clark et al., 1988, 458).

Beside the temporal intershot manipulation discussed above, it is worth discussing the rhythmic, graphic and spatial relations between the shots. To start with, the atmosphere created by the constant and ceaseless movement involved in the scene is supported by the graphic harmony of the shots, since almost all the shots that are cut together feature people similarly dressed in terms of colour, similarly framed in terms of angle – eye-level and waist-up – and distance – medium to close-ups –, evenly staged within the same exosphere, and within the frame to create graphically balanced shots. This atmosphere is also supported by the rhythmical dimension of the intershot process, since the shots included appear to be of similar screen duration, without including any particularly short or long shots. Respectively, there is no slowing down or speeding up of the film's rhythm in that sense; the pace that is set from the beginning goes through to the end of the scene.

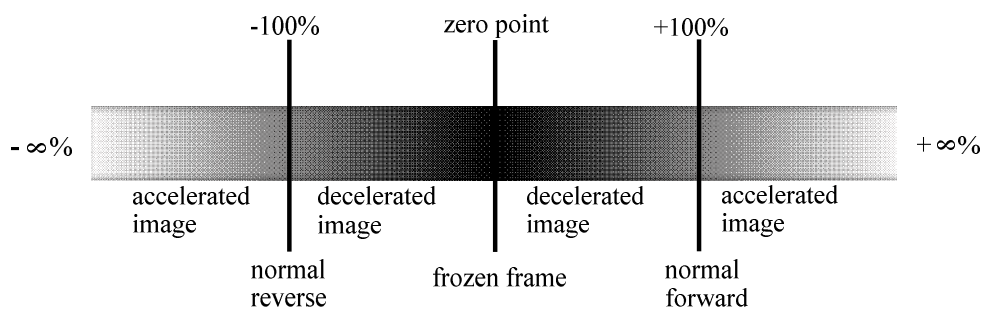
In terms of the spatial relations involved in the scene, there is no establishing shot of the room that this crowd is in, making it difficult for the viewer to form a spatial framework in which the action is placed. Choreographically speaking, this spatially undefined platform gives Deren the freedom of composing relations that are not necessarily read as being in an exact point of the room, relations that are created primarily in relation to the rest of the group rather than to the exospherical space.

While rhythmically the section projects a sense of continuity and smoothness, which is reflected also by the fluid kinespherical action, it is occasionally interrupted by frozen images that violently fragment the movement continuation. This drastic effect, first used by Deren in this scene, constitutes a way of extending time by space. As she notes:

[...] here the frozen frame becomes a moment of suspended animation which, according to its contextual position, may convey either the sense of critical hesitation [...] or may constitute a comment on stillness and movement as the opposition of life and death.

Deren and McPherson, 2005, 124-125

Having extensively experimented with the use of forward and reverse speeds as well as their slow and fast attributes, Deren freezes the kine-exospherical action in an attempt to demonstrate the zero point between them. In addition, considering the forward and reverse speeds in relation to the degree of their speed, the freeze effect stands in between reverse and forward speed and at the point where the slowing of the kine-exospherical registered action reaches frame multiplication and therefore stillness. The following diagram illustrates the above.



**Figure 4-28: Reverse, Zero and Forward Speed**

Expanding on Deren's notion of 'double exposure of time' discussed in the structural analysis of *Study*, the projection of a performed event at a slower or faster speed, in forward (+) or reverse (-) speed direction, conflicts with the actual attributes of the performed event. However, in regards to the frozen frame, namely zero speed which is also directionless, the issue is different. There is no corresponding rhythm in actuality for comparison, since there is no event; a picture, which is essentially a frozen, technically multiplied frame, is a motionless spatial element. The only thing that a freeze effect acquires within a screenwork context is a momentum associated with the preceding action, and therefore anticipation for the succeeding action. It is not an actual event with its speed altered but an instant of an event with its actual rhythm stopped and with infinite possibilities as to its expansion in terms of screen duration. It is in that sense that time is extended by space, as Deren argues. Overall, a spatiotemporal treatment is created that is revisited later.

#### 4.5.2.3 The Outdoor Dancing

Deren concludes 'The Party' by gradually fragmenting and mixing the event's chronology more and more, resulting in a highly choreographic outcome. This climactic structure leads to the next part which this time is performed by professional dancers and develops further the gestures occurring throughout the film (Guggenheim and Deren, 1946). From everyday to highly stylised movement, the choreography, which is based on the preceding kinesiology manifested at the party, now acquires different attributes. The tension is higher and the party movements and gestures are big, strong and bound, like they have

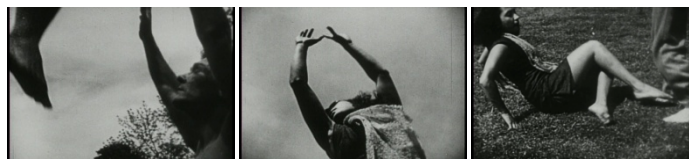
broken free from the constraints of the formal gathering, as will be later illustrated. Likewise, the enclosed crowded interior space is now an open exterior space that permits freedom of movement. Interestingly, the whole ‘Outdoor Dancing’ part is slowed down by around 25%, creating rhythmic conflict and temporal duality as discussed above. The fact that the actual action is not drastically altered as to its speed makes the movements look unrealistic, yet in a sense feasible.

Enumerating examples of this “climactic extension of the party movements” (Guggenheim and Deren, 1946), a group of three women, instead of simply shaking hands and coming closer to greet and kiss each other, pull each other to the extreme and then close in very tightly while projecting an agitation of movement, as seen below.



**Figure 4-29: Outdoor Dancing - Women**

A simple hug is now a huge lift that leads to a high jump and a low landing, in which Deren uses the reverse technique applied to the ‘Leap’ in Study to depict an effortless and hyperphysical action.



**Figure 4-30: Outdoor Dancing - Duet**

Furthermore, what was a simple reach out seeking to create spatial tension towards a person in the party that was further away is now an extreme spatial projection which is, in a sense, uncontrollable, both in terms of strength and tension as well as direction. As seen below, the camera perspective shifts from an eye-level viewpoint that invites the viewer to ‘join’ the party and be a participant

to extreme low angles that produce images of superiority and hyperphysicality that confront the viewer.



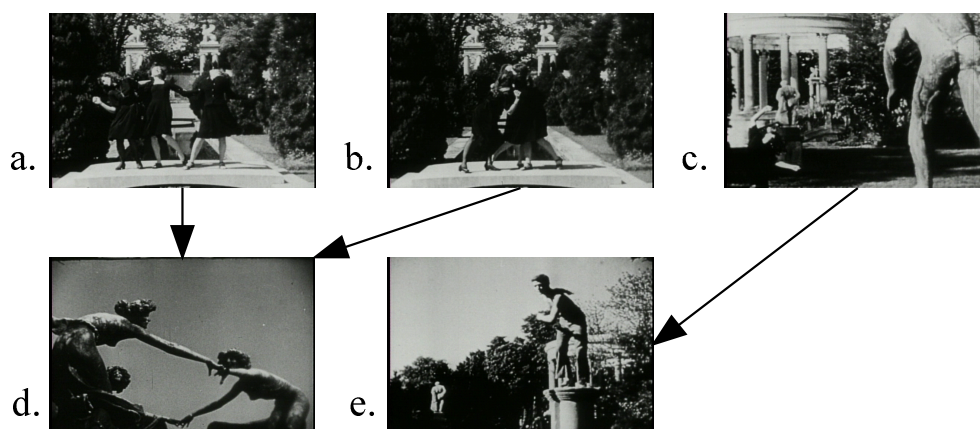
Figure 4-31: From The Party to Outdoor Dancing - 1

Finally, throughout ‘The Party’, the cluster of people moving towards each other and immediately moving apart is exaggerated by people pulling each other to a twirl where their bodies, due to their angular speed, are out of personal axis, creating a common dependent axis up to the point they break loose. First a group of pictures shows a screen left to right turn and then a group shows an opposite turn, as seen in ‘The Party’ and the ‘Outdoor Dancing’ parts respectively. What is also perceived through the comparative analysis of these two segments, which in fact concerns other segments in the corresponding parts, is that the framing scale has changed between indoors, from kinespherical to inner-spherical and at times micro-spherical shots, to outdoors where the framing is occasionally inner-spherical but mainly extends from kinespherical to exospherical, multi-spherical and at times macro-exospherical shots.



Figure 4-32: From The Party to Outdoor Dancing - 2

In addition the freeze effect is developed. With the statues in the background, Deren demonstrates graphically the frozen moments preceded in ‘The Party’ sequence while the performing action draws a parallel with the statues. Most notably, the female trio established early on in the sequence bears a resemblance to the statue of three women shown later on. Furthermore, the distinct figure of the male statue shown in several parts of the sequence is imitated by the male protagonist just before the beginning of the pursuit. Pictures are shown in screen chronological order and connected to their performer-statue relation.



**Figure 4-33: Performer-Statue Relation**

Especially in the second section of P:3, the statue’s frozen energy starts to pass on to the performers as they also start to freeze in mid-action. Firstly, the three women freeze one after the other after their spinning action with Westbrook. Finally, as aforementioned, the male protagonist, who is turned into a statue, slowly starts to move. Especially in Westbrook’s case, the frozen moments are very carefully chosen by Deren to occur in instances that could be materialised as individual pauses, but they cannot really occur due to the preceding actions. For example, as seen in the picture of an *attitude on relevé*<sup>76</sup> below, the body stillness is feasible. However, knowing that this stillness/frozen moment comes just after a leap off the column, the viewer knows that it is impossible to be achieved. In other words, Deren chooses to stress the intermediary realm which exists between actuality, a feasible movement under the physical laws of the world and the recorporealised screen unreality.



**Figure 4-34: *Attitude on Relevé***

At the same time, Christiani starts to withdraw away from the group and especially from Westbrook while she interchanges identity with Deren, materialising in a way that was only inferred in the beginning with the ‘winding of the wool’ sequence. The ‘Outdoor Dancing’ part ends when Westbrook is again mobilised from a statue and starts pursuing the Christiani-Deren identity.

#### 4.5.2.4 The Impossible Pursuit

Revisiting the Meshes introductory and repeated chase between Deren and the black figure, Deren creates once more a pursuit between an actual performer and one of hyperphysical powers, only reversed. In Meshes, Deren, DG1, DG2, and DG3 were all running towards the black figure, which, although slowly moving, could never be reached. Here in Ritual, as in Meshes, the protagonist/s retain their physicality but are now those pursued. At the same time, the pursuer is hyperphysical as to his spatial progression as well as to his spatial tension with Deren-Christiani. The recorporealised actions of the pursuer are screened in slow forward speed, inferring a slower spatial advancement, while the pursuer is screened in normal forward speed running away; yet the former manages to almost catch up with the latter.

The complexity of this section surpasses any previous screendance device. Here, Deren employs a synthesis of in-camera, intershot treatment similar to the ‘Sand Dunes’ sequence in At Land, along with speed alteration. While in At Land the camera stopped in order for Deren as performer to change locales, here the camera recording stops in order for Deren as filmmaker to alter the motor speed. Then the camera resumes from exactly the same framing position in order for the spatial actuality to be seamlessly connected with the previous shot. At the same



time, while the chase is developed behind the columns of an atrium, from screen left to screen right, Deren pans the camera rapidly towards the left in order to bring the pursuer within the frame. However, because of the speed alteration, the pan seems to retain the pan speed established before the cut, since the fast camera movement during the registration is slowed down with the fast recording registration, thereby slowing speed projection. In that way, Deren succeeds in rhythmically uniting the two shots, despite the midway speed alteration. When finally Westbrook is brought within the frame, his movements are slowed down due to the aforementioned registration speed alteration.

The importance of this intershot and in-camera treatment lies in the fact that it makes use of the space in between the pursued and the pursuer. In a sense, it separates the scenographic space into three sections, namely one on the right occupied by the pursued, one in the middle that is empty of performers and therefore of any kinespherical action, and finally one on the left which is the pursuer's space. Accordingly, the alterations and cuts occur while on a neutral, lifeless and still setting, and the columns which have no innate movement, as the 'triangle' in Deren's double exposure theory, are free of an actual identifiable rhythm. In that way, the transition from one performer's spatiotemporal parameters to the other are unidentifiable too and, as a result, Westbrook is slowed down against a seemingly unaltered normal speed screened background which is common with the one the pursuer uses.

Overall, this screening device results in a section that depicts two performers who seemingly share the same exospherical space and acquire the same spatiotemporal attributes throughout a seemingly one shot sequence. In fact, they perform within different kinespherical spatiotemporal parameters, one in normal speed and one in slow motion.

Finally, there is also a scenographic issue related to this chase, especially with the columns setting (a), which is the black and white vertical translatory symmetry, visually constructed by the columns against a dark lit background. It is noteworthy that macro-structurally, this black-white vertical splicing of the screen is seen in other instances throughout the screenwork. The opening

sequence, when Christiani is in between two doors (b), can also be considered as bilateral symmetry, in the indoors ‘Party’ to the ‘Outdoor Dancing’ transition (c) where again a vertical splicing occurs in the form of a white and black contrast, revisiting in that way a black and white conflicting composition.



**Figure 4-35: Black and White Bilateral Symmetry**

However, this graphic contrast is not confined to the visual framing and the exospherical setting but is also an issue applied to the female protagonists; the light- skin colour of Deren and the dark-skinned Christiani who appear as part of the same identity. Reinforcing this conflict, the last part of the screenwork uses the protagonists’ interchange, along with their dress change, in addition to an inversed colour image manipulation, as well as a drastic exospherical change.

#### 4.5.2.5 Underwater Finale

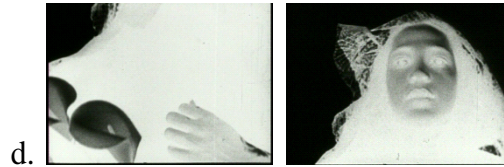
The final part of the film, which is also the shortest in duration, is arguably the most condensed as regards the degree of metamorphosis involved and its macro-structural interlinks. In terms of the performer’s interchange, Deren starts going in the water (Figure 4-36a), using the same body design – arms up – used when she released the winding wool in the first part of Ritual, notably the same body design she also used in the concluding running of At Land (Figure 4-36b), demonstrating in a sense habitual kinesiology.



**Figure 4-36: Habitual Body Design**

Then, just before immersing, she changes with Christiani (Figure 4-36c) through continuous inner-spherical, intershot transition. A contrasting performer identity, in terms of the contrasting skin colour which is also a continuation of the dual pursuer analysed in ‘impossible pursuit’, is furthermore linked with the action involved in the ‘winding of the wool’ sequence analysed above.

The next sequence regards the underwater shots which are shot in negative, namely using inverse colours, while at the same time there is an exospherical contrast from over ground to underwater along with a temporal alteration from normal to slow speed. As the body submerges and is shown in negative, it is almost impossible to clarify which of the two performers is screened. A close analysis demonstrates that the first performer shown in plain clothing is probably Deren (c), followed by the nun-widow dressed performer who is most certainly Christiani (d). Accordingly, there is one more metamorphosis involved within the metamorphosis of the protagonist which is the costume change. Reinforcing the ritualistic nature of the screenwork, this metamorphosis regards the passage from one self to another. “The creation of a ritual (as in RITUAL IN TRANSFIGURED TIME) is necessarily a climactic structure, that being the nature of a ritual of the “rites de passage” order” (Guggenheim and Deren, 1947), depicting at the same time both selves inverted, therefore, not only altered from one into the other – Deren-Christiani interchange – but also self deconstructed – positive and normal to negative screening.



**Figure 4-37: Deren-Christiani Underwater**

In addition to these already condensed seconds, the nun-widow costume is only recognised as such because it has been screened before in ‘the Party’ sequence. What is actually screened is a white rather than a black garment which, in ritualistic terms, resembles more a bridal gown than that of a widow or nun, at least as regards Deren’s western cultural context<sup>77</sup>. Therefore, in line with the positive-negative plastic inversion, there is an inversion of values from something that has connotations with death and mourning to one that is synonymous with a celebratory beginning and birth, as if the ‘ritual’ Deren discusses with her title has reached its climactic resolution. Yet, judging from Christiani’s neutral expression, and bearing in mind that the protagonist is underwater, trying to avoid the world as manifested through the Party’s ‘representative’ Frank Westbrook, it seems like she tries to free herself from the over-ground life to an underwater freedom, in the face of death. Overall this complex sequence summarises and interlinks all the parts of the screenwork, leaving the viewer with an ending open to interpretation.

### **4.5.3 Conclusion**

Deren argued that Ritual was her more representative screenwork. In a sense it was the most inclusive in that it combined the mesh connection of Meshes, with distant chronological scenes connected through certain elements, and the kine-exosphical exploration of At Land, with the use of a recorporealisation of everyday movements, along with professional choreographic sequences as these

were manipulated through certain filmic devices; a practice manifested before only in Study.

It was on these grounds that Ritual, as Study, was a screenwork that attracted 'dance' comments but notably not so much for its professional 'outdoor dancing' as for the recorporealised 'Party' sequence. John Malcolm Brinnin (1916 – 1998), American poet and literary critic, writes that Ritual is dance "in its first meaning: its manifestation on film strikes with the impact of discovery" (cited in Guggenheim and Deren, 1946), while the dance scholar Snyder writes that "... the sequence in the cocktail party is marvellous choreography... It's all dance. Beautiful sense of choreography there, a real sense of what we are much more aware of now, of body language ..." (cited in Clark et al., 1988, 453). In that sense, they are both in line with Deren who argues that:

what makes this [Ritual] a dance film, ... is that all movements -- stylized or casual, full-figured or detailed -- are related to each other, both immediately and over the film as a whole, according to a choreographic concept ... shots are held together not by the constant identity of an individual performer, but by the emotional integrity of the movement itself, independent of its performer.

Guggenheim and Deren, 1947

Even beyond the employment of the devices apparent in her preceding screenworks, Deren also introduced new screendance devices. The frozen image effect was the most distinct and the most extensively used. However, other temporal manipulations are also fundamental for the transfigurative character of the screenwork: the double exposure of 'orders of time' which are screened in 'continuity' for the chase sequence (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 150), the reverse speed, and finally concerning mainly chronology the 'déjà vu' effect.

As Deren claimed in 1960, the ritualistic character of the screenwork concerns not only this work but all arts in that they communicate through distinctive forms. "A ritual is an action distinguished from all others in that it seeks the realization of its purpose through the exercise of form. In this sense ritual is art; and even historically, all art derives from ritual" (Deren and McPherson, 2005,

252). Consequently, in this film, as with all her preceding screenworks, she emphasises the form. That is not to say that it is a screenwork abstract in quality but that there is a focus on film space and time, as well as on the contained recorporealised movement in order for a new metamorphic screen whole to be created. Deren understood ritualistic form as “qualities of two and two [that] may be so related in inspired equation as to create, by their dynamic inter-action, much more than four” (cited in Clark et al., 1988, 461). It is on these grounds that within fifteen minutes, Deren succeeds in constructing a micro-structurally and macro-structurally interesting screenwork, full of innovative devices that demarcate a screendance artwork.

#### **4.6 MEDITATION ON VIOLENCE: Introduction**

Similar to the experimental and movement celebratory Study (1945), Deren aimed, in Meditation on Violence (1948) hereinafter called Meditation, to resolve certain issues that she intended to confront in another screenwork she was planning but never materialised<sup>78</sup>. Deren’s viewpoint on creating Meditation, introduces some of the structural issues that will be later discussed:

I try first of all to resolve the problem of achieving a non-climactic structure; for the longer film will be polyphonic, built as a fugue of three voices, and non-climactic in structure. MEDITATION ON VIOLENCE does have a climax but it descends from it. The film begins in the middle of a movement and ends in the middle of a movement, suggesting the infinite extensions of a fugue rather than an enclosed climactic structure. The other problem which I began working on in this film is the relating of sound to images brought together from independent sources [...that] attempt to resolve some of the problems which I shall confront in the longer film-in-progress.

Guggenheim and Deren, 1949

#### 4.6.1 Macro-Structural Analysis

Deren's own shooting diagram is a parabola shaped by three lines, as shown below. The middle one, which is on top in the beginning, corresponds to the movement which, as noted by Deren, presumably exists beyond the screen duration as will be later explained. As seen below (Figure 4-38) the line under demonstrates the flute timeline, and the one above the drum timeline. This parabolic curve is also separated by lines that create five sections of three kinds of kinesiology. The sinuous Wu-Tang Chinese boxing is followed by the erratic Shaolin Chinese boxing to the Sword Shaolin action and then back to the Shaolin and finally to the Wu-Tang action/boxing.

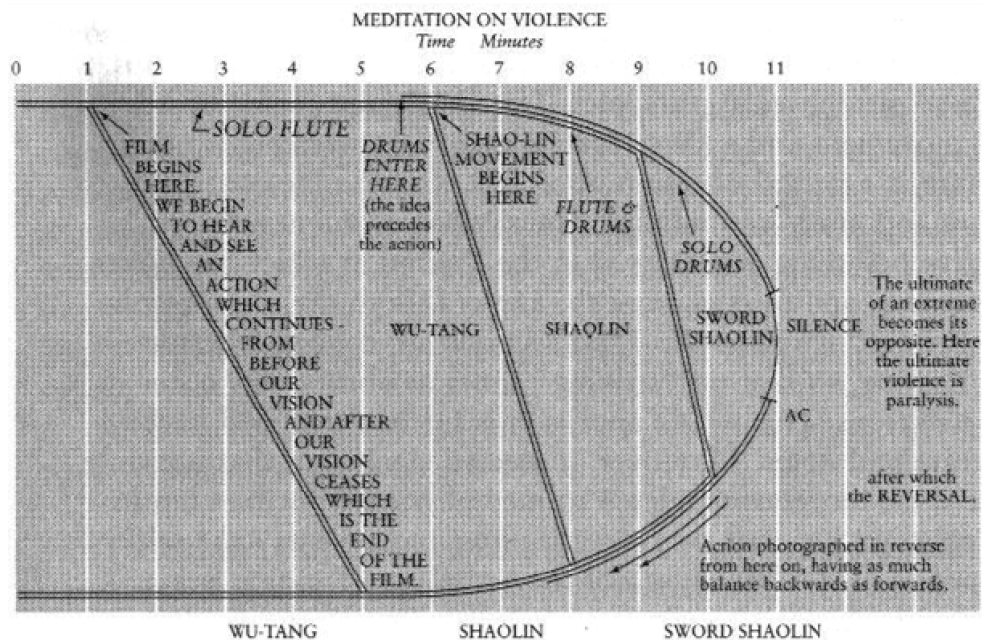
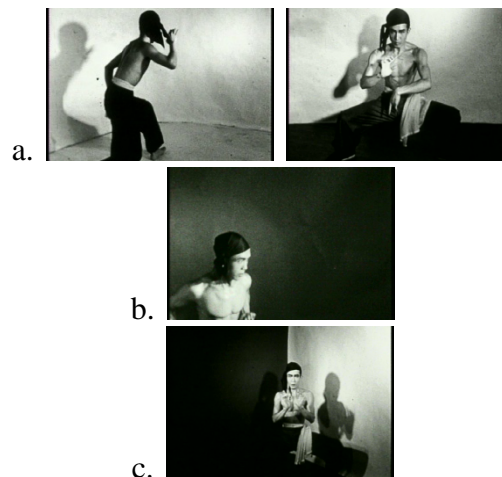


Figure 4-38: Deren's Shooting Diagram (cited in Sitney, 2002, 23)

Note that the above figure is segmented into three parts. The first part concerns a forward progression of action which coincides with an increase in the degree of violence in action, as will be later analysed; the second part concerns the preparation, the frozen moment/paralysis, and the aftermath; the third part reverses thematically the first part, by decreasing the degree of violence in the movement from Sword Shaolin, to Shaolin, and back to Wu-Tang. It concerns a forward and reverse path which at first seems to bear a macro-structural resemblance to At Land and Meditation, since they both have a sense of 'going'

and 'return'. Yet it has to be noted that the 'return' in Meditation is substantially different as will be demonstrated later on.

In terms of macro-exosphical analysis, a forward and reverse attitude is also noted which accompanies the kinesiological alterations. According to Deren, she was seeking to construct a 'nowhere' performing platform to accommodate the meditative movement. "[...] I used the camera to transcend space, to be everywhere and anywhere. In this film the place is an abstraction which is nowhere." (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 230) Expanding on Deren's claims, two main spaces are presented in the screenwork. Firstly, the indoor space, which introduces and concludes the screenwork and is a constructed theatrical plain set of a white wall (a), followed as the camera moves screen right to a black wall (b) and again to a white one (c) connected by a floor which seems to be in some areas white and in others black, as seen below:



**Figure 4-39: Meditation Indoors**

Secondly, an outdoor space which is a circular construction and which bears resemblance to a small amphitheatrical space, as shown below:



**Figure 4-40: Meditation Outdoors**



In terms of the indoor space, which is perhaps the space Deren refers to as 'nowhere' space, an exosphere is abstracted from any scenographic elements. It is a bold statement of contrasting colours and plain surfaces that serve to enhance the movement occurring in front. Notably this is the first time Deren fully constructs the performing platform, as up until Ritual all the exospherical spaces she used were pre-existing spaces that she may have chosen to alter but has never fully constructed.

Deciphering Deren's diagram in terms of the parts and sections created, as well as taking into account the drastic exospherical change projected – from indoors to outdoors –, the following macro-structural diagram is constructed.

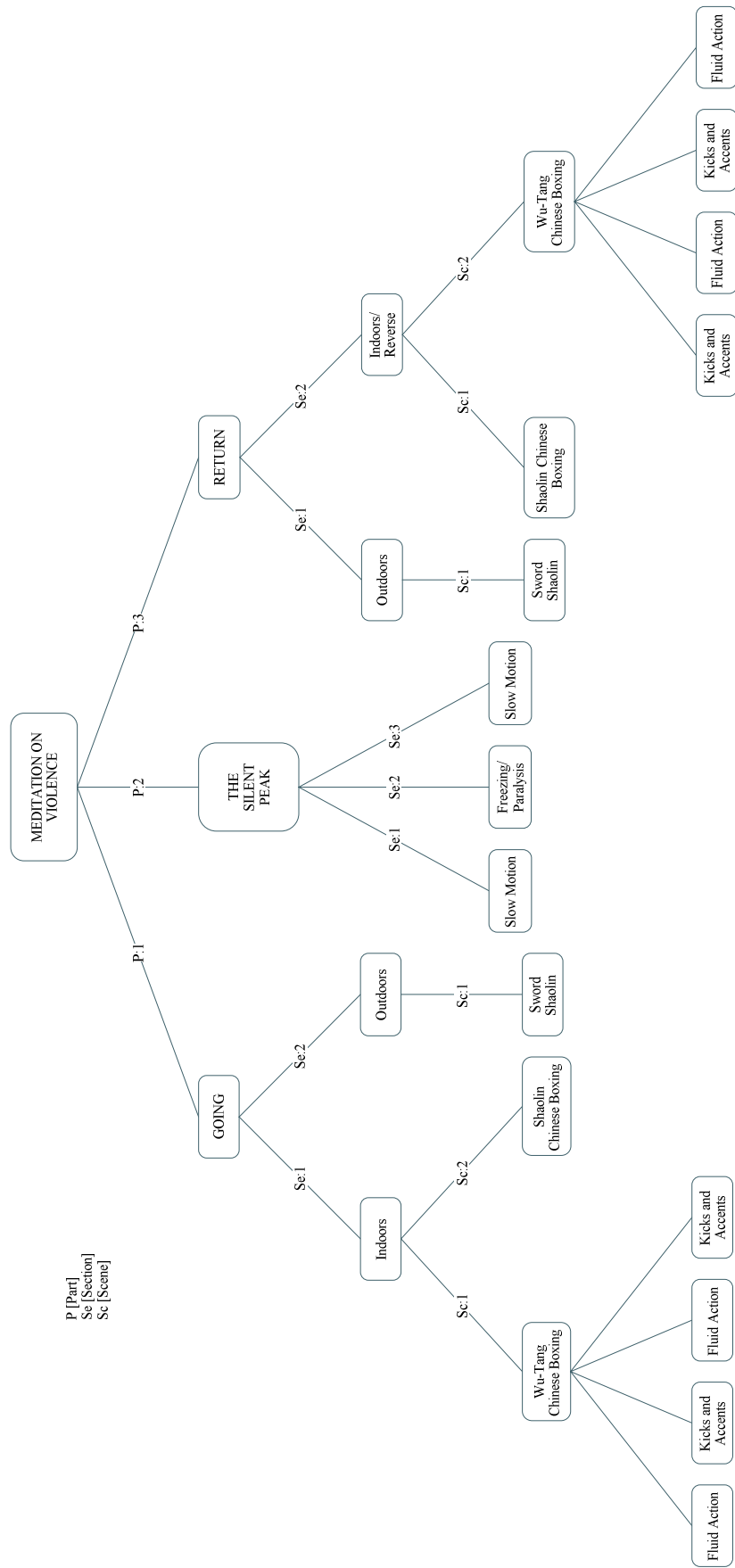


Figure 4-41: Meditation Segmentation

#### 4.6.2 Corporeal Agents of Movement

Similar to Study, Meditation is a solo work. It is inspired and performed by professional actor and martial art practitioner Ch'ao-li Chi (b.1929); a Chinese American male who, while indoors, wears only a pair of plain loose dark trousers, a white belt, and a headband (Figure 4-42) and while outdoors he wears a full traditional combat costume (Figure 4-43), as shown below:



Figure 4-42: Meditation – Indoor clothing



Figure 4-43: Meditation – Outdoor clothing

The screenwork incorporates three types of movement: Wu-Tang Chinese boxing, Shaolin Chinese boxing, and Sword Shaolin. While being three different types of kinespherical action, they are all connected into a whole. Even when the kinespherical action is transferred from indoors to outdoors and back to indoors, it occurs with kinespherical continuity, in order for the illusion of a continuous integrity of movement purely independent from the background to be achieved, as in Study. Notably, what happens for the first time in Meditation is that the drastic exospherical change is also accompanied by drastic costume change, from plain semi-naked clothing (Figure 4-42) to full elaborate costume (Figure 4-43). In that respect the visual conflict is dual, both in exospherical as well as in kinespherical attributes. However, the movement which is central to the screenwork succeeds in visually connecting the dual change and creating a seamless film entity from the beginning to the completion of the film.

Discussion of the film's kinespherical action will be done in conjunction with the production processes, specifically the camera, and the post-production treatment, namely the intershot processes. For the Wu-Tang kinesiology, Deren notes that:

Wu Tang school is based on the idea of absorbing the force of the opponent. It is gentle-seeming and flowing, with roundness of movement... and a complete coordination with breathing... In the constant alternation of positive and negative movement, in such a basic concept as the continual metamorphosis of one movement into the other...

Deren and McPherson, 2005, 229-230

Accordingly, the Wu-Tang section concerns kinespherical action that is fluid, sustained, bound and strong in nature. It is multi-directional in that it continuously advances and retreats, going from right to left, forwards and backwards, up and down, and vice versa. However, despite the constant kinespherical action, the section is relatively static in terms of exospherical distance covered and does not expand beyond a few square metres. In concordance with the fluidity and the confinement of the performer's movement, the camera movement is limited to kinespherical movement. Filmed entirely by Deren, the visual capturing is done by a hand-held camera that is in a constant dialogue with Chi's Wu Tang movement in that it follows the movement of the performer. The camera movement is subtle and hardly identifiable due to the white neutral background, yet a close frame by frame analysis demonstrates a continuous and curved pathway which reacts constantly to the movement of the performer. It is as if Deren has synchronised her breathing with Chi's while filming; accordingly, the two body rhythms coincide and even the minute movements of the hand-held camera are harmonious with the Wu Tang 'continual metamorphosis' mentioned above. As she notes particularly for this section, as well as for the P:3 Wu-tang section, these "[...] are deliberately smooth and flowing so that not 'striking' shots or abrupt cuts occur in these sections" (Deren, 1965, 31).

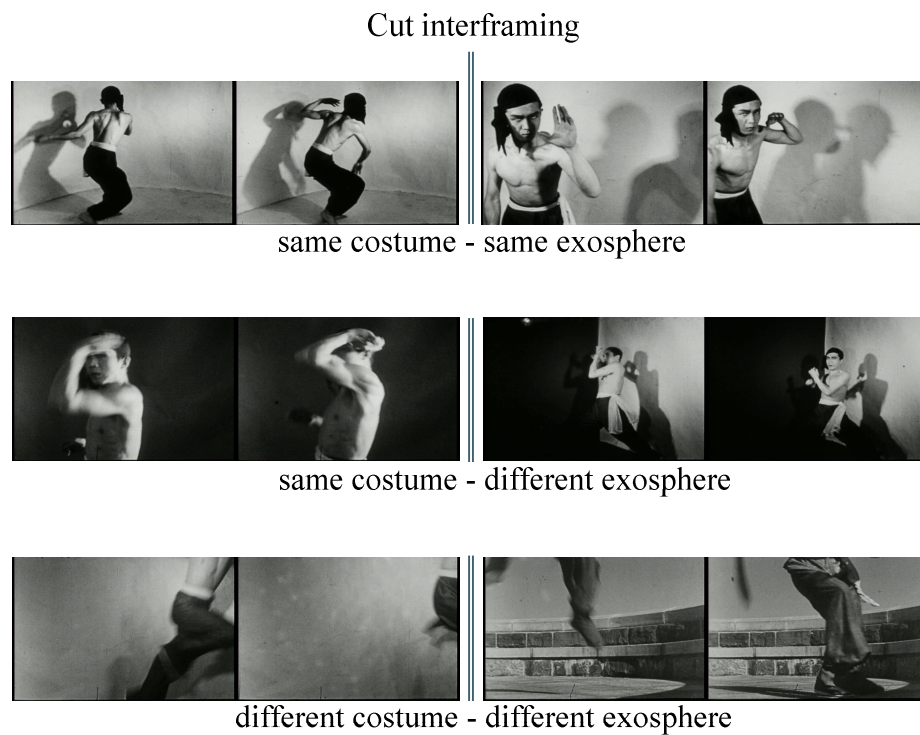
In the Shaolin section which "is based on aggressive attack" (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 230), the body movement is sharp, bound and direct with

instances of accents and sudden quality, while the body design often resumes angular positions. The background also changes from white to black in the beginning while, as the screenwork progresses and the tension increases, there are instances of performance in between the white and the black background. Accordingly, the performance is on the edge of the two conflicting backgrounds, reinforcing the intensity of the screenwork while the kine-exocamera movement is in confrontation with the aggressive Shaolin, as Deren (2005, 230) notes and Butler (2007, 19) asserts. Most of the performer's movements face the camera/spectator and, in contrast with the Wu Tang which has an internal focus, the Shaolin is outward and totally aware of where the camera/spectator is. The action has not really developed into a physical fight between the 'eyes' of the camera and the performer but the camera-performer spatial tension has certainly increased and is constant. The camera does not participate anymore in the action but is regarded instead as a careful spectator that moves constantly and in accordance with Chi's movement. Seeing things oppositely, Chi does not view anymore the 'eye' of the camera as a harmless entity but as one that should be always within his field of vision and on which he should not turn his back.

The tension increases even further with the "the sword section [which] derives from this same form of movement" (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 230), but it is even more aggressive and this time even more exospherically active. In a completely different exospherical space and a different costume, including a sword for weapon, Chi performs against the camera. Being a development of the Shaolin but with raised aggression as well as speed of action, Chi's movement includes high kicks, jumps and contrasting low level actions while the constant threatening sword movement slices the screen diagonally. The camera is now the 'antagonist' (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 230), the active enemy. In total contrast with the Wu Tang section, it is not a matter of dialogue or spectatorship but of conflict (Butler, 2007, 19). It is hard to identify which of the two ends of the spatial tension initiate the movement. It seems like both ends adjust constantly and according to the others' aggressive actions. What is certain is that the two ends are very close with the camera invading the performer's kinespherical space, which in this case increases the sense of threat. The outcome is a screen which is metaphorically slashed and a figure which faces the camera

all the time, as happens in other instances but now in an antagonistic and threatening manner.

In intershot terms, the screenwork is in its majority a series of mid-action cuts. While the kinespherical action continues seemingly uninterrupted, the angle, the distance, or both, alter significantly the viewer's perspective. It is like filming with more than one camera and changing from one to the other while the action continues. However, Deren's screenwork is filmed by one hand-held camera, as mentioned above. Notably, the same intershot method, used in micro-structural terms, is also applied to the exospherical changes as well as to costume changes, meaning from indoors to outdoors and back. The three groups of sequential screenshots demonstrate the aforementioned.



**Figure 4-44: Mid-action Intershot Transition**

In terms of the intershot rhythm, with the exception of the second part, which is analysed in a separate section, the rhythm is faster and consequently the shots are shorter as the screenwork progresses from the Wu Tang to Shaolin to the Sword Shaolin and vice-versa as far as the third part is concerned. With this treatment,

the increasing and the decreasing aggressions – first and third part correspondingly – are reinforced by the concordant speed of intershot. Longer shots and less viewing interruption are used for Wu Tang, shorter shots for the Shaolin, which in turn progress to the fast intershot treatment of the sword Shaolin, altering the viewing angles and distance every few seconds and creating an atmosphere of instability and anxiety.

#### **4.6.3 Temporal Cubism**

Dance is primarily the art of movement in space and time and Meditation is above all a film devoted to the way time manipulates and thus alters motion and image as a whole. Time is not a new concern for Deren; all of her completed films have been composed under constant consideration of the possibilities of time manipulation provided through the cinematic medium. However, Meditation is predominantly focused on the principles of time and its cinematic value; the way the production and post-production processes may temporally reconstruct and deconstruct the captured event as a result of the alteration and, more specifically in terms of the performers, the recorporealisation of the actual movement performed at the time of recording.

Deren claims that for Meditation she used a filmic treatment of ‘cubism in time’ most appropriate for the meditative nature of re-examination. As she notes,

It is the nature of meditation to look at a thing in one way, then approach it from another, move forward, recede, return. I conceived of photographing this as a kind of cubism in time. The same movement is seen from different approaches just as in cubism, simultaneously different aspects are seen, but here not in space but in time.

Deren and McPherson, 2005, 216

In another instance, Deren explains her notion of ‘cubism in time’ by stating that the camera “revolves around the movements of the figure, returns to some previous movement to examine it from another angle altogether, to achieve a “cubism in time” in the same way meditation “turns around an idea, goes

forward, returns to examine it from another angle [...]” (cited in Sitney, 2002, 24).

Despite the fact that Deren locates cubism in the visual re-examination of the Chi's movements, when the camera uses different angles to view the same movement fragments, 'cubism in time' arguably expands beyond that. It also re-examines the physicality of chronos, namely the development of life in time, which is what is negotiated especially in the second and third part of the screenwork.

The slow-motion effect is probably the most recognisable among her techniques of time-manipulation. Deren, fascinated by the results of slow-motion, compares the way a telescope reveals the structure of matter to the way slow-motion reveals the structure of movement, uncovering “all the complexities of even the simplest act” (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 178). The filmic capacity of slowing down a certain recorded event, therefore projecting it in longer screen duration than its actual one, allows the human eye to experience the details of an event affecting the whole viewing perspective of the action shown. Although one can see this very distinctively in Study and Ritual, here it is used in the second part of the screenwork, namely in the 'silent peak' where a movement cluster which normally would last around eight seconds here lasts 26 seconds “as a statement of the anguished effort, the dimension of meaning, which lies below the surface of action” (Deren, 2005, 179).

Within the same part, another temporal manipulation is identified, that of the frozen action, which is another case of Deren's notion of 'extension of time by space'. First used in Ritual, here Deren achieves a multiple emphasis both in micro as well as macro-structural terms, by freezing the performer's movement while he is on the highest point of his jump. In micro-structural terms, she prolongs and emphasises the zero point of kinetic energy. In other words, the chronological (the when) and topological (the where) point the leap starts its descent is also the point of maximum gravitational potential energy<sup>79</sup>. Perhaps even more importantly, on macro-structural grounds, the point of the freeze effect as well as the slow-motion effect which precedes and succeeds it



demarcates the beginning of reverse projection. As demonstrated in the diagram above (Figure 4-38), as well as being mentioned in Deren's notes, the last part of the screenwork is kine-exospherically reversed. With Deren trying not to "convey so much a sense of backward movement spatially, but rather an undoing of time" (Deren, 2005, 121), the reverse effect already used in At Land, in Study, as well as in Ritual here differs both in quantity as well as in quality.

Its qualitative difference concerns the kind of action applied to it. In line with Deren's notion of undoing of time, the impact attitude of Wu-tang and Shaolin presented in the first part are now impulsive and vice versa. Namely, the accent of movement is reversed and whatever was at the beginning of a movement is now at the end. However, both the Wu-Tang and the Shaolin performed are kinesiologyically balanced in that they are mostly within a state of stability<sup>80</sup>, to use Laban's term, and accompanied by music which is continuous and in normal forward speed. All these factors, along with the fluidity and the organic synthesis of the movements, result in reversed projected movement sequences which conceal their recorporealised attributes. While creating a visually bewildering and unidentifiable effect, the movement still seems to be physically feasible.

In quantitative terms, the time span under question is much longer than in other instances. In Study, it does not last longer than fifteen seconds and a similar time span is used in the rest of the films. However, in Meditation, the effect is applied without interruption to the last four minutes of the screenwork which proportionally account for approximately 31% of the screenwork. This choice affects vastly the whole structure of the film by giving a strong statement about the relativism of time and how this can be manipulated through the cinematic medium.

Structure, therefore, is another point where time plays a major role. This film aims to create a circular event that does not have a beginning or an end and thus stretches its time limits beyond screen duration into infinity. In Deren's words, "the film begins in the middle of a movement and ends in the middle of a movement, so that the film is a period of vision upon life, with the life continuing before and after, into infinity" (Deren, 1965, 18).

In terms of kinespherical temporal manipulation, Deren uses the slow and smooth movement of Wu-Tang recorded in normal forward speed, as far as the first part is concerned. This is built up into the aggressive movement of Shaolin, followed by the even more intensified kinesiology of sword Shaolin. Next, the ultimate energy level is reached, which is cinematically expressed with the 'paralysis' moment, that as described above is a highly dynamic freeze image. From that point on, the route back is reversed thematically as well as in projection. In that way Deren produces the infinity she was seeking, the reverse projection adding significantly to the connotation of the circular and infinite existence of movement: an effect which is acoustically supported by the music as well as through the intershot treatment. Longer shots are gradually replaced by shorter ones, the whole process is reversed and the film ends the same way it started with longer shot durations.

#### **4.6.4 Music Metamorphosis/Meditation**

Deren's composition for Meditation is a musical collage composed of drums recorded by Deren in Haiti, and a classical Chinese flute solo (Guggenheim and Deren, 1953). Deren created a soundtrack that produced a separate yet related layer to the kinespherical action of the film. In macro-structural terms, as has also been demonstrated by Deren's parabolic diagram above, the music image relationship is empathetic in that it directly relates to the atmosphere of the screenwork.

The soundtrack is in line with Deren's aim to create a thematically circular screenwork that "abstracts the principle of ongoing metamorphosis and change which was in Ritual" (Deren, 1965, 31). Music is dynamically intensified from the solo flute, audible before the image that introduces and accompanies the Wu Tang section, to the addition of the drums which introduce the Shaolin movement; the same way that thought precedes action. As noted by Deren, "The pulse, increasing intensity, is proportional to the abstract throbbing of the flute. The drums begin before a new movement just as an idea precedes action"

(Deren, 2005, 218). Finally, the sword Shaolin section is accompanied only by drums. The musical collage reaches the highest point that is countered audibly through a section of silence. Then, the third part of the soundtrack follows the thematical reversing of the dynamic quality of the action, meaning from solo drums to drums and flute to solo flute.

Expanding on the choice of musical sources, Deren notes that, “The flute seems to me the sound itself of the lyric spirit. The drums are the pulse of blood. I think the meditation on violence would have both” (Deren, 2005, 230). With this in mind, Deren uses the two sound sources as separate yet interconnected elements, while at the utmost point of slow motion and freeze/paralysis moments the sound of silence enhances the visual deconstruction. Overall, this is a musical collage that constantly shifts identity, providing an extra layer of metamorphosis/change to the screenwork. In solos, the flute and the drums have their own complete identity which reinforces the atmosphere of the visual elements, when together, they merge into a new combined whole that accompanies the action. Notably, this musical collage precedes and surpasses the visual timeline, extending and reinforcing Deren’s aim of depiction of chronological infinity, before as well as after the screenwork.

#### **4.6.5 Conclusion**

Meditation has been regarded as less successful than the rest of Deren’s screenworks. Sitney is one of the earliest to argue that “Maya Deren makes some extravagant intellectual claims [...] which are interesting because the film fails to live up to them” (2002, 23). Along the same lines of criticism, Amos Vogel, founder of ‘Cinema 16’, excluded Meditation when he screened Deren’s screenworks in 1962. Most recently, Jackson (2002) argues that Meditation’s defects

[...] lie in its being less *visually* interesting [...] because Deren has violated what I feel are her own more demanding suggestions for the making of experimental “choreographies”: avoid recording pre-existing movements; avoid the “fixed front view and the rigid walls of the theatre”; instead create new movements, develop new spatiotemporal relationships, out of the interaction between the film instrument (camera and editing bench) and the performer. Whereas the brief middle section of the film that consists of Sword Shao-Lin is highly kinaesthetic [...] the opening and closing sections are [...] recorded always at eye-level in a bland interior space [...] the kind of film recording of staged dance that she always argued vehemently against.

Jackson, 2002, 182-183

However, the current analysis argues differently, in that the obvious complexity and the quantity of manipulation are not necessarily indicative of better practice or better art for that matter. The constant dialogic relationship established between Deren’s hand-held camera and the performer is subtle but nevertheless very close in the Wu-Tang section and more drastic in Shaolin, reaching a conflicting tension for the Sword Shaolin, demonstrating a highly ‘kinaesthetic’ attribute, to use Jackson’s terminology. In addition, the claim that the way indoors sections are unimaginatively captured is debatable on the grounds that the eye-level capturing, which Jackson argues is against Deren’s aesthetic parameters, has been used before on numerous occasions. Here, it reflects the fluidity of the action being in a sense the co-dancer related to the performed movement. It is also important to view how the simpler parts contribute to the whole, instead of being discussed separately.

Accordingly, and in line with the performed action which has a circular climactic structure, the kine- and exo-camera movement employs an analogous attitude. Simpler camera movement is followed by more drastic kine and exo-camera movements and the opposite as the screenwork reverses. Furthermore, it is significant to take into account the inter- and intrashot processes occurring throughout, which result firstly in a kinespherical continuity, secondly in the ‘silent peak’ moment and finally to the reverse effect, as discussed above.

Although Meditation does not contain a large number of diverse effects, the first part, the silent peak part, and perhaps most importantly the third reversed part are conceptually burdened and in line with Deren's aim of climax and circularity. Finally, in terms of Deren's use of music, an empathetic relationship is established between image and sound. This provides an additional conceptual element since it does not merely accompany but also adds to the experience, in line with Deren's notion of film-sound.

Overall, Meditation is a highly conceptual screenwork which makes limited use of screendance devices in a condensed, targeted and meaningful way. Deren demonstrated maturity in both hand-held kine and exo-camera movements which seem to fully understand the performed actions as well as in the intershot and music-image creational levels which reinforce Deren's micro and macro-structural idea of infinity. On these grounds, it is argued that Deren succeeded in creating a film far beyond any defects: a film that "consists not only of photographing these movements, but attempts an equivalent conversion, into filmic terms, of these metaphysical principles" (Deren, 1965, 18).

#### **4.7 THE VERY EYE OF NIGHT: Introduction**

Maya Deren:

[...] regardless of whether it is the camera-frame itself or the figure in reality which moves, what matters in the final analysis, on the screen, is the *relationship between the figure and the frame*.

Deren and McPherson, 2005, 175<sup>81</sup>

Einstein, 1905 Special Theory of Relativity:

[...] no particular object in the universe is suitable as an absolute frame of reference which is at rest with respect to space. Any object is a suitable frame of reference, and the motion of any object can be referred to that frame.

Bram et al., 1975, 204

An outcome of Deren's relativistic perception quoted above and "of long years of experimentation" (Deren, 1965), The Very Eye of Night, hereinafter called Eye of Night, is Deren's only film that took so long to be completed, a process which in total lasted three years, 1952 – 1955, excluding the planning time. A metaphysical screenwork, as Deren notes (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 233), this is the only one of Deren's screenworks involving so many co-creators and collaborators. Along with Deren and the composer Teiji Ito, Antony Tudor – a well established choreographer<sup>82</sup> – was the third creative force of the film. Furthermore, the film credits twelve more people, apart from the nine performers, who were students of the Metropolitan Opera Ballet School in New York.

On general grounds, Jackson discusses Eye of Night in terms of its thematic content, and how this is connected with Deren's interest first in psychology, namely the Vitruvian man as Jung's archetypal Self; secondly in the Chinese cosmological symbol of wholeness, the Yin-yang circle; and thirdly in Greek mythology which is used by Deren to identify the performers. Furthermore, she provides information on Deren's use of music and how this is connected with the action and the characters (Jackson, 2002, 184-191).

Jackson concludes by arguing that the "innovative choreography for camera gives us a sense of these dancers as celestial bodies traversing a timeless space" (2002, 191). However, she claims that Deren's "interdependent patterns of gravitational orbits" (cited in Jackson, 2002, 190) are

difficult to detect, for the film is in fact shot and cut together so that individual dancers or groups of dancers make quite separate entrances into and exits beyond the often mobile frame. Thus their choreographed movements are more like isolated vignettes than elements of an overall integrated pattern.

Jackson, 2002, 191

Expanding on Jackson's brief screen choreographic notes, the current analysis will assess whether structural patterns are identified in the screenwork. Avoiding

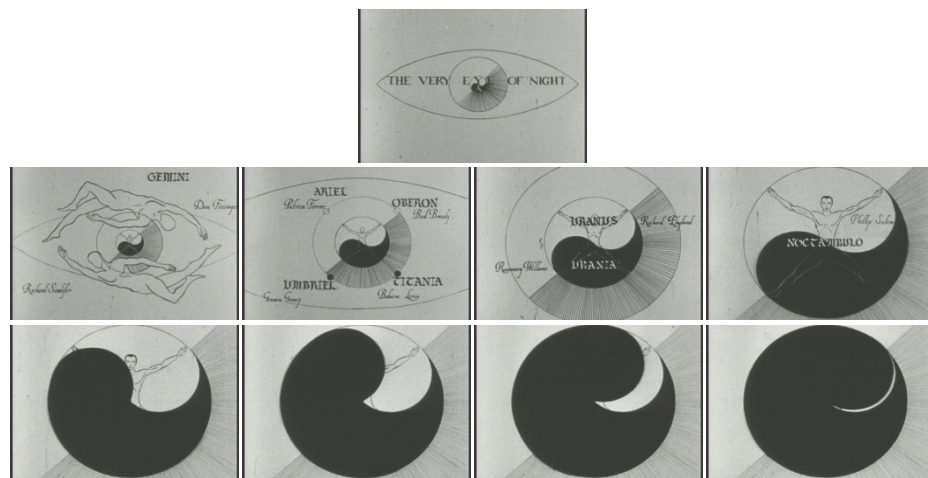
repetition, it will refer to Jackson's music notes and expand on their exact macro-structural and micro-structural patterns. Finally, it will discuss the way that the choreography involved is related not only to the overall idea of the film but also to micro-structural screen dance terms which constitute the dynamic relationship with the camera and the post-production processes of the cinematic medium.

#### **4.7.1 Macro-Structural Analysis: an audio-visual approach**

Having no exospherical alterations, or costumes and any other visually drastic differentiations, the screenwork is seemingly a one-part structure. In fact, it is the only film that resists any form of segmentation, prompting one to view it as a chaotic sum of screen dance action, or as Jackson notes, "choreographic vignettes" (2002, 191). However, as Deren notes "... all components of the major idea... cannot possibly be known all at once, the first time around. They must necessarily be perceived in succession, as one sees the film repeatedly, either in a screening room or in memory" (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 233). As with the universe which at first seems extremely vast and chaotic, but is scientifically proven to be a well organised structure, Eye of Night, if examined closely and repetitively as Deren herself prompts us to do, reveals structural forms that compile a macro-structure of specific patterns which are strategically repeated and evolved. Most importantly these structural forms are not based on exospherical changes and kinespherical patterns as happens in Meshes or on a distinct kinespherical climactic action as happens in Meditation, both of which are visually related elements. Instead, for the first time in Deren's sound screenworks, it is through the music as well as the action that the structural segmentation of the screenwork is identified. On these grounds, the current analysis, instead of creating a separate section to discuss the sound attributes of the screenwork, employs a combined audio-visual structural approach for segmenting Eye of Night.

Proceeding to the segmentation of the screenwork which will provide us with a framework of analysis, while also identifying certain structural issues, three main parts are formalised. Prior to these, the introductory credits can be regarded as an

introductory screenwork section. For the first time Deren uses plastic forms to present the characters, creating credits that are not only informative as to the participators but also indicative of the forthcoming action and the roles included. It should be noted that the discussion concerns mainly the second section of the introductory credits, right after listing Deren, the co-creators and the technical staff. In this section, the following five main cards appear: the first being the title, the second to the fifth presenting the characters, with the fifth also being multiple and animated into a black circle which then cross-fades to the first screenshot.



**Figure 4-45: Credit Titles**

The importance of these introductory credits is multi-faceted, beyond the semiology included in the names given to the characters and the drawings used, as already discussed by Sitney (2002) and revisited by Jackson (2002). First, there is an establishing shot and then a gradual almost investigatory entrance of the viewer within the initial drawing. As the spectator is drawn into the initial schema, s/he realises that, The Very 'Eye' of Night is the one that includes Gemini – played by two performers –, which surrounds Ariel, Oberon, Titania, and Umbriel, who in turn encircle Uranus and Urania. Finally, these engulf Noctambulo that seems to be the centre of the 'eye'.

After these elaborate, at least for Deren's standards, credits, three parts follow along with the introduction of music. Prior to further discussion of the



screenwork, it is important to refer to certain audio parameters relevant to the analysis.

Introducing certain sound attributes, Deren makes use of acousmatic sound only, as occurs in all Deren's screenworks, the Eye of Night soundtrack was composed after the visual editing of the screenwork had been completed. As in Meditation, the Eye of Night music relates empathetically to the visual elements of the screenwork, presenting a role that affects and is affected by the screened action.

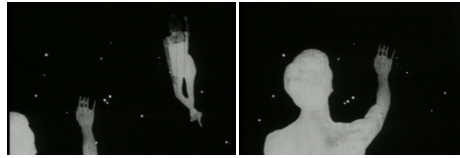
Regarding the nature of the sound score, Deren notes in her 1960 brochure that "the original score by Teiji Ito for flute, bass clarinet, Balinese brass gamelan [sic], Balinese marimba, and three Haitian drums, was initially recorded layer-on layer with Mr. Ito performing on all instruments except the flute and the bass clarinet" (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 254). This results in a wide spectrum of musical instruments which span modern to traditional and from Western to Indonesian, as well as Haitian ones. For the music - image relationship in particular, Jackson identifies certain parallels and counterpoints.

Before any dancers make their entrance, we hear over the slowly moving star-field the bell-like resonances of individual notes played on the brass gamelan a *pas de deux* is complemented by a breathy duet of clarinet and flute; marimba and drum beats accompany the turns and leaps of three male dancers; a fast staccato rhythm on the wooden marimba provides counterpoints to a slow-motion pirouette; gamelan, clarinet, and drums attend the cluster of six dancers as they rotate in space.

Jackson, 2002, 186-187

Expanding on Jackson's micro-structural notes, an audio-visual timeline demonstrates certain macro-structural parameters that concern not only the corresponding performers but also the screenwork as a whole. Accordingly, there is a rhythmical intensification identified approximately in the first six minutes of the screenwork. Starting with silence, scattered and irregular sounds of gamelan follow, accompanying the first pictures of the black sky and the moving stars. Shortly after starts the gradual introduction of all the characters, in order of

audiovisual appearance: Noctambulo in both female and male appearances, shown below, is accompanied by the clarinet.



**Figure 4-46: Noctambulo**

Then Gemini follows, which is schematised by the two bodies as illustrated below:



**Figure 4-47: Gemini**

Along with the introduction of the Gemini sign, rhythm is also introduced played by the gamelan.

– note that there are no published original scores, the following are approximate rhythmical values based on the audio of the screenwork –



**Figure 4-48: Gamelan Rhythm**

Shortly after, the Haitian drums are introduced as an accompaniment with double the rhythm of gamelan as shown below. At the same time Uranus and Urania enter the screen, being encircled by the quartet of Ariel, Oberon, Umbriel, and Titania.



**Figure 4-49: Drums Rhythm**

As the screenwork progresses, approximately 4'45" into the screenwork, the gamelan's rhythm is also doubled, coinciding with the Haitian Drums and intensifying the atmosphere of the screenwork. Thirty seconds later the drums assume a rhythm of triplets which is six times faster than the initial one, as demonstrated below:



**Figure 4-50: Triplets**

In the meantime, the characters enter and exit the screen constantly and in variable ways. Following this visual mixture of characters as well as the frenzy and persisting rhythm of Haitian drums, a section of woodwinds comes in, where a melodic phrase is established. This middle part of woodwinds is repeated three times, with a percussion break of marimba triplets and Haitian drums to separate the second from the third repetition. This second part of the screenwork is visually defined by series of primarily trios and some duos, and solos which, in certain instances, run irrespective of the sound attributes, at times in contrapuntal manner, with slow smooth movement contradicting fast staccato drumming, and at other times in an audio-visually empathetic manner, where movement follows the rhythm of the music. What is noteworthy is that these solos, duos and trios seem to run in parallel timelines, meaning that they give the sense that they continue even when they are off-screen, similar to that of Beatty at the introductory spiral movement in Study. Whereas this is distinctive here, it seems to occur for the whole screenwork and for all characters, as will be later explained.

From this point on, an anti-climax is unravelled which follows almost an opposite structure from part one. After 13'30", fast triplets are followed by eights which slowly go to quarters and then slow down to scattered sounds of gamelan

and finally end in silence, demonstrating that this third part is a gradual decrease of musical tension. In an empathetic relationship, the visual mixture of variable entrances and exits comes to an end through a final pass of a male performer which resembles the ending of Ritual. Both bodies cross the screen vertically from centre up to centre down in relative kinespherical stillness in Ritual, and in complete stillness – frozen kinesphere – in Eye of Night. In addition, both bodies have received common graphic intrashot treatment; they are in negative. Their basic difference is that in Ritual the protagonist is female whereas, in Eye of Night, the last performer appearing on screen is male.

Overall, Eye of Night is a three part structure, following the credits, with the first part being a build up of visual and rhythmical tension, the second/middle part mixes high rhythmical tension with identifiable and repeated movement patterns and melodic lines, and the third and final part takes down the tension, reversing in a way the initial tension build up of part one.

#### **4.7.2 The Relativistic Exosphere**

Having introduced the plastic effect of negative projection in the concluding scene of Ritual when the alternating protagonist submerged underwater into a blackness of nothingness, in Eye of Night Deren applies it throughout the duration of the screenwork, excluding the credits. Interestingly, the graphic values between the two films are comparable in that the action is originally performed on a white background which is inverted into a black exospherical surrounding in both cases. However, in contrast with Ritual's black underwater scene which was pure black and gravity bound, the exosphere in Eye of Night includes stars in the form of small, white moving dots to simulate the sky and the motion of the planets, providing the sense of a gravity-free performing platform.

Technically, as Deren notes, “The sky of animated stars itself is a triple exposure, a technique I finally arrived at in an effort to give the sky depth” (2005, 181). By using variable speed and superimposing star registrations, Deren succeeded in creating a sense of depth. As she explains, “it is this variation in the

rate of speed relative to your eye that creates the sense of depth in a landscape seen from a moving vehicle” (2005, 181). This refers to the perception cue of depth of ‘motion parallax’ where the relative motion of near and far objects is a cue about their distance from the observer<sup>83</sup>.

In intrashot grounds, one of the layers printed on film was the triple star projection discussed above and, as a second layer – technically the fourth one –, the action performed. As Deren notes, “double printed from beginning to end, the live dance action [...is] super-imposed on a layer of animated stars (holes punched in black paper) whose contrasting direction and speed movement make the dance action seem even more gravity-free” (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 181). As a parenthesis, it should be noted for reasons of accuracy that Deren does not apply a four layer exposure intrashot technique throughout the film. Neither does she use at all times a triple star exposure, nor a single choreographic exposure, as she superimposes shots of choreographic action.

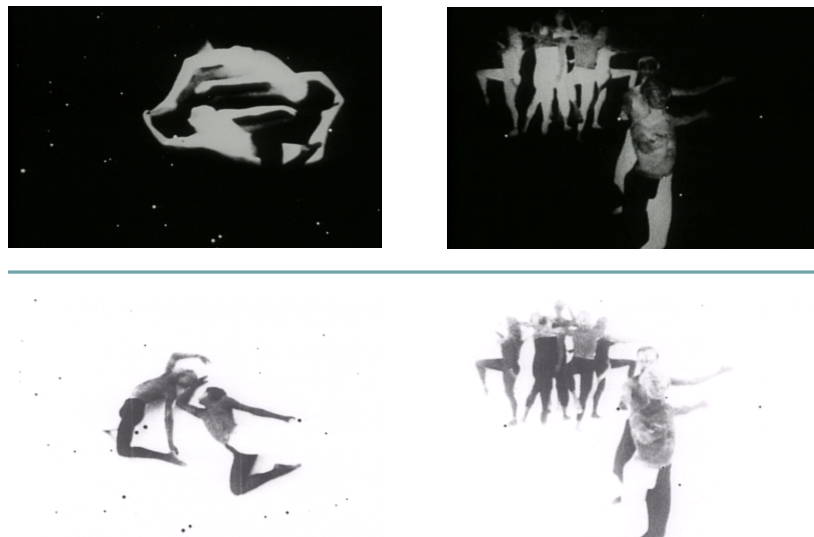
In exospherical grounds, the particularity of the star projection lies in the fact that it creates a performing platform which is, in a sense, absent. There is no dimensional plane formed by the stars but rather multiple spatial points which are unidentifiable as to their distance from the performer or the viewer. This absence of a definite reference of the performing platform provides the ability of horizon alteration. Acknowledging this capacity, Deren shifts the performing platform all the time, creating a relativistic platform which is hard to define due to the lack of static points. As a result Deren succeeds in isolating the performer/s’ kinespherical realities from their corresponding exospheres or, if seen differently from their common exosphere, providing them a performing space which is anywhere, everywhere, and in a sense nowhere, all at the same time.

The lack of a referential point bears a strong resemblance to the laws of special relativity (Einstein, 1920/2000). According to Albert Einstein (1879 – 1955) there is no such a thing as absolute motion since every motion can only be identified in relevance to a certain frame of reference. In Eye of Night, the action’s frame of reference, in other words the exospherical reality, is made up of

stars whose number, constant motion and unclear dimensions produce a non-referential background rather than a certain performing platform.

### 4.7.3 Inverted Corporeal Agents

In terms of the ‘live dance action’, to employ Deren’s term, namely the performer’s kinespherical action, it is important to analyse the costume design used. Deren blacked up the dancers, through full body costumes, and added some white details like hanging fabrics. By inverting the graphic values and showing the kinespherical realities in negative, Deren succeeds in inverting the performers’ corporeality along with their graphic values. Below are two sets of pictures: the first are original screenshots and the second are the same shots inverted in order for the original values to be identified. Despite the fact that the high contrast used by Deren does not permit details to be inverted, the original colours and shapes of the costumes are identifiable. What is noteworthy is that for the first time, as is more apparent by the second set of pictures, body-facial painting is added as part of the performer’s appearance.



**Figure 4-51: Inverted Performers**

Whereas each performer plays a particular role in the introductory credits, as above mentioned, this does not correspond to a costume or any other corporeal

differentiation among the performers. As will be demonstrated, besides the male - female differentiation, the performers acquire roles only through their kinespherical action. Other than that, there is a general attempt at unification achieved through common or very similar clothing along with the appliance of the negative effect. Notably, in contrast to the rest of Deren's screenworks, in Eye of Night all the performers are protagonists of equal significance, which is a paradox. As will be later identified, the overall screening result draws the attention away from the individual dancer and the notion of protagonist towards the moving and movable recorporealised entities.

#### **4.7.4 Screendance Devices**

##### 4.7.4.1 Exospherical vastness

Beyond the strategically organised macro-structure, there are also certain formalistic screendance devices that require discussion. Consistency of film space, meaning the combination of on-screen and off-screen spaces (Aumont, 1992, 14), is one of them. While space consistency would expect a dancer entering the frame from the same side s/he exited, the opposite often happens. The performer/s might re-enter the frame twice or more times from the same screen point only to find another group performing already in the new space. This treatment expands the film space, adding to the vastness of the black canvas. The performing platform is multiplied and therefore more new spaces are introduced.

In addition, Deren screens performing action that starts and ends in mid-action, both in micro as well as macro-structural terms. Echoing Meditation processes, the performers are screened already in motion before they are discovered by the camera, while macro-structurally the film starts and ends with an animated sky, as one would expect watching actual sky images. This, along with the fact that performing groups and performing actions are re-screened, encourages the viewer to assume that the movement continues off-screen in a ceaseless manner. It gives the sense that the action is only filmically interrupted. When it reappears

through intershot processes, it is like being revisited, as if it has never stopped and as if its existence is almost independent to the cinematic process. This effect is also distinctively encountered in the opening scene of the Study, a treatment that contributes to an even more extended sense of film space, one could argue infinite.

The primarily black canvas also results in the blending of the screen with the screening room; provided that the screenwork is projected on a normative screen theatre. The exospherical blackness draws in the dark auditorium, connecting the exospherical space of the dancers to the exospherical space of the receivers sitting in the room. This enlarges further the already extended exospherical space into an illusory infinity that engulfs both the screened and the real world.

#### 4.7.4.2 Kine-exo Camera Treatment: A Choreography for Camera?

As in Study, the film is credited in the beginning as “a choreography for camera”. However, Tudor is not credited as the choreographer of the screenwork, but as the director of the students of the Metropolitan Opera Ballet School. His contribution seems to be confined to the formalisation of the movement vocabulary used by the dancers rather than its syntax in film space and time, meaning that he was focusing on the dancers’ kinespherical arrangement, leaving the exospherical arrangement of the action, as well as its temporal manipulation, to Deren, who is credited as the one who has “conceived, directed, filmed and edited” the screenwork. Discussing Deren’s exospherical arrangement of Tudor’s performing material, Sitney notes in Eye of Night that there is, “a drift toward late Cubist space –a loss of depth, the breakdown of horizontal and vertical centrality (in this particular case through the rejection of gravitational coordinates)...” (2002, 206).

In his brief but detailed observation, Sitney raises primarily two interrelated issues: firstly, the breakdown of horizontal and vertical centralities through a flatness of the plastic attributes of the framed reality, and secondly the deconstruction of gravitational orientation. As aforementioned, the screenwork is



constituted by a series of entrances and exits, a fact that results in an equal number of multi-oriented spatial progressions. Most of them are either altered in speed or in direction by a kine/exo-camera treatment or are even constructed purely by the camera, while the performer/s assume a certain body design or perform kine-exospherically static movement. In other words, Deren moves the performers within the screen frame irrespectively of their own movement, yet in a choreographically sensitive way, as will be later analysed.

What is specifically important is that the exospherical pathways move in more than one set of dimensions. It is not simply a matter of diagonal back left to diagonal forward right, as it is for instance in Study, but a combination of three sets of parameters. First of all, there is a pathway structured by the kine-exospherical movement given by Tudor and as a second layer there is the kine-camera movement that changes the alignment of the performers' platform, namely their base, and finally the exo-camera movement that affects the size of the performers, as well as their exospherical motion in respect to the screen plane. In addition, Deren makes use of eye level shots which resemble the live theatrical viewing parameters alternated with extreme camera angles – especially from high level and above – that defamiliarise the pictured dance action. All the above mentioned factors produce even more complex viewing parameters. However, this does not necessarily flatten the image, nor does it deny depth as Sitney (2002) argues, and furthermore the gravitational forces are apparent. The dancers seem like beings weightless in space, due to the movable and visually absent base, yet their movements demonstrate a gravity force. While the orientation shifts, the lifts and landings point towards a base. The following examples are indicative of the kine-exospherical issues discussed above.

The introductory body design, which possibly depicts Noctambulo, although in multiple appearances as shown below, resembles Christiani's body design in the entrance of Ritual. The obvious resemblance between the two introductory postures demonstrates a habitual movement from Deren's part, as well as high degree of her kinespherical intervention.



**Figure 4-52: Habitual Movement – Ritual and Eye of Night**

In screendance formalistic terms, it is noteworthy that the extended arm of Noctambulo's posture, which projects spatially a straight line towards the surrounding space, has a medium front orientation in kinespherical terms, while in screen terms it has a high back right. Materialising this projected virtual line, Deren, in an immediate dialogic relationship with movement, moves the dancer towards the pointing orientation. In other words, she translates the spatial pattern with a corresponding spatial progression that takes the positional content of projection and transforms it to a motional content of progression. The fact that the dancer remains kinespherically still while he crosses the screen creates a visual conflict, while at the same time it raises the issues of relativity to which Deren seeks to draw attention. Whether the dancer moves or not can only be defined according to its frame of reference (Einstein, 1920/2000). Accordingly, the dancer is filmically frozen and therefore kine-exosphericly static, while in screen terms he is moving diagonally back.

Discussing the trio of the middle part as another indicative example of Deren's treatments of spatiotemporal recorporealizations, – with an approximate screentime of 10' 07" – one sees a constant camera-dance interrelationship where the camera handling reacts even to the smallest movement, as demonstrated through the following examples. When the female dancer starts leaning backwards in profile and towards her partner, the camera rotates in the opposite way, resulting in a minimal yet very effective enhancement of the movement. Shortly after – 10' 58" – the female partner leans back while on the floor, making a movement of circular path that results in a spatial projection of the body, head

and her left arm and pointing towards low screen right. At the same time, in a conflicting manner, the kine-exo camera treatment moves the body in opposite way, creating a spatial progression with the body in an opposite direction of the projection while it slightly rotates the image in contrasting manner, meaning that the circular body design points anti-clockwise while the screened body is turned clock-wise.

Hence, it is observed that body designs and performed movements initiate a camera movement and dictate, in a sense, the overall framing and therefore screen placement of the projected kinespheres according to the intrinsic qualities of the movement. The discussed examples are only brief segments of Deren's spatiotemporal manipulation which spans the screenwork, with the screened realities being always in motion and with almost none of the shots of the film being static.

#### **4.7.5 Conclusion**

Deren, aiming to draw attention to the larger issues this screenwork seeks to raise, notes that Eye of Night “[...] may be most accurately described as “metaphysical,” in the sense that one speaks of the ‘metaphysical poets’ such as Donne” (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 233). Space and time, which had always been among Deren's primary concerns, are now also thematically used in a metaphysical performing platform. This provides Deren with the capacity to create an audiovisual subversive pattern “in the imperturbable logics of the night sky and in the irrevocable, interdependent patterns of gravitational orbits. This is, as it were, the major, overall idea of the film” (Deren and McPherson, 2005, 232).

Accompanied by an interdependent but nevertheless complex soundtrack, motion-wise, the amount of spatial progressions and the equal number of tracing lines, through spatial progressions and projections, create a complex design of constant motion that prohibits the viewer from setting a stable screen reality. The receiver is at all times on a process of adaptation of the dimensional framework

of the performed movement, negotiating at the same time the visual habit of human uprightness which is the basis for the identification of the horizontal, vertical and sagittal planes in which everyday reality is manifested. By manipulating this verticality, Deren succeeds in detaching herself from the theatrical conventions of filming even further than the rest of her films, stretching the perceptual boundaries of screened live dance into screendance creation.

The overall outcome demonstrates that Deren has reached a level of deep understanding of movement and choreography as perceived in theatrical space and recognizes how this can be recorporealised within screendance parameters. A new device is applied of kinespherical isolation and exospherical movement of the kinesphere within the screen frame and independently from the performers' kine-exospherical mobility. The result is a study of kine- and exo-camera movement which, along with the intrashot manipulation that constructed the background as well as the intershot synthesising of the shots, provide a highly technical result.

Deren said that while Study is a duet of camera and performer – an attribute also apparent in Meditation – Eye of Night is a dialogue between the theatrical dance and the screendance apparatus, where the latter, responding to Tudor's kinesiology, reacts in the most sympathetic way. The communication is instant and is based on Deren's experience of working with theatrical movement. The fact that she was not performing in the film, provided her with the opportunity to make all the filming on her own, as she did with Meditation and Study. This was perhaps the only way she could have achieved these complex often hand-held shots of minute kine-camera as well as exo-camera movement. It is Deren's last completed screenwork and an excellent example of her screendance aesthetic values.

#### 4.8 DERENIAN PRACTICE

The screendance formalist methodological approach used in this chapter to analyse Deren's six completed screenworks identified previously unexplored areas of her practical approach. Both in micro-structural and macro-structural terms, as well as in her audio-visual treatment, both variability and continuity have been demonstrated among her films. The 'introductory' Meshes sets the character and the rules by which Deren sought to communicate through her screenworks. Corporeal as well as non-corporeal agents, namely objects, are spatiotemporally manipulated to construct a film reality that transcends, while at the same time, is attached to the physical world. Furthermore, the sound score that accompanies this complex film reality, while it is interlinked to the actual elements presented, and at times even empathetic to them, includes no actuality sounds, in the sense discussed in chapter three. The 'broadened' At Land, while exploring too the friction between actual and imaginary worlds, extends the manipulation of spatiotemporality beyond the performers and the objects, to their corresponding exospheres, namely the surrounding environment. The 'exploratory' Study focuses on the movement of the performer – a professional dancer and choreographer – achieving through production and post-production processes a recorporealised body, which in discreet but highly reconstructive ways, departs significantly from its live theatrical attributes.

Ritual can be best described as Deren's 'maximalist' screendance work, where all of her knowledge obtained through Meshes, At Land, and Study, are synthesised to form the basis of a work that develops even further Deren's notions of the recorporealised body and the deconstructed spatiotemporality of the actuality presented. On the contrary, the 'minimalist' Meditation, presents limited use of screendance devices, yet in meaningful and revolutionary ways. In particular, the prolonged use of 'reverse effect' questions fundamentally the viewer's perception of chronology and physicality. It is furthermore the first of Deren's films with such extensive use of kine- and exo-camera / hand-held movement, with dialogic camera-performer results that demonstrate further Deren's sensitivity to movement.

The 'negative' Eye of Night, Deren's last screendance, is not only inverted in graphic values, it is also the only one placed in a non-conventional gravity, non-earthly environment. Furthermore, it is performed by no-protagonists whose identities are not easily ascertainable due to their abstract costume design and their overall inverted/negative graphic alteration. Echoing Study and to an extent Meditation in its camera-performer relationship, here the action is also exospherically detached. Freed from its background, the screened body is also completely free from any conventional theatrical boundaries; an experience which is enhanced by a highly complex soundtrack, which is nevertheless closely related to the action.

In macro-structural terms, it is noteworthy that Deren's screendances demonstrate complex structures of non-mainstream narrative logic. The repeated yet altered pattern in Meshes, revisits places, objects and people, including the multiplied self, but each time within different parameters that ultimately lead to a double-ending. In At Land, the protagonist, after travelling through places and achieving what seems to be her goal, then reverses her route while observed by herself and in a sense her own past. In Study, a climactic structure with an accented middle is observed. While there is no apparent causal motivation, as occurs in a sense in Meshes and At Land, there is a type of narrative closure that is aligned with a sense of freedom for the dancer; starting from within, surrounded by the physical world, and in a constrained manner, he ends on top of a mountain assuming an open and dominating position.

With Ritual, Deren returns to causal motivation for the last time. This time the protagonist is not multiplied but alternating and the structure does not revisit itself. Through a climactic structure, chronologically complex scenes, a double identity and characters that acquire hyperphysical attributes as the screenwork progresses, Ritual concludes with a double meaning open to interpretation, which combines black and white, death and marriage, and an inverted-negative image. Meditation can be macro-structurally defined as circular, with a distinctive accent in roughly the middle of the screenwork. However, the fact of the reversed second part, which in a sense shows in the future a reversed past, in

addition to the fact that the movement starts and ends in mid-action inferring continuity of action outside the film, leads to an infinite macro-structural logic and meaning. Finally, Eye of Night, while initially giving the sense of an unstructured audio-visual screendance, is – both in terms of the constructed movement, as well as the accompanying soundtrack, a structure that builds up and down roughly in similar ways to Meditation, but not as clearly defined. What is communicated is a sense of chaotic order, in line with Deren's metaphysical and relativistic concerns.

Overall, Deren's screenworks demonstrate a common aesthetic ground that is schematised along the axis of screendance art as identified in chapter one. Deren uses human body movement as her primary agent for communicating her fictional filmic created reality. While the movement content differs considerably among the films and her screen choreographic approach is variable, the spatiotemporal alteration of the physicality depicted is always employed. By synthesising the results of the whole thesis, the concluding remarks will discuss the matter further.

## CONCLUSION

### Terms and Methods

In the process of discussing Derenian theory and practice from a formalist screendance perspective, the thesis has engaged with a number of terminological and methodological issues that concern not only Deren's work but also screendance in general.

Firstly, the screendance typology has been clarified. As established in chapter one, dance on screen is identified in products that can be situated within the factual and fictional continuum (see Figure 2-1 on page 93). Towards the 'factual' end, 'dance notation screenwork' registers and reproduces a specific live dance work in the highest fidelity possible, for informative, archival, research or other reasons. Moving towards the left, 'dance documentation screenwork' refers too to a specific dance work, but the emphasis is on preserving and recreating on screen the live dance's communicative impact. The third and final factual category is the 'dance documentary', which engages with dance-related issues, but not necessarily with a specific dance performance. Towards the fictional end of the continuum the 'dance adaptation' is a screenwork that, although related to a specific dance work, is cinematically constructed and often substantially different to its corresponding live version. It is therefore more related to the last category of dance on screen products, 'screendance art' which at the far right of the continuum concerns fictional screenworks that mediate dance; a category that sets the basis for all succeeding discussion.

Furthermore, the development of a representational-narrative-meaning model (RNM) has facilitated further understanding of Deren's theoretical and practical work. This consists of three intersecting continuums as seen in Figure 2-3 on page 95. The representational continuum pans from 'actual', 'realistic', and 'abstract' to 'absent' and investigates the degree of realism depicted in the audio-visual components. The narrative continuum assesses whether the work is an



‘enactment’ of a situation, whether it communicates some sort of meaning, though not in the normative cause-effect storytelling manner – thema – or whether it has no intended meaning and is basically a ‘format’. Finally, the meaning continuum, interlinked with the representational and narrative continuums, defines whether the creation is ‘specific’, ‘open’ or somewhere between with regards to its conveyed message.

Finally, with the aim of investigating further the properties of Deren’s screendances, and in the absence of any screendance methodological framework that focuses on the formal parameters of screendance art, chapter three has developed a multi-layer model of screendance analysis that deciphers the apparatus of dance and its reconstruction through the multi-layer cinematic processes, while establishing the screen choreographic capacity.

The model is based upon the creative stages which are as shown in Figure 3-2 on page 117. The first layer, regarding dance mechanics, is constituted by two parts: the kinespherical reality – the performer’s personal space, and the exospherical reality – the performing shared space, as analytically demonstrated in Figure 3-9 and Figure 3-10 on pages 124 and 125, respectively.

In visual terms, screendance production concerns the camera instrument, and the manipulation of registration in terms of on-camera adjustments, and body-camera movement – kine-camera and exo-camera movement. In audio terms it is about the selective process undertaken by microphones.

The next stage, the screendance post-production, is based upon the acquired raw material, which is further manipulated on an individual shot basis, in terms of its graphic values and rhythmical elements – intrashot manipulation – and in response to each other, on a synthesised multi-shot basis of two or more shots in succession – horizontal editing – or in co-existence – vertical editing. In a similar manner, the audio raw material is altered as to its attributes and synthesised in vertical and horizontal ways, for the creation of the film’s soundtrack.

The last creational stage is the audio-visual transmission. The visual sector is a two fold discussion which, as established in chapter three, concerns firstly the projector and the way its image can be altered, as well its capacity to move, and secondly the screen's versatility in terms of colour, shape and movement. On similar grounds, the audio transmitters/speakers have the capacity to move, creating unique audio environments.

Accordingly, there are three choreographic spaces identified. The personal mobile space – kinesphere – where dance action is viewed in reference to the performer; the exosphere – within which the kinesphere moves; and finally the dynamic camera platform – the camera's virtual sphere – which relates to the way the reception point of view is manipulated in reference to the screen plane. All of these layers provide room for spatiotemporal manipulation. Furthermore, post-production has also been established as having significant choreographic capacity, through its ability to alter the image's graphic, and temporal values, while also being able to reconstruct and deconstruct the chronology of the performing events. Finally, on visual grounds, the potential mobility of the projector and the versatility of the screen provide a last creative layer, and two more choreographic spatiotemporal platforms that can alter the final screendance product by altering its reception parameters.

Similarly, screendance sound can contribute to the screen choreographic result through the music's emotional and rhythmical relationship to the screened action, and through the rest of the sound's temporal relationship, spatialisation and alteration as identified in section 3.5.4. Finally, at the time of audio transmission, the number and the mobility of the sound transmitters provides a final audio layer to the screen choreographic result.

### **Derenian Screendance Theory and Practice / RNM & Multi-layer models**

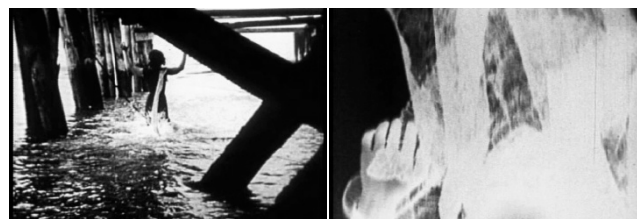
Synthesising Derenian theory and practice, a degree of consistency as well as heterogeneity are identified. Deren's aesthetics call for filmic construction of manipulated spatiotemporality that focuses on the human body and its movement capacity. Resembling in that respect dance modernism, especially as manifested

through Humphrey and Wigman, Deren is furthermore against narrative normative Aristotelian processes, and in favour of what has been identified as ‘thematic’ narrative development, which overall is situated towards the open meaning according to the RNM – representational, narrative, meaning – model.

In terms of kinespherical and exospherical arrangement, Deren hovers in between representative actual and non-representative abstract elements. However, she never loses her connection with the human body and its physicality. On kinespherical grounds, there are three kinds of kinesiology identified. Recorporealised, namely filmically altered, and stylised colloquial movement is employed in Meshes, At Land, and incorporated in Ritual; choreographed kinesiology danced by professional dancers is identified exclusively in Study, Eye of Night, and in combination with stylised colloquial movement in Ritual, and finally recorporealised martial art kinesiology is used in Meditation. Further comparative analysis also identifies habitual movement motifs, which occur at key macro-structural points within the screenworks. Most notably, the way At Land and Ritual end in angular bilateral symmetry resembles also Beatty’s final body design in Study as seen in the following pictures:



At Land



Ritual



Study

**Figure 5-0-1: Habitual Movement**

A further example is Christiani's introductory body design in Ritual repeated by Noctambulo in Eye of Night (see Figure 4-36). Notably in both cases there is also macro-structural resemblance in that both introduce the corresponding screenworks. Beyond their actions, the performers' outfits vary from realistic clothing – including everyday casual, formal, ritualistic and traditional – to abstract costumes. At Land and Meditation use realistic – meaning everyday and traditional clothing – costumes, Eye of Night and in a more minimal way Study, incorporate outfits of abstract nature specifically designed for the screenwork, and finally Meshes, and in a sense Ritual, make use of both.

On exospherical grounds, and particularly in regards to the performing platforms pictured, Deren's screenworks make use of location filming, namely actual or realistic exospheres, as well as abstract settings. As seen in Meshes, At Land, Study, in the majority of Ritual and partly in Meditation, Deren makes use of actual spaces, perhaps altered for filmic purposes, but always retaining their realistic values. Spaces like a friend's apartment, a museum room, and Deren's own house are indicative indoor spaces, while a forest, mountains, seaside and countryside are some of the exterior ones. Contrary to these realistic exospherical settings, Deren also makes use of abstract constructed spaces like the introductory (1.1) and concluding parts (3.2) of Meditation. Furthermore, throughout Eye of Night, and in the conclusion (5) of Ritual, exospherically constructed spaces are also graphically altered through negative intrashot manipulation. Finally, in terms of exospherical arrangement, the objects that do not play merely decorative role are of great significance. Particularly in Meshes, but also in At Land and primarily in the introductory part of Ritual, objects that are otherwise actual in appearance – a knife, mirrors, chess pawns and wool thread among others – are defamiliarised either through their screen animation, or through their screen context and usage.

This synthesis of realistic with non-realistic elements, corporeal and non-corporeal, is extended to Deren's visual production and post-production approaches. In constant dialogic relationship with the action, performed body-camera movement, both kine-camera and exo-camera, creates innovative

movable perspectives and performing platforms as introduced in Meshes, and extensively used in Eye of Night. However, it is by orchestrating kine-exospherical arrangement, with kine-exocamera movement and screendance post-production, that most of the recorporealised and spatiotemporally reconstructed realities are achieved.

It has been suggested in chapter two that Deren's intershot approach cannot be easily classified as either classical continuity or dialectical editing, in that it incorporates elements of both approaches. The formalist analysis of her screendances identifies that while Deren has overall followed classical continuity rules like the 180° and 30° rules of angle change, it is not the same for the matching techniques, which Deren often uses in deconstructive ways, resulting in a unique editing approach.

Introduced in Meshes in the 'Four Strides' section, and extensively used in At Land, Study and throughout the exospherical changes in Meditation, Deren defies spatiotemporal rules by joining together disjunctive spaces, through kinespherical action. In other words, an action that starts in space 'A' continues in space 'B' in a kinespherical, seamless, graphical and rhythmical manner. In that way, the kinespherical continuity is juxtaposed with the exospherical alteration. Furthermore, there are instances that either utilise different rhythmic frameworks like the 'impossible pursuit' under the columns in Ritual, or different chronologies like the 'sand dunes' and the 'four men' in At Land, as well as the introduction of Study, which are nevertheless seamlessly connected by a seemingly continuous exospherical background.

Other instances of pioneering treatment include juxtaposition of temporal attributes, when the speeding up, slowing down and reversal of an action is constructed in a way that is not easily identifiable, if at all; notably the concluding leap action in Study, the head-hair movement in the first part of Ritual and the third part of Meditation.

Finally, on visual grounds, Deren extends space by connecting shots of the same kine-exospherical action captured from different kine-exocamera perspectives, as seen in the staircases in Meshes, in the driftwood ascendance in At Land, and in the concluding leap in Study. Reversing, in a sense, this intershot treatment, Deren extends time by reprinting, and rearranging on a micro-structural level, the content of a shot, notably seen in the ‘Party’ and the ‘Outdoor Dancing’ in Ritual as well as in the frozen moments in Meditation and throughout Eye of Night.

Screenance sound is not extensively developed within Deren’s writings, and when it is, it is mainly developed around the area of actuality sound and script. Deren favours the use of sound as long as it is reconstructed for cinematic purposes, giving the following example:

... as if you were standing at a window and looking out into the street, and there are children playing hopscotch... that’s your visual experience. Behind you, in the room, are women discussing hats or something, and that’s your auditory experience. You stand at the place where these two come together by virtue of your presence... They don’t know about each other, and so you stand by the window and have a sense of afternoon, which is neither the children in the street nor the women talking behind you but a curious combination of both, and that is your resultant image... this is possible in film...

cited in Sitney, 1970, 179

However, and this is perhaps the only point where Derenian theory differs from Derenian practice, there are no instances in her screenworks when either the aforementioned or any other actuality sound manipulation is materialised. Instead, Deren uses only acousmatic sound, and specifically music in order to provide her screenworks with an additional filmic dimension that, rather than accompanying, adds to the visual attributes. Mostly empathetic, and at times rhythmically concordant with the action, it is furthermore used for role characterisation, and/or macro-structural purposes, adding in that way to the complexity of the screenwork.

In terms of the narrative constructions within her screenworks, Meshes, At Land and Ritual include instances that prompt the protagonist/s to advance their

actions according to causal motivation. However, the way this is done does not comply with classical narrative cause-effect progression due to the limited and often ambiguous information. The aforementioned recorporealised scenes, the reconstructed spatiotemporality, the multiplication and alteration of characters, and at times the defamiliarised use of objects result in a macro-structure that is narratologically unconventional and to a certain extent open to interpretation, facts that align the screenworks with the thematic category.

Furthermore, the solitary works Study and Meditation, approach communicative factors differently. The characters' actions are as important as the overall macro-structure, which, in a dialogic relationship with the action performed, creates a meaning on its own. Rather than performing causally motivated solos, the characters seem to govern the progression of the events. Paradoxically, it could be also argued that, especially in Meditation, music affects, if not leads, considerably the action, since it always precedes the events as explained in section 4.6.4. Nevertheless, these abstracted narrative approaches should not be mistaken as anti-meaning format. In both instances, Deren aims and arguably succeeds in producing thematic meaning despite its relative broadness. In Study, Beatty negotiates his place within the spatial environment, and in Meditation Chi questions temporality and the passage of chronology. Along the same lines, Eye of Night seems not to be based on a causally motivated succession of events, but rather on a structure that complies with either rules of interrelation and/or of independence among the characters. Combining, in a sense, the 'themas' of both Study and Meditation, Eye of Night's equally open meaning engages with issues of spatiotemporal relativity and the broader metaphysical issues surrounding the place of humans in time and space.

Overall, despite the heterogeneity identified in Deren's screenworks, it is noteworthy that her notion of "filmic integrity and logic" (1946, 48) always manifests itself through fundamental screendance attributes. It is a filmic reality consisting of a fictional environment of reconstructed exospherical spaces and defamiliarised objects, which incorporates at times music, but most importantly is revealed to the spectator through recorporealised human actions. The originality and consistency of Deren's theory and practice, as well as her

established affiliation with screendance art, proves the initial hypothesis that Deren is a screendance practitioner, as well as a screendance aesthetic theorist. With regards to the latter, given the factors of timescale – 1940s to 1950s – and secondly the absence of any other extensive theoretical writing on screendance art up to her times, Deren is not only a significant screendance theorist, but possibly the earliest.

### **Further Implications and Research**

Reflecting on the results of this thesis, the typological continuum of dance on screen products proposed here will generally facilitate the recognition and understanding of the corresponding categories, advancing the research around these areas. Among the array of issues that are worthy of further investigation, there seems to be immediate need for investigation of the ‘dance notation’ and ‘dance documentation’ practices. In terms of the former, the guidelines provided by the current investigation could set the basis for further analytic investigation with the ultimate aim of providing the most comprehensive processes of registering/notating a dance work. As far as dance documentation is concerned, comparative analysis among the most successful screenworks, in terms of their communicative purpose, will perhaps provide certain guidelines for effectively converting the live audio-visual experience on screen.

In methodological terms, the multi-layer and RNM models of analysis have provided a sound basis for engaging with Deren’s screendances. However, whereas the heterogeneity of her screenworks indicates the applicability of the models to a wide spectrum of screendance art, it is up to further research to investigate this hypothesis; its validity will be only reinforced through its application to more cases. As an extension of the applicability of the models, it would be also valuable to examine their analytic significance when applied to screendance related productions, such as multi-media performances.

Reversing the process of combining cinematic and dance scholarship to arrive at these models, it would be interesting to investigate whether the outcomes can



actually inform dance or cinematic practices that are not screendance, like classical narrative screenworks. More specifically, the proposed models could be used to examine, firstly, whether the kine-exospheric formalist model is an efficient way of engaging with a dance work, and secondly, whether the multi-layer screendance model could provide new formalist readings of non-screendance cinematic works. Finally, it could be assessed whether the RNM combined model is a productive and inclusive way of engaging with issues of representation, narrativity and meaning, with regards to dance and cinematic artworks in general.

In term of cinema history, the current research has focused on Deren's theoretical originality and therefore her status alongside the aesthetic theorists like Eisenstein, Arnheim, and Bazin to name but very few. Along these lines, when the long-awaited screendance history is compiled, Deren should arguably acquire a distinct space, not for surrealist, feminist, anthropological or generally avant-garde reasons, but for her screendance artistry that this thesis has established. On similar grounds of historical assessment, the formalist analysis of all of Deren's screendances has also identified the degree of heterogeneity and individual inventiveness among her screenworks, which will hopefully encourage curators and scholars to reassess the misconception that Meshes is Deren's best film and/or her most representative.

Maya Deren is an artist who revolutionised screendance theory and practice, and in doing so created a legacy that is worthy of further attention and research. Many artists have made literary/poetic references to Deren – Merrill (1976), Tundra (2008), Annwn (2009) – while others have borrowed her images either to use for their music albums covers – 'Crystal Crescent' by Primal Scream 1986, 'These Bones Will Rise To Love You Again' by Lee County Killers (2005) – or for music video – 'Gentleman Who Fell' by Milla Jovovich (1994). There are also theatrical examples of Deren-related material. In 1994 'Horse and Bamboo theatre' based a play on Deren's visits to Haiti. Finally, of great interest is the fact that at least two music groups have produced new soundtracks for Deren's screenworks – Subterraneans and Mão Morta – while at VideoDance2003 in Athens, and four years later at the 10<sup>th</sup> Dance for Camera Festival in Brighton,

specially commissioned live music accompanied Deren's screened films. Especially with regards to the music video, the theatrical and the musical works, it would be interesting to investigate the relation between Deren's established screendance aesthetics and the corresponding screenworks.

There are also many screendance artists, among others, whose work may have no direct reference, but is clearly influenced by Derenian theory and practice; Christiana Galanopoulou (2007) identifies influences from early artists like Shirley Clarke up to recent screendance creators like Eric S. Koziol (2002), Sean O'Brien (2002), Alla Kovgan and Jeff Silva (2002), and Daniel Wilmouth (1997). Systematic investigation of the existing screendance works will identify whether these are isolated coincidental examples or whether there are the indication of a considerable volume of Derenian influenced works. A comparative analysis between the results provided by the current thesis, and the screendance formal characteristics of the screenworks will historically contextualise Deren's screendance legacy.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> For details regarding the Guggenheim application packs see appendix 1.
- <sup>2</sup> The film under discussion is Witch's Cradle which has begun in 1943. It features Marcel Duchamp and Pajorita Matta and aimed to explore the 'magical' attributes of the art objects Duchamp, among others, exhibited in Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century Gallery. (Nichols and Deren, 2001, 8). Whereas the film has never been finished and released by Deren, the rushes have survived. A version was released in 1989, if not earlier (anon., 1989, 82).
- <sup>3</sup> Based in New York from 1947 until 1963, Cinema 16 was a film society founded by Amos Vogel. Its shows consisted mostly of post-World War II experimental films, as well as nonfiction films, such as documentaries and educational films. For further information on Cinema 16, refer to MacDonald and Vogel (2002).
- <sup>4</sup> For further study on these issues see, for example, Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen's edited book What Is Dance? (1983) as well as Susan L. Foster's book Reading Dancing (1986) beside the aforementioned and among others.
- <sup>5</sup> Deep focus is determined by the camera-to-subject distance, the focal length of the lens, and the f-number of the lens opening – the aperture –. The wider the angle of the lens, the greater the f-number – the smaller the aperture diameter – the longer the depth of field. To be precise, there is only a certain distance at which the subject is in focus, but focus falls off gradually nearer of further of that distance. The region in which the blurring is imperceptible under normal viewing conditions, is considered as depth of field.
- <sup>6</sup> Whereas John Grierson's seminal contribution has overshadowed that of his sisters, as noted by film scholars Sylvia Paskin and Annette Kuhn (1994), and concurred by film academic Gwendolyn Audrey Foster (1995), the role played by Marion and Ruby Grierson in the development of British documentary was also fundamental. Accordingly, they should share credit with their brother. On these grounds, the current thesis uses the more democratic 'one of' instead of the often quoted phrase 'the' father and founder of British documentary (seen in Scott, 1975; Roud, 1980; Perry, 1997; Izod and Kilborn, 1998; Petrie, 2000; Houghton, 2003; among others).
- <sup>7</sup> Grierson's principles, proposed as a sort of minor manifesto in 1932, demonstrate clearly his perspective on the ontology of documentary:

First principles. (1) We believe that the cinema's capacity for getting around and observing and selecting from life itself, can be exploited in a new and vital art form. The studio films largely ignore this possibility of opening up the screen on the real world. They photograph acted stories against artificial backgrounds. Documentary would photograph the living scene and the living story. (2) We believe that the original (or native) actor, and the original (or) native scene, are better guides to a screen interpretation of the modern world. They give cinema greater fund of material... more complex and astonishing happenings than the studio can... (3) We believe that the materials and the stories thus taken from the raw can be finer (more real in the philosophic sense) than the acted article.

Grierson, 1998, 83

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- <sup>8</sup> The ‘poetic mode’ reassembles the historical world by emphasising visual associations and formal characteristics; the ‘expository mode’ is didactic in nature and addresses the world, often through argumentative verbal commentary; the ‘observational mode’ seeks to represent the world through discreet ways of filmmaking; the ‘participatory mode’, unlike the ‘observational documentary’, interacts with the world making use of interviewing or other participatory means; the ‘reflexive mode’ calls attention to the documentary form, by means of questioning its conventions, and increasing the viewing awareness; and finally, the ‘performative mode’ is highly subjective as to the way it engages with a subject. (Nichols, 2001, 99-138).
- <sup>9</sup> The positive film shows the correct areas of light and darkness in a photograph as in nature, not reversed as in negative.
- <sup>10</sup> Although the term has changed usage since its introduction in the 1920s, cinema-vérité (film-truth) is used by Clarke in reference to a cinema that “attempted to catch reality on film... [an] unstaged, non-dramatised, non-narrative cinema” (Hayward, 2000, 59).
- <sup>11</sup> Lorber is most probably referring to Doris Totten Chase (1923 – 2008) who was an artist experimenting in various media. A painter, sculptor and filmmaker, who was often involved with dance and theatre, she is widely known for her pioneering video art works.
- <sup>12</sup> The case of creating shorter screendance works of their stage equivalent is often noticed. It is presumably on this fact that Daniel Conrad argues that “film time runs more quickly than stage time” (Conrad, 2006, 102). It is however a debatable generalisation since in other stage to screen art adaptations like theatre musicals or stage plays, it is not necessarily the case. Future research on the phenomenon will perhaps provide some answers to this intriguing claim.
- <sup>13</sup> The following texts have been reprinted in Deren and McPherson (2005), Deren et al. (1970), Clark et al. (1985).
- <sup>14</sup> The full list consists of Miriam Arsham, Stan Brakhage, Chao-Li Chi, Rita Christiani, Jean-Léon Destiné, Katherine Dunham, Graeme Ferguson, Alexander Hammid, Judith Malina, Jonas Mekas, Martha Gabriel, André Pierre, Amos Vogel and Marcia Vogel.
- <sup>15</sup> Patriarchal film-making reflected the world mainly from a male perspective that placed women in an inferior social position; often depicted as objects of male desire. As Sharon Smith notes in 1972 “From its beginning they [women] were present but not in characterisations any self-respecting person could identify with” (1972, 13). Marjorie Rosen concurs in 1973, establishing that the female film depiction, may have changed from the advent of cinema till 1960s but it has always suffered diminishment due to the male-perspective (Rosen, 1975). For a collection of essays on the wider spectrum of feminist film theory see the edited book of Sue Thornham (1999). For a critical introduction on women's filmmaking see Alison Butler (2002).
- <sup>16</sup> ‘Anthology Film Archives’ is a non-profit organisation established in New York City by Jonas Mekas, Stan Brakhage, Paul Adams Sitney and Peter Kubelka, and opened on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1970.
- <sup>17</sup> Sitney refers to Deren (1917 – 1961), Stan Brakhage (1933 – 2003), Gregory Markopoulos (1928 – 1992) and Peter Kubelka (b.1934) respectively.
- <sup>18</sup> Jackson refers correspondingly to the influential French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859 – 1941), to the English writer, critic and poet Thomas Ernest Hulme (1883 – 1917), to the American – naturalised British – poet, dramatist and literary critic Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888 – 1965), and finally to American expatriate, economist, musician, critic and poet Ezra Pound (1885 – 1972).

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- <sup>19</sup> It should be noted that the notion of imagist films was not new. Raymond Spottiswoode explains in 1950 that the imagist film makes use of “the visual simile and the symbol as the chief means of montage, and as an alternative to the spoken word” (1950, 297), providing as an example Machaty’s Extase (1933).
- <sup>20</sup> Gilles Deleuze (1925 – 1995) was a French philosopher whose seminal works on philosophy, literature, fine arts, and film, are highly influential.
- <sup>21</sup> In fact the roots of formalism as an aesthetic approach stems as far back as the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle (384 – 322 B.C.) and his Ποιητική ‘Poetics’ written in 350 B.C.<sup>21</sup>, as well as the German philosopher Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729 – 1781) and his reasoning presented in Laokoon oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie (1766), (‘Laokoon An Essay Upon the Limits of Painting and Poetry’). In the former instance, there is a section where Aristotle undertakes to distinguish between different art forms according to the specificity of their corresponding mediums. Revisiting Aristotle, Lessing discusses purity of the art medium and how poetry and painting are substantially different in character.
- <sup>22</sup> David Wark Griffith in his film Intolerance (1916) pursued four story lines simultaneously, among other cinematic techniques, materialising ideas that Münsterberg expressed about the time and space manipulation that can be achieved through cinema.
- <sup>23</sup> Film as Art (Arnheim, 1957) was firstly published in German as ‘Film als Kunst’ in 1932.
- <sup>24</sup> Arnheim (1957) drew the conclusion that the raw material of film as art is related to the technical limitations of representation. He named six limitations that were then part of the cinematic expression: the projection of the three dimensional solid space on a two dimensional surface; the reduction of a sense of depth and the problem of absolute image size; the lighting and the absence of colour; the framing of the image; the absence of a space-time continuum that the editing creates; and eventually, the absence of inputs from other sense.
- <sup>25</sup> As Felix Mesguich (1871-1949), cameraman for the Lumières, has explicitly stated:
- ... the Lumière Brothers have established the true domain of the cinema in the right manner. The novel, the theatre, suffice for the study of the human heart. The cinema is the dynamism of life, of nature and its manifestations, of the crowd and its eddies. All that asserts itself through movement depends on it. Its lens opens on the world.
- cited in Sadoul, 1947, 208
- <sup>26</sup> Discussing the realism of the film director William Wyler (1902-1981), Bazin praises Wyler for creating “a picture that resembles as much as possible, despite the inevitable formal elements required to create it, the spectacle that an eye could see if it looked at reality through an empty framing device” (Bazin and Cardullo, 1997, 10) “the most purely cinematic works ever” (1997, 3).
- <sup>27</sup> Accordingly, the ‘eyeline match’ technique connects a shot that includes a character watching, with what s/he is watching, allowing the viewer to follow the character’s gaze direction. The ‘match on movement’ connects two shots in reference to their movement; speed direction is comparable between the two succeeding shots. The ‘match on action’ refers to the connection of two shots that frame the same action from a different perspective; therefore, an action that begins in the first shot continues or even finishes in the second, seamlessly connected by the supposing uninterrupted filmed action. Finally, the ‘match on axis’ technique is materialised by connecting two shots of the same event filmed along the same camera-to-object axis but with a difference of distance (Aumont, 1992, 56). The 180°

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rule is a fundamental guideline for editing which ensures that two characters have the same left/right orientation to each other. It is based on a virtual axis constructed between the two subjects, which the camera should not cross between shots of the same scene. The 30° rule specifies that the “transition between two shots less than 30 degrees apart might be perceived as unnecessary or discontinuous-- in short, visible” (Corrigan and White, 2004, 130).

<sup>28</sup> His view can be clearly illustrated in his 1929 text ‘A Dialectical Approach to Film Form’ where the following types of conflict are cited:

1. Graphic conflict
2. Conflict of planes
3. Conflict of volumes
4. Spatial conflict
5. Light conflict
6. Tempo conflict ...
7. Conflict between matter and viewpoint (achieved by spatial distortion through camera angle)
8. Conflict between matter and its spatial nature (achieved by optical distortion by the lens)
9. Conflict between an event and its temporal nature (achieved by slow-motion and stop-motion); and finally
10. Conflict between the whole optical complex and a quite different sphere.

Eisenstein, 1969, 49, 54

<sup>29</sup> This particular montage practice is argued by Dudley Andrew to have been conceived “within the psychological model of Pavlov, or at least of the associationists” (1976, 44) referring respectively to the Russian physiologist, psychologist, and physician Ivan Petrovich Pavlov (1849-1936) and his experiments on classical conditioning, a type of associative learning, and the theory of how things combine in mind. Namely, an editing style that seeks through the shots, but primarily through their combination, to create psychological stimuli to the audience through associative processes.

<sup>30</sup> Having witnessed important events of the twentieth century, Russian filmmakers, especially in 1920s and 1930s, addressed through their works major ideological and socio-political changes. Examples include Eisenstein’s Battleship Potemkin (1925) and October: Ten Days That Shook the World (1927), which are also indicative of the innovative film editing. For further information see Richard Taylor (1998), Anna M. Lawton (1992) and Richard Taylor and Ian Christie (1994), among others.

<sup>31</sup> Discussing reality and the ‘significance’ of the objects that form it, Gestalt psychology argues that “the problem of significance is closely bound up with the problem of the relation between the whole and its parts. It has been said that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. It is more correct to say that the whole is something else than the sum of its parts” (Koffka, 1999, 176).

<sup>32</sup> Different sources provide different birth dates; for instance 1919 is the date given by Jack Anderson (1995), alternatively 1923 is provided by Mary Clarke and Clement Crisp (1981) among others.

<sup>33</sup> Katherine Dunham submitted her thesis, entitled "Dances of Haiti, Their Social Organization, Classification, Form and Function" in 1939, and is considered one of the earliest ethno-choreologists. Her extensive study of the Caribbean dance forms, especially as manifested in Haitian Vodou rituals, is evident in her dancing style which synthesises African and Caribbean movement and rhythm with classical ballet dance. Creating one of the first all black

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dance companies, 'The Negro Dance Group' in 1934, Dunham broke new ground in the way that the white community treated African-American artists and also the black community in general. Her activist work, in conjunction with being an artist, author, choreographer, anthropologist and philanthropist, compiles a multi-faceted persona that has arguably created a legacy and vision that lives on. For further study on Katherine Dunham refer to Dunham, Clark (2005).

- <sup>34</sup> For further reading on the art of photography and its attributes look Ansel Adams The Camera (1995), first published in the 1950s, which stresses mechanical performance and artistic control as well as the comprehensive guide to all aspects of photography Langford's Basic Photography: the Guide for Serious Photographers (Langford et al. 2007)

<sup>35</sup>

Sound can be defined as a wave motion in air or other elastic media (stimulus) or as that excitation of the hearing mechanism that results in the perception of sound (sensation). Which definition applies, depends on whether the approach is physical or psychophysical ... If the interest is in the disturbance of air treated by a loudspeaker, it is problem in physics. If the interest is how it sounds to a person near the loudspeaker, psychophysical methods must be used.

F. Alton Everest, 2001, 1

- <sup>36</sup> Based on her famous 'Fire Dance', Fuller produced, directed and performed an homonymous short film in 1906 – France, Gaumont – (Coffman, 1992).

- <sup>37</sup> Sally Banes, author of numerous books and articles on dance criticism and history, proposes the use of the term "historical modern dance" (1987, iv) to describe the dance period prior to post-modern dance. Another example is Lynn Garafola, author of *Diaghilev's Ballet Russes* (Garafola, 1989) who, in reviewing Julia L. Foulkes' book Modern Bodies: Dance and American Modernism from Martha Graham to Alvin Ailey (2002), writes "Julia L. Foulkes book *Modern Bodies...* sheds new light on the rise and fall of 'historic' modern dance" (Foulkes, 2002, back cover).

- <sup>38</sup> Susan Manning, an authority on the era of German expressionist dance, refers to it as 'dance modernism' in certain texts (1988) and as 'modern dance' in others (1993). Other authorities on the subject like Ramsay Burt (1998) and Roger Copeland (2004) make a clear distinction between the terms 'modern dance' and 'modernism' using the latter to refer to arts in general and the Greenbergian usage, rather than dance in particular . Finally, Stephanie Jordan (1992) uses the term 'modernist dances' to refer to 'dances about dancing'.

- <sup>39</sup> For a detailed analysis of dance modernism refer to John Martin (1965b), Margaret Lloyd (1949), Jane Winearls (1968), Selma Jeanne Cohen (1969), Don McDonagh (1990), Jack Anderson (1997), Isa Partsch-Bergsohn (1994, 1995, 2001, 2003) among others. Beside the aforementioned, Sally Banes provides an interesting viewpoint that classifies dance modernism as being "unmodernist" (1987, xiv), a highly debatable viewpoint questioned by Susan Manning (1988).

- <sup>40</sup> In his 1935 essay The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility – a retitled, only slightly altered version of Walter Benjamin's (1892-1940) influential essay The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction (Benjamin, 2008) – Benjamin also engages with the phenomenon of mechanical reproduction of art, and its effect on artistic expression. Chronologically speaking, it is Martin that succeeds the discussion on

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reproduction, yet since Benjamin's essay was not translated in English until 1968 by Harry Zohn, it is difficult to know if Martin was aware of the essay.

- <sup>41</sup> 'Abstract expressionism' is a term borrowed from the plastic arts and mainly painting. It corresponded to a post-World War II art movement that flourished in north America. 'Abstract expressionism', concerns works that limber between the anti-figurative aesthetic of abstract painting, and the emotionally tense German expressionism. As Jackson Pollock notes, "Experience of our age in terms of painting – not an illustration of – (but the equivalent)" (cited in Cernuschi, 1997, 17), meaning, as Claude Cernuschi explains, not figurative illustration but an 'equivalent' which is "comparable to what the cognitive scientists describe as metaphor" (1997, 17).
- <sup>42</sup> For further information on 'objectivism' the reader may refer to Roger Copeland (2004) and Gay Morris (2006).
- <sup>43</sup> Marcia B. Siegel (1979) talks about fourteen rather than fifteen dancers that Don McDonagh mentions (1976).
- <sup>44</sup> Don McDonagh notes that only in the first performance the dance was cued by taps on a gong (1976, 90).
- <sup>45</sup> Loïe Fuller (also Loie Fuller, born Marie Louise Fuller) (1862 - 1928) is considered by some the forerunner of dance modernism. She is famous for being a lighting pioneer who combined her choreography with fabrics illuminated from different directions. Distinctly, she is probably the earliest dancer whose costume – and the attached fabrics – abstracted and transformed her corporeal figure as a structural element of the choreography. For further information refer to Sommer (1975, 1981).
- <sup>46</sup> For more information on the reasons responsible for the tendency of injecting narrative see Walter Fisher (1987). His theory of 'Narrative Paradigm' suggests that all communication is a form of storytelling, and that human beings experience life as a series of ongoing narratives.
- <sup>47</sup> Ari Hiltunen in Aristotle in Hollywood (2002) discusses Aristotle's concept of "proper pleasure" as manifested within tragedy and its storytelling processes and eventually demonstrates connections between successful, Hollywood-style strategies and the Aristotelian narrative. Michael Tierno, in Aristotle's Poetics for Screenwriters (2002), demonstrates the value of Aristotle's storytelling devices and their applicability in current screenwriting.
- <sup>48</sup> Paul Adams Sitney describes abstracted narrative as being the most common form employed by avant-garde filmmakers, providing as examples the surrealist film Un Chien Andalou created in 1928 and released one year later by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, Deren's Meshes of the Afternoon (1943) and, as thematic compositions, "the city symphonies, usually describing a day in the life of a city; or tone poems about a season, a place, or a form of matter, such as Steiner's *H<sub>2</sub>O* about water patterns." (2002, 22), another example being Ballet Mécanique (1924), a project by the American composer George Antheil and the filmmakers Dudley Murphy and Fernand Léger, who was also painter and sculptor.
- <sup>49</sup> It is debatable whether Mary Wigman was actually the 'first'. It is worth taking into account the biased nature of John Martin's writings which aim to raise the status of modern dance against ballet's tradition and evolution has its polemics, the most notable one being his contemporary theorist Lincoln Edward Kirstein (1907-1996). According to the latter, who is ballet biased, Vaslav Nijinsky is the innovator of 'absolute dance'. "...before Nijinsky, no one, neither [Michel] Fokine, [Isadora] Duncan nor [Jean-Georges] Noverre, had conceived of movement simply as movement" (1969, 284) establishing Nijinsky as the earliest choreographer that made use of non-realistic movement or for technical exhibition.



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- <sup>50</sup> Derived from music, an ‘ABA’ form of dance, or an elaboration of it as AB, CB, ACA, with letters representing sections of a dance, is according to Humphrey

thoroughly formal, and is suited to the nondramatic dance... [since being drama] a compressed bit of life, cannot very well begin and end with an A section, or all sense of development and change, the essence of drama, is lost. Life does not repeat exactly; no two moments are alike, similar as they may seem.

Humphrey, 1959, 151

About the ‘Recurring theme’ she explains that “the keynote ... is a repeated idea” (Humphrey, 1959, 150); it is basically about a theme, a movement section which is repeated in variations. The fourth form, ‘The Suite’, is the one in which non-representational movement materials – ‘abstractions’ – are put together on the principle of contrast. Finally, ‘Broken Form’ concerns the dance works which are “deliberately illogical, in which lack of continuity in idea is the point” (Humphrey, 1959, 150), often used for comic danceworks, since for Humphrey “illogicality is often at the very heart of humour” (1959, 154).

- <sup>51</sup> The term ‘reception’ that corresponds to a ‘receiver’, as opposed to a ‘spectator’ or an ‘audience’, is chosen as the most appropriate and concise term for the current text, referring to the ending pole of the SMR – sender message receiver – communication model of screendance products. ‘Spectator’ or ‘audience’, besides being a singular and a collective term, emphasizes two different processes of reception, visual for ‘spectator’ and audio for ‘audience’. Monaco, argues that this differentiation is not coincidental, but it rather corresponds to the fact that as far as theatre is concerned, it is a highly auditory activity, whereas cinema is primarily a visual pleasure (Monaco, 2000, 48). The extent to which this is a fact is debatable and it is not for this thesis to discuss beyond screendance terms. As far as screendance is concerned, the receiver’s activity is audiovisual, so for reasons of linguistic preciseness it is neither discussion of a ‘spectator’ or audience’ but of audiovisual ‘receiver’.
- <sup>52</sup> McPherson, among others, uses the term ‘wide’, instead of ‘long’ to describe the same shot sizes, while instead of ‘extreme close-up’ she chooses the term ‘big close-up’. Accordingly the shot types are extreme wide shot, wide shot, medium wide shot, mid-shot, medium close-up, close-up, big close-up (2006a, 29).
- <sup>53</sup> As clarified in chapter two the term ‘normal’ for the 50 mm lenses should be treated with consideration, since, whereas the 50 mm lenses approximate the perspective of the human vision, the wide-angled lens – a typical wide-angle lens is 28 mm – is closer to the human’s eye angle of vision which is even wider from the ‘wide-angle’ lens.
- <sup>54</sup> Malkiewicz and Mullen (2005), in the glossary section of the book, defines the terms as “**crane**. A large camera-mounting vehicle with a rotating and high raising arm, operated electrically or manually” (238) “**dolly**. A wheeled vehicle for mounting a camera and accommodating a camera operator and assistant. Often equipped with a boom on which the camera is mounted” (239).
- <sup>55</sup> If the alteration concerns a single frame, then it is basically an intra/interframe manipulation, but since this is a very rare case, the term intra/intershot is more accurate for the current discussion.
- <sup>56</sup> Note that the vertical and horizontal editing discussion of intershot manipulation is not relevant to Deren’s discussion of the vertical and horizontal way of approaching filmmaking, discussed in chapter two.
- <sup>57</sup> Bordwell and Thompson based on the notion of ‘story space’ use the term ‘diegetic sound’ to define “The voices of the characters, sounds made by objects in the story, or music coming

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- from instruments in the story space” (1985, 192) whether on-screen or off-screen, yet their terminology is focused on classical narrative films and not screenworks in general. Accordingly, the current screendance discussion benefits more from Aumont’s approach to film-space.
- <sup>58</sup> Silence, as noted by Chion and Gorbman (1994, 57), is not necessarily a complete interruption of film sound. It is often a low volume ambient ‘silence’ specific to each space. Using the current thesis’ terminology it is a low volume ambient sound of the corresponding recorded exospherical reality.
- <sup>59</sup> ‘Loudness’ stands for the physical strength (amplitude) of a sound. ‘Pitch’ refers to the perceived frequency of a sound – highness or lowness –. ‘Timbre’ or ‘colour’ or ‘tone quality’ refers to the harmonic components that make two sounds of same loudness and pitch, dissimilar (Bordwell and Thompson, 1985, 184-185).
- <sup>60</sup> Extensive experimentation of the kinespherical body camera movement has been undertaken by Canadian filmmaker and artist Michael Snow and his ultimate pan/tilt/roll machine, where a camera is mounted on a machine able to move towards any direction, while being also able to roll. This machine, which has been technically supervised by cinematographer and technician Pierre Abbeloos, has been used by Snow specifically in his film La Region Centrale (1971).
- <sup>61</sup> As mentioned in chapter two, Fowler (2004) provides an article about gallery film installations and Deren.
- <sup>62</sup> Vertov and Epstein are two more theorists that make parallelism of microscope with slow-motion, as Michelson (2001), Jackson (2002) and Butler (2007) have noted. Other theorists that compare cinematic time with the microscope include Hanns Sachs (1998) in his 1928 essay ‘Film Psychology’.
- <sup>63</sup> One of the earliest and most notable examples of speaker installation is Fantasound installation for the screening of Fantasia (Disney, 1940) where film producer, director and animator Walt Disney (1901 – 1966) used an RCA [Radio Corporation of America] designed system to emphasise the directional character of a symphony orchestra (Handzo, 1985, 418).
- <sup>64</sup> This statement of principles can be accessed in an audible form in In the Mirror of Maya Deren (Kudlacek, 2002).
- <sup>65</sup> I have watched Deren’s Meshes of the Afternoon in at least four instances on a theatre screen, in all of which the film was projected at its latter sound version; as occurs in both DVD-video publications of Deren’s completed screenworks: Maya Deren’s Experimental Films (Mystic Fire Video, 2007) The History of Dance on Film and Video: Part 2: Maya Deren - Dance Films (Editions a voir, 1996). Interestingly, in the credits of the film, Deren has changed the beginning credits in order to insert Teji-Ito’s name, but she has retained the initial film date – 1943.
- <sup>66</sup> Intertitles are the cards often used in silent cinema for narrative purposes. “[...] early film intertitles often frame their words in borders resembling painting frames” (Elliott, 2003, 17)
- <sup>67</sup> Bugaku basically is gagaku – elegant – music played as accompaniment for dance. Recognised as ‘court music’ in 702 AD, gagaku “became the designation of the standard varieties of court music as they were developed through the centuries to modern times” (Brown, 1993, 498).

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- <sup>68</sup> Otherwise referred to as ‘non-pitched’, ‘unpitched’, or ‘untuned’ percussions “are associated with irregular pressure variations without a definite periodicity” (Campbell, 2004, 5), in other words no identifiable pitch.
- <sup>69</sup> For more information on sound spatialisation and structural use refer to Noël Burch (1985), and Bordwell and Thompson (1985).
- <sup>70</sup> The single quoted titles mentioned above are based on the scenario reprinted in Clark et al. (1988, 266). For further information see Clark et al. (1988, 265-276).
- <sup>71</sup> According to Terese Capucilli, a student of Martha Graham, and later principal and co-artistic director of the company, in a technical sense “Contraction is the lengthening of the spine into a curve while the front of the body is shortened” (cited in Marcel, 2009 [online]).
- <sup>72</sup> ‘*tour en l’air*’: a turn in the air, a movement which involves the dancer “turning while at the same time jumping straight up into the air”( Craine and Mackrell, 2000).
- <sup>73</sup> This scene and the integrated metaphor is fundamental in Sitney’s discussion on ‘imagist’ screenworks (1970, 188).
- <sup>75</sup> Deren has not provided a segmentation as such. However, these lists are constructed from primary sources and therefore can be considered valid material. For further information see Clark (1988, 503-509).
- <sup>76</sup> *Relevé* “(FR., lifted). A rise from flat foot to half or full point...” (392) *Attitude* “Position in which the dancer stands on one leg with the other lifted in front or behind with the knee bent...” (Craine and Mackrell, 2000, 30).
- <sup>77</sup> The black clothing is generally associated darkness and death and is often used for mourning; the white with purity and innocence, which is why it is used in bridal gowns among western cultures. However, there are historical and cultural contexts where this is not the case. For example during the Byzantine empire, the emperor was mourning a close relative in white, other examples include Ancient Greece, Rome and China (Rhodocanakis, 1868, 357-358) Furthermore, white clothing is the traditional Hindu colour for the mourning period (Bryant, 2003, 646).
- <sup>78</sup> As Deren states in her 1949 Guggenheim application, she was planning to make a film that would blend Balinese and Haitian Rituals, through the use of Children’s games that would work as “the liason, the fusion, between the other two” (Guggenheim and Deren, 1949). Finally the film was going to experiment with sound from these sources. Deren did not complete the film due to insufficient funding.
- <sup>79</sup> “There is potential energy associated with a body’s weight and its height above the ground. We call this *gravitational potential energy*.” (Young et al., 2008, 214) For more details look [Sears and Zemansky's University Physics](#) (Young et al., 2008, 213-222).
- <sup>80</sup> Laban, in his German writings, uses the terms *Stabilitat* and *Labilitat*, to refer to the principles of stability and lability respectively. The former, refers to “The use of movements in the cardinal directions, up, down, left, right, forward, and backward such that the centre of weight tends to remain directly over the stance, or to repeatedly return to it” (cited in Preston-Dunlop, 1995, 301). In contrast, lability, refers to “The use of movements in the diametral and diagonal directions so that the weight moves away from being above the stance, with a tendency to lose equilibrium” (cited in Preston-Dunlop, 1995, 304).
- <sup>81</sup> Originally published in ‘Adventures of Creative Film-making’ (Deren, 1960).

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- <sup>82</sup> Antony Tudor (1908 –1987), was a highly influential twentieth-century ballet master – choreographer, teacher and dancer. He created over sixty ballets and was instrumental in the establishment and rise of the American Ballet Theater. For further information refer to The Ballets of Antony Tudor: Studies in Psyche and Satire (Chazin-Bennahum, 1994).
- <sup>83</sup> For further information on ‘motion parallax’ and the rest of depth cues, refer to the Foundations of Binocular Vision: A Clinical Perspective (Steinman, 2000).

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## APPENDIX 1:

### Maya Deren's John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Application Packs

Maya Deren applied six times: unsuccessfully in 1945, 1947, 1948, 1949 and 1953, and successfully in the competition of 1946. The following lists enumerate the material relating to these applications as received through personal correspondence in May 2004.

[original titles in inverted commas]

#### **1945 (material received in 1944)**

– list compiled by the researcher –

1. Concise statement of project.
2. Applicant's details:
  - a. Personal History
  - b. Education
  - c. Accomplishments
  - d. Plans For Work
  - e. References
3. Confidential Reports on Candidate For Fellowship by:
  - a. Mr. Herman Weinberg
  - b. Professor Sawyer Falk
  - c. Mr. Marcel Duchamp
  - d. Mr. Ossip Zadkine
  - e. Mr. J. B. Neumann
  - f. Mme Galka Scheyer
4. The Invitation to the premiere of At Land.
5. Letter from Maya Deren to Henry Allen Moe for the addition of Professor Sawyer Falk to the list of persons as references.
6. Letter of notification from Henry Allen Moe to Maya Deren of the latter's unsuccessful application.

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**1946 (material received in 1945-1946)**

– list as catalogued by Maya Deren herself and presented in the first page of the application under the title “Enclosures” –

1. Statement of application renewal, including additional references as sponsors.
2. Chronological diary of developments concerning the films since the previous application in 1944.
3. Supplementary quotations from reviews and letters concerning reception of films.
4. Brief statement of plans for work, accompanied by printed circular concerning direction of film work and a longer article, dealing, more elaborately, with the same topic. This is presented in triplicate; one for the Foundation; one for Mr. George Amberg, as additional sponsor; and one for sponsor to be chosen from a list, by the judges.
5. A copy of the film program at the Museum of Modern Art, sponsored by the American Film Center.
6. An article dealing with the dance film, printed in the October issue of Dance Magazine.
7. An article dealing with film technique, printed in the June issue of Movie Makers.

(The articles are submitted as the most precise descriptions of the actual techniques I have developed and employed in my films.)

In addition... – list compiled by the researcher –

8. Letter from Maya Deren to Henry Allen Moe for submission of additional reviews.
9. Programme of “Three Abandoned Films” .
10. Reviews
11. Correspondence between Henry Allen Moe and Maya Deren regarding the appointment and acceptance of the fellowship.

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12. Letters of invitation to Henry Allen Moe for the premiere and other screenings of Ritual in Transfigured Time.
  13. Programme of “Films in the Classicist Tradition”.
  14. “Ritual in Transfigured Time” article in Dance , December, 1946 .
  15. List of past and scheduled “Screenings of the Films” [original title] and lectures.
  16. Personal Bibliography
  17. Reviews
  18. Letter from Maya Deren to Henry Allen Moe requesting information for the extension of her fellowship and submission of further material (“Films in the Classicist Tradition” programme notes, reviews).

## **1947**

– list compiled by the researcher –

1. Letter from Maya Deren to Henry Allen Moe for extension of her fellowship.
2. “Application For The Renewal of a Fellowship For Creative Work in the Field of Motion-Pictures”
3. Letter from Maya Deren to the foundation regarding corrections of the foundation’s “Index listing” of Deren’s films.
4. List of past and scheduled “Screenings of the Films” and lectures
5. The index corrected
6. Personal Bibliography
7. Letter from Lila Pelton to Josephine Leighton for submission of additional information regarding the list of past and scheduled “Screenings of the Films” and lectures.
8. Additional information regarding the list of past and scheduled “Screenings of the Films” and lectures.

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## 1948

– list compiled by the researcher –

1. Letter from Maya Deren to Henry Allen Moe for grant application.
2. Four Articles about Maya Deren:
  - a. “Maya Deren, Artiste et Cinéaste de Talent est á P-au-P”
  - b. “Miss Maya Deren et Ses
  - c. Maya Deren au Centre d’Art
  - d. Maya Deren au...
3. Cover Letter from Maya Deren for submission of additional material.
4. Personal Bibliography
5. List of past and scheduled “Screenings of the Films” and lectures.

## 1949

– list compiled by the researcher –

1. Letter from Maya Deren to Henry Allen Moe announcing her new film [Meditation On Violence], and re-application for a fellowship

In addition... – list as catalogued by Maya Deren –

2. [numbered as 1] A report on the state of the long film-in-progress for which I made the trip to Haiti last year.
3. [numbered as 2] A report on MEDITATION ON VIOLENCE, a shorter film completed in December (1948), in which I attempt to resolve some of the problems which I shall confront in the longer film-in-progress.
4. [numbered as 3] A general report on the status of my film activity.

## 1953

– list as catalogued by Deren and presented in the first page of the application –

1. Application for the Re-renewal [sic] of Fellowship in Motion Pictures (4pp)
2. Summary of activities since the receipt of Fellowship in 1946
3. A complete bibliography (9pp) [...]



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4. A list of screenings of the films (8pps) [...]
  5. A pre-publication bound page-proof of DIVINE HORSEMEN [...]
  6. Critical comments on Divine Horsemen. Copies of two letters and a photostat of a review which appeared in England.
  7. The proof of the back of the album cover of the long-playing record of my Haitian recordings which is shortly to be released.
  8. A circular about my films, composed of quotes.
  9. Three tear sheets of articles: THE ARTIST AS GOD IN HAITI (Tiger's Eye 6/48); HAITI (Flair, 10/50); GODDESS OF LOVE (Mademoiselle 2/51) [...]

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## NON-PRINT SOURCES

### **Discography**

Parallax Error Beheads You (2008)  
Composer: Max Tundra

### **Live performances**

Blush (2002)  
Director: Wim Vandekeybus

Can we afford this / Cost of Living (2000 – 2003)  
Director: Lloyd Newson

### **Filmography**

9 Variations (1966)  
Director: Hilary Harris

A Study in Choreography for Camera (1945)  
Director: Maya Deren

Arcus (2002)  
Fimmakers: Alla Kovgan and Jeff Silva

Arrivée d'un Train à la Ciotat, L' (Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat) (1895)

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Directors: Auguste and Louis Lumière

At Land (1944)

Director: Maya Deren

Ballet Mécanique (1924)

Directors: Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy

Birds (2000)

Director: David Hinton

Blush (2005)

Director: Wim Vandekeybus

Book of Days (1998)

Director: Meredith Monk

Bridges Go Round (1958)

Director: Shirley Clarke

Cabaret (1972)

Director: Bob Fosse

Choreographer: Bob Fosse

Cost of Living (2004)

Director: Lloyd Newson

Curtain of Eyes (1997)

Director: Danièle Wilmouth

Danse Serpentine (1896)

Filmmakers: August and Luis Lumière

Choreographer-Performer: Loïe Fuller

Divine Horsemen: Living Gods of Haiti (1985)

Directors and Editors: Teiji Ito and Cherel Ito

Cinematographer: Maya Deren

Dance of Summer (1929)

Choreographer: Mary Wigman

Drama of Motion (1930)

Choreographer: Doris Humphrey

Entr'acte (1924)

Director: René Clair

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Extase (1933)

Director: Gustav Machaty

Fantasia (1940)

Producer: Walt Disney

Farewell and Thanksgiving (1942)

Choreographer: Mary Wigman

Fire Dance (1906)

Choreographer: Loïe Fuller

In Paris Parks (1954)

Director: Shirley Clarke

In the Mirror of Maya Deren (2002)

Director: Martina Kudláček

Intolerance (1916)

Director D.W. Griffith

Lamentation (1930)

Choreographer: Martha Graham

Maya Deren: Experimental Films (2002)

Directors: Maya Deren, Alexander Hammid

Meditation on Violence (1948)

Director: Maya Deren

Meshes of the Afternoon (1943)

Director: Maya Deren

Moana (1926)

Director: Robert Flaherty

Modern Dance in Germany and the United States (1995)

Director: Partsch-Bergsohn, Isa

Monotony (1928)

Choreographer: Mary Wigman

Moods of the Sea (1941)

Directors: Slavko Vorkapich and John Hoffman

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New England Dances (1990)

Director: John Bishop

No Maps on My Taps (1979)

Director: George T. Nierenberg

On the Town (1949)

Directors: Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly

Choreographers: Gene Kelly, Carol Haney and Alex Romero

Dancemaker (1998)

Director: Matthew Diamond

Region Centrale, La (1971)

Director: Michael Snow

Rhythm is it! (2004)

Directors: Thomas Grube and Enrique Sanchez Lansch

Ritual in Transfigured Time (1945 – 46)

Director: Maya Deren

Scherzo (1939)

Director: Norman McLaren

Scratch (2005)

Director: Shelly Love

Seraphic Song (1929)

Choreographer: Mary Wigman

Serpentine Dance by Annabelle (1896)

Director: William K. L. Dickson

Singin' in the Rain (1952)

Director: Stanley Donen, Gene Kelly

Choreographers: Gene Kelly, Jeanne Coyne, Carol Haney and Gwen Verdon

Sunrise at Midnight (2002)

Director: Sean O'Brien

The Duchess (2002)

Director: Eric Koziol

The History of Dance on Film and Video (1996 – 1998)

Director: Maya Deren, Man Ray, Dudley Murphey et al.

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The Makers of Modern Dance in Germany: Rudolf Laban, Mary Wigman, Kurt

Jooss (2001)

Director: Isa Partsch-Bergsohn

The Shakers (1930)

Choreographer: Dorris Humphrey

The Very Eye of Night (1952 – 1955)

Director: Maya Deren

Top Hat (1935)

Director: Mark Sandrich

Choreographers: Hermes Pan and Fred Astaire

Un Chien Andalou (1929)

Directors: Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí

Voyage Dans La Lune, Le (1902)

Director: Georges Méliès

Water Study (1928)

Choreographer: Dorris Humphrey

Witch's Cradle (1943) (unfinished)

Director: Maya Deren

Witch Dance (1914)

Choreographer: Mary Wigman

With my Red Fires (1936)

Choreographer: Dorris Humphrey