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Tracing image and bodily displacement in modern and postmodern dance

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TRACING

IMAGE AND BODILY DISPLACEMENT

IN

MODERN AND POSTMODERN DANCE

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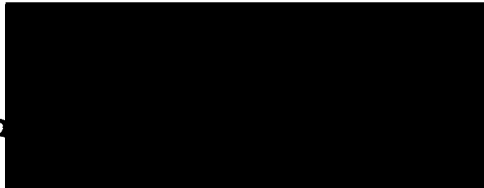
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TRACING
IMAGE AND BODILY DISPLACEMENT
IN
MODERN AND POSTMODERN DANCE

By

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MA Thesis, Faculty of Creative Arts,
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ABSTRACT

Through time the dancer has been both celebrated and disadvantaged by antithetical ideas: the division of soul and body, form and matter, life and death, artist and audience. For the romantics, the dancing body stood in a relationship to poetic thought in much the same way as the dancer stood to the body. Notions of the body in early modernism arose from cultural and political constructs through which poets and writers examined the nature of truth. These poets, Yeats in particular, hinted at a premise that a whole history of culture may be necessary to explain why women and art may not be considered as 'thinking bodies'. The notion of truth and of the female dancing form became bound up in the idea of the symbol of art, beauty and truth. Contemporary dance forms have evolved in various movements which either celebrated and lauded or rejected and satirised the dancer and the dancing image. Either way, the cultural and political movements of the twentieth century have bequeathed a residue of impressions surrounding bodily image. The current processes employed in today's dance practice, all of which contour the scope and diversity of contemporary dance, are couched in the multi-faceted presence of postmodernism. Alongside such constructs is the fact that the twentieth century has been centred in the desire to 'create an image' and a subsequent preoccupation with bodily image.

But there are also many other channels through which the idea and use of image in postmodern dance are expressed. For instance, postmodern artists orchestrate and play with the idea of image to deconstruct forms, to lay bare the object of the dance process and in so doing, they disrupt, fragment and question established precepts and perceptions of culture. Postmodern theorists and artists also examine the literary, cultural and philosophical phenomena of politics, technology, identity and change. An examination of postmodern treatment of imagery can illuminate some of the particular processes by which choreographers explore ideas and incorporate them into their work.

Postmodern dance can produce positive images for women and illuminate the conditions of men and women in defiance of the dominant constructions of gender and the hegemonic views of existence working in our culture. Gendered constructions in modernist dance forms have effected the evolution of body image whilst postmodern dance offers a complexity that 'deconstructs' these images.

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INTRODUCTION

The dancing presence of the artist reminds us of the bodily grounding of all those acts of discourse, training and movement which spring from the dance, and which dance seeks to resolve through creative expression. Discourses strive to articulate a body's essence in movement. This thesis is primarily concerned with the ideology of the dancing body in performance. It seeks to reflect on how elements of image are perceived by linking modernist insights and philosophies with innovations in dance and relating these to contemporary dance practice. The major questions posed are, 'How has modern society expressed images of alienation from the body through dance performance and, 'How have historical movements affected the use of image and image-making in contemporary postmodern dance'?

To illuminate a perspective of image and imagery and its use in dance, I have examined some of the cultural and political movements in romanticism, modernism and postmodernism to show how these movements have affected the evolution of image in dance practice. I begin by looking at the integration of the 'Romantic Image' in dance from the late nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century, discussing these in relation to literary theories and feminist analyses of performance and perception.

In Chapter One, I describe romantic concepts of image and symbolism in dance. Together with a brief sketch of the way in which alienation caused by industrialisation coincided with romantic ideas and imagery of some modernist dancers who created new movement forms embedded in the spirit of industrialisation and scientific experimentation. I outline and discuss the styles and innovations of dancers Loie Fuller and Maud Allan together with W. B. Yeats' theory of the 'Romantic Image' and Stéphane Mallarmé's ideology of the 'poet's gaze'.

Chapter Two considers the late emergence of romanticism in classical ballet, which merged with elements of what became known as the aesthetic movement, defined as the nature of art to be read as discrete language and deciphered for its meaning. I discuss and compare the responses of writers, Théophile Gautier and Mallarmé to the various dancers and dance genres, indicating how modernist dancers like Isadora Duncan, Valentin St Point and Bronislava Nijinska created a space for female discourses of the body and new practices in dance.

Chapter Three investigates some common principles in the social and creative constructions of choreographic frameworks and questions processes through which audiences make meaning from the performance of these works. To discuss these questions I consider a definition of image at the conscious sensory and at the deeper kinesthetic level of perception and cognition. Following this is my suggestion that theories of 'image schemata' derived from studies in clinical psychology, philosophy and linguistics can be applied to the body in dance performance. I discuss Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey's styles of 'modern dance' choreography, analysing them by applying 'image schemata' to illustrate readings of image on a holistic body level, projecting the idea that meanings are not arbitrary, but dependant on a range of factors related to

cognition and perception.

Chapter Four considers the emerging modernist dance body free of classical technique, outlining innovations independent of gender hierarchies in classical ballet and the outmoded narratives of preceding eras. The modern dance form characterised new dance genres, through which license was given to view and develop new techniques derived from different perspectives of female physicality, to express new inner female voices. I consider feminist sociological perspectives of the body to question modernist notions of the essential female body and the perspectives emanating from these modern dance forms. Early postmodern dance rejected this notion of the modern dancer. I discuss these changes in relation to the Judson group, their democratic approaches and their rejection of the codified forms of ballet and modern dance. The work of Lucinda Childs, Steve Paxton, and Meredith Monk are discussed through the application of 'image schemata' reinforcing the notion that there are some commonalities underlying the perception of both theatrical and non-theatrical dance performance.

Chapter Five examines a current framework in dance practice, in which artists draw from disparate disciplines to develop ideas. Issues and theories are frequently juxtaposed and examined through dance alongside other arts practice. Images of the body represented in dance, reflect a range of body types as well as the 'ideal' body reinforced and projected by popular media culture. I discuss the works of Pina Bausch, Compagnie Montalvo-Hervieu, and Chunky Move and elaborate on my practical research that draws on dance techniques related to media, improvisation and contemporary practice.

My conclusion indicates that romanticism's emphasis on personal expression relies on the dichotomy of feminine and masculine essentialist temperaments. The early modernist dance artists inspired a fresh perspective liberating themselves from the romantic notion of body image and its implicit binary oppositions by operating outside the ballet genre. Contemporary performers, as well as writers such as Mallarmé and Yeats critiqued the contradiction they perceived to exist in the dance ideas of their time. They argued against the detachment of the dancing image from the body of the dancer, altering criteria for performance and opening new perceptions of physicality in art. Later innovations in dance technique developed by Graham and Humphrey, whilst freeing dance from 'stereotyped fictions', gradually became encoded in a similar manner to that of classical ballet, setting a dangerous precedent for readings of dance that reinforced woman as expressive of a universal stereotype. The definitive experiments of the early postmodern dance artists were subversive in questioning all aspects of dance culture from the codified movement techniques, the hierarchies, the training and ownership to the venues of dance performance. Postmodernism continues the exploration, which enables dance artists to continue to change the object of dance itself.

My assertion is that whereas modernism borrowed, experimented and reconstructed, the early postmodern assailed, parodied and questioned. Current dance seeks new meanings and

contexts to make sense of and look beyond the present, and in place of modernism's confidence and postmodernism's radical reconstruction seeks a middle ground by affirming a dream of 'incalculable choreographies'. In contemporary dance practice, the image of the dancing body embraces multifarious layers of meaning, all of which capture as well as fragment the reality of the everyday body and its ever-increasing encounters with the 'technological' body.

CHAPTER ONE

THE DANCING IMAGE: **DISPLACEMENT IN THE ROMANTIC**

*Almost not there.
This is how the woman danced.
She is tall with long limbs, she is not thin like a ballerina.
No, she has weight like a woman who has
borne children. She is pale among the stage light,
Hair in a straight fall across her face.
A translucent figure from
This distance. She is dressed in white.*
(Seward 1991: p61)

One of the paradoxes of being human is the obvious and dominant fact that we are embodied. This 'translucent figure', the dancing body presents that utmost enigma of corporeality, which inspires multifarious human inscriptions of meaning, provoking rational and often irrational epistemologies expressed through images of the body. Whether images of the body are constructed as symbolic, representational, archetypal or grotesque, they must filter through the discourse mechanisms of gender, culture and politics, all of which are enmeshed in multiple performances within their own disciplinary parameters. Hence it is crucial to a discussion of images of the dancing body to acknowledge that the body, consciously or unconsciously, has been located within all forms of discourse.

My primary concern is with the ideology of the body in performance and the importance of reflection on how elements of image perception in arts disciplines are utilised in contemporary dance performance. I will trace and discuss the location of images of the dancing body, by reflecting on the processes and contexts of romanticism and modernism, with the prospect that while in the act of examining the past we will be able to perceive the present in a new light. Bodies located in performance are not merely instruments for the expression or the reception of something else. The reality of bodies is that they always gesture towards other disciplines and times; their actuality lies in their ability to simultaneously substantiate both physical mobility and layers of meaning. Susan Bordo in her book, Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body, argues that,

Bodies do not only pass meaning along, or pass it along in their uniquely responsive way. They develop choreographies of signs through which they discourse; they turn, or pivot from premise to conclusion through a process of reasoning; they confer with, bump, support, hold one another in narrating their own physical fate. How does the body, this corporeality, make meaning? (Bordo 1993: 226-7)

To illuminate a perspective of imagery and perception of bodily image in dance, (and its ideological constructs), I will examine some pertinent examples of theatre dance genres. The evolution of these genres is connected with the responses to dance of poets and literary

exponents such as Stéphane Mallarmé and W.B Yeats of the late romantic period through to modernism. I will compare these ideas with critiques of gender and performance ideology, linking these earlier concepts of image perception with current dance practice.

Whilst unearthing the enigma of image perceptions of the dancing body in performance, it is necessary to consider the layers of discourse accumulating around its site. The body can reveal multiple significations: biological, psychological and physiological, but these will be manipulated, masked and encoded as they become embedded in a range of contextual discourses that deconstruct the body as a locus of verbal and non verbal interaction. I will relate my arguments to the particular discourses derived from and dependant upon the concepts of gendered constructions, theories of perception and literary theory. Ironically, a dancing body encapsulates a totality of being whose physiological framework embodies discourse whilst simultaneously idealising or abstracting it. Within the discourse of performance, the body in training, performance preparation and performance is both the medium and the message of its semiotic loci. The meanings in the physical language of the body remain embedded in sociological relationships within society's evaluative and perceptual structures. Hence bodies in dance have been inscribed as symbolic and as representations of lived, ordinary corporeality. This enigma of the dancing body and the multiple images it construes implies or represents are effects or outcomes of choreography and performance in various movements of the twentieth century. Some of these are unintended by-products of choreography and performance; others arise out of the elements of performance and audience perception.

Western thought has developed conceptions of physicality that have been cultivated primarily through Christian moral and aesthetic philosophies. These philosophies would have us negate our bodies (particularly our reproductive functions). Brian Turner in his book, The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory, suggests that, as the Christian moral apparatus of industrial capitalism is disappearing, it is being replaced by the spread of mass consumerism. Through the dissemination of mass consumerism, contemporary culture has invented and continues to focus on new images of the body in popular and consumer culture.

It is the connections of our bodies within our sociological contexts that lead to the constant reproduction of ideas, each with their manifest cultural political implications. (Turner, 1992: 3)

This 'invention' (or rather I believe, re-invention) of either romanticised or gender explicit images of the body, Turner states, is a consequence of the profound and long-term transformation of Western industrial society. The aesthetic traditions of modernism believed that art should develop a holistic illumination of the human condition and, as most of the arts 'belonged' to the upper classes, embedded in this notion was ownership of culture and a

resultant resistance to progress or change. Hence there was a tension between the social shifts caused by industrialisation and the development of modernism on the one hand, and the conservatism of the higher tenets of artistic modernism, on the other. These factors affected the periodic examination of the 'Romantic Image' by artists of the early twentieth century, in particular, Théophile Gautier and Stéphane Mallarmé as well as emphasising a return to the romantic spirit of the dance by critics such as W. R. Titterton and Arnold Haskell in the late period of modernism.

The separation of the body from the economic and political structure of society, as Turner has suggested is the cultural effect of the prominence and pervasiveness of images of the body in popular consumer culture. A disenchantment caused by the gradual advent of industrialisation and its shift into the creation of a new social class, which acquired wealth as the result of increased mechanisation, caused transformational ideologies of expression in poets, theorists and artists of the modernist generation. In turn, these reactions produced a period of radical artistic innovation: new understandings evoked an ideology that created a cultural avant-garde, helping to bring about a reorientation of society. Political events stimulated the development of new modes of expression, while experimental forms of art had unseen ideological repercussions.

The poets did attempt to provide blueprints for society, while the politicians were often predominantly inspired by imaginative visions. And it becomes clear that modernism is a mercurial phenomenon which requires continuous redefinition under changing historical circumstances'. (Timms and Collier, in Williams 1988: Preface p xii)

The culture of politics interacted with various socially driven movements in art and society to form the complex, fluid environment of the period. Embedded in the artistic modes of modernism were the changing definitions of the plastic arts and adventurous experiments that resulted in new and renewed perspectives of dance practice.

Williams shows that there is no easy equation to be made between experimental art and progressive politics. Fundamental to most questions about innovation in art and its location in culture and politics of the modernist period, is the relationship between medium and message. It is this relationship that poets such as Yeats, Mallarmé, Gautier and artists such as Loïe Fuller, Maude Allan and Ruth St Denis in the period of the romantic (in early modernism) and later, Isadora Duncan, Valentin St Point, the Ballets Russes and Bronislava Nijinska explore in the dance and ballet of the modernist period. Modernism proposed new types of art for a new kind of social world and its perceptions. These artists developed work that explored varied relationships between medium and message. It is within this complex milieu of cultural and political placement that the image of bodies in creative dance practice

and performance begins to develop an emergent discourse, which challenged conventional notions of gendered bodily image, image perception and practice.

Art in new movements such as Futurism or Symbolism either challenged or reaffirmed established systems of authority, as is the case of some interpretations of symbolism that arose from theories of the 'Romantic Image'. However Janet Wolff has noted that,

Experience of the body even at the simplest level is mediated by a presentation of the body, the body image. (Wolff 1997: 81)

Within the practice and discourse of dance, the ways the body travels through space, wields force or expends energy are culturally established, as are the ways that male & female bodies interact: Who has access to touching whose body and where? Who supports the weight of another's body? How are bodies viewed from different perspectives and in different contexts? Who accommodates whom and what attitudes are derived as a result of these penumbrations? The readings of body image may be as many as there are viewers, in any performance or location where the body is prominent. These readings may also be moderated or overlaid by the views derived from the institution of dance and perceptions of popularist body culture of the period. Writers of the romantic period such as Mallarmé criticised the narrow visuality of the theatre: the frenzied viewing of 'dandied voyeurs' who attended the ballet, as they would the vaudeville, armed with opera glasses for privatised possession of the performers' bodily images. Moreover, the way in which the ballerina was cast in narratives of disempowerment, (princess, swan or sprite) was dominated by patriarchal narratives of discourse, all of which were devised at the behest of the ballet master. These constituted the institutionalised genre of an outmoded classical ballet in early modernism, popularised by the European society of the period. What Mallarmé critiqued as images located within the choreographic constructions of classical ballet and vaudeville was dependant on the features of the choreographic conventions and the choices made at the performance site, all of which underscore the ways of seeing embedded in the performance. The trained muscle memory and degrees of lived experience in the diverse forms of dancing bodies, together with the perceived conventions of the period, simultaneously shape and reflect the sociological construction of the performance. On the one hand, bodies communicate the ideas embedded within the choreographic theme and, on the other, the attendant kinaesthetic diversity of weight, energy and movement rhythms, are all moderated by socially constructed frames.

From the traditional choreography and style of classical ballet, the roles and conventions of male and female dancers, were set by the ideology and techniques of the genre. Techniques of 'pas de deux' determined that the male dancer always supported the weight of the ballerina. His roles were characterised by strength and authority frequently displaying a vigorous athletic style and a propensity for spectacle. The polarities of masculine and feminine movements formed the basis of the dance themes, narratives and images in

classical ballet. In conventional ballet productions the woman's body serves as a spectacle, arranged and displayed frequently in vulnerable positions, which categorised and stereotyped her in clearly defined roles of princesses or puppets. Women were portrayed as either passive, innocent, undemonstrative, ethereal (the classic romantic body), or rejected, derided and feared (the grotesque body). All these roles employ the female dancers as strangely disembodied against the males who are perceived as solid vigorous and powerful. The use of the 'classical' body in ballet emphasised its commitment to line, weightlessness, lift and extension, shaping an ethereal presence evocative of romantic themes, rather than of a real corporality. This body functioned within both the discourse of the dance and in the form of the classical absent body of the bourgeois society, being subject to the interplay between the cultural ideological apparatus of the dance and the ideologies of modernist art and of other cultural institutions of the period. It also placed strict limits on body size and shape for girls and women dancers, to reinforce an ideal of petiteness. This tendency acted to efface all traces of the person, imprinted a severe homogeneity into the image of the classical female body on the one hand, whilst placing the dancers in defenceless positions which were subject to that complex gaze of the audience, both male and female; within the elaborate mix of social, primarily patriarchal structures. The magic of the theatre reflects also the theatrical display of social interaction, of which Mallarmé notes,

Where the horizon glows each evening.. other people do the same; society goes to the theatre, as if hungry, to be fed by the 'social arrangement' of stage and spectators. (Mallarmé, in McCarren 1995: 220)

Through the responses experienced by the viewer, imbued with states of being, knowledge and education, we can examine the images of the body and perceptions of bodily form. Messages that come from literary and print media or other modalities of cultural surveillance tend to reinforce stereotypical responses when placed in a performance site that throws bodies into high relief. Yet the dancing body and the images relayed in the act of performance, contain a power that is constantly revisited in a cultural politics of corporeal identity. This was true, particularly for the romantic period, during which time the dancing body was much celebrated, compared and examined in attempts to go beyond the body to inner states of meaning.

A common thread in artistic experiments of the period encapsulated the notion of the 'seer's' alienation, a symbolic departure from popularist or trivialised, mass-produced art. The metaphor of the 'seer' was personified by major poets of the late nineteenth century (among them Yeats and Baudelaire), as a necessity for the survival and maintenance of their art. They felt in acute danger of losing a vision, which could not be perceived beyond everyday perception. They also expressed fear of mechanisation and mass production that threatened to efface the essence of their poetic vision. The Romantic Movement's appeal was derived from the folk art of marginal people, whose art they perceived as exotic and primitively powerful. The attraction of folk art of the European rustic and of sources in Asia and Africa

are combined with underlying associations of the 'primitive' and the 'unconscious'. At the same time there is an singular emphasis on the most evident features of a modern, urban industrialised world: the city, the machine, speed, space - the creative engineering and construction of a future in industrial terms. The contrast with romantic emphases on spiritual and natural creativity which some artists continued to pursue during this period could hardly be more marked. Alienation articulated as a withdrawal into image and symbolism, therefore, became a key concept of poets and artists who embraced the romantic. Performers and other artists undertook specific projects in response to these creative and social paradoxes.

Noticeable also was an emphasis on creativity, a concept encapsulated in the 'Romantic Movement', when the term was heavily used. In some periods, in direct response to the violent avant-garde rejections of traditional forms, there was a strong appeal to revive the art and learning, of the 'classics' of the immediate and long distant past. These classics were sources, stimuli of a new creativity, against an exhausted or crippled current order. Within this context, the notion and inspiration of 'Romantic Image' fields its evolution and origins in the late eighteenth century and comes into fruition in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century art in the literature of the European writers, the self-appointed 'seers' of this period. We see also vestiges of it in the Symbolist Movement and in the work of Loïe Fuller and Isadora Duncan. The term 'romantic' is used as applicable to the arts of one epoch. In this period a high valuation was placed on the image-making powers of the mind at the expense of the rational powers, and on the substitution of organicist images for mechanistic modes of thinking about works of live art. Frank Kermode, in his account of the development of the 'Romantic Image' quotes Stephen Daedalus in 'Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man', elaborating,

The nature of the 'aesthetic image'..... was apprehended as one thing, self bounded and self-contained upon the immeasurable background of space or time which it is not. (Joyce, in Kermode 1957: 1)

A definition of the 'Romantic Image' will illustrate some of the complexities, which surround its central notions and suggest a rationale for its popularity. The Irish poet, W.B. Yeats, in departing from the abstraction of creative literary forms, developed a theory of image in the late nineteenth century. This undertaking was a reaction to the philosophical mode that viewed body and mind as distinct categories. Yeats' search for a totality of being 'was an urgent seeking for images to embody beauty; an organic, irreducible beauty, that of a perfectly proportioned human body'. (Kermode 1957: 50) This totality of being he applied in particular to the beauty of women and to the beauty of the work of art. To Yeats, proportion, (in the classical sense) movement and meaning were not intellectual properties, but belonged to the imagination that generates a symbolic mode of perception. The beauty of a woman, in her shape or bodily form, more particularly when in motion, became the emblem

of the work of art. Yeats' poetry of the dancer represents an aesthetic image of a dancing body unified in body and soul. Kermode elaborates Yeats' idea that,

All dreams of the soul end in a perfect man's or woman's body. Beauty is the perfectly proportioned body conceived by the viewer as form and essence; perceived ahead of passion. In this, what mattered to Yeats was the concrete, unique, symbolic object, the living, unified body, defying explanation or paraphrase, as these are merely agents of intellect. (Kermode 1957: 57)

For Yeats, a work of art must be separate from everything heterogeneous or casual, from all personality or condition. He relates this idea to the sentiment that an artwork must contain the impetus and organic whole embodied in the dancer, which is animated and lyrical. This completeness cannot be defined satisfactorily in either intellectual or physical terms, but must remain an enigma of symbolism, totally enmeshed in the act of expression. This phenomenon became known as the 'Romantic Image'.

Ideas concerning creativity and expression were associated with the 'Romantic Image' and its exponents set out to probe image-making processes lying deep within the psyche in attempts to go beyond the mundane and access the subconscious. Yeats' (and others') theory of creativity and the creative imagination sought to penetrate at a deeper, more intrinsic level than that perceived in everyday apprehension. The corporeal presence of the dancer always presents the viewer with the problem of habitually perceiving the corporeal form within its sociological context. The figure of the dancer (in any era) is imprinted with a range of culturally inscribed impressions layered over the body. Yeats' theory, in departing from everyday perception, symbolised the female form in an attempt to remove it from intellectual inscription, particularly wishing to by-pass associations to the urban and the rational. Yeats employed distinctive images (the tower, the gyre/spiral, the dancer) to communicate the essence of his poetry. The temporal nature of dance and its associations with the spiralling movement of the 'gyre' were symbolised in the image of a dancing woman's body. This body, whilst in motion provided Yeats with an image that was aesthetically satisfying and inspired his theory of perception in an attempt to develop alternative narratives of the holistic nature of the body in keeping with an image perception devoid of the immediately conscious and pragmatic. Hence, the need to delve into the psyche, to see how the mind works within its organic corporeal structures. Such a delving into perception and the creative imagination stimulated the onset of Symbolism and the aesthetic image, and which (along with contemporary writers of the period) motivated the theories of literary apprehension often applied to the dancer.

Projects such as Yeats' theory seemed to go hand in glove with the birth of the 'Romantic Image' as an idea, and ironically, the artist's devotion to it developed at the same time as the modern industrial state and the emergence of the modern middle class in Europe. The new bourgeoisie embraced those aesthetic or higher ideals associated with romanticism: visions

of beauty, grace and form. Subsumed in the social ethos of the newly developing bourgeoisie, these notions gained momentum in response to increased wealth. With its altered status, the bourgeoisie appropriated the aesthetic ideals of the intelligentsia, sometimes whilst lacking their tradition of education. These aesthetic ideals also frequently represented male dominated modes of discourse. This complex social and political milieu invested new economic values in its fabric, all of which formed complex new moral and social codes.

Early modernist artists were attracted to the metaphor of dance, representing many of its images in the guise of the (frequently female) dancer. As Felicia McCarren suggests, critical and literary writings such as those of Stéphane Mallarmé examine the conventions and ideologies of the dance stage and the ways in which they determine expectations about gender and the reception of the woman's image by the spectator. Loïe Fuller, dance artist, theatre technician, teacher and entrepreneur wrote on many aspects of performance and the nature of movement from within her dance genre. Both these artists facilitated shifts in the idea of perceiving as well as examining dance performance. In the early modernist period visual artists also interacted with the forms of dance itself. Fuller's was a good example as her innovative skill was spread over many different art fields. She pioneered innovations in theatre lighting technique and, in addition influenced the Art Nouveau movement. She formed associations with artists and many notable figures of the period, among them, August Rodin, Sarah Bernhardt, Alexandre Dumas. Through examination of the work of Fuller and Duncan, we gain an impression that early modernist dance forms absorbed, explored and conveyed the discourse of a romantic notion of the female image formed around the dancer as symbol. Writers, artists and critics frequently drew on the source and inspiration of the dancer to form their theories of writing and creative expression whilst, at the same time, dance artists were reshaping their genre according to the tenets of modernism, 'to shape their arts according to their inner logic'. (Habermas, in Foster 1985: 6)

This power of the dancing body has motivated many artists and poets in the last century and a half to advance theories of literature, perception and performance. I will look briefly at some from the early modernist period, (1890 –1920s), in order to focus on the emergence in modernism of new theories of discerning and interpreting dance performance, which emerged at this time. New attitudes towards gender also begin to emerge. Dance artists of this period, in their drive for the creative realisation and articulation of their art also developed new forms of choreography and performance processes that have altered gender perception and translocated images of the body. A high point in this process was the period of early modernism, during which avant-garde performers such as Loïe Fuller, Maud Allan, Ruth St Denis, Isadora Duncan and later, Valentin St-Point and Bronislava Nijinska broadened the boundaries of choreographic and performance techniques and their attendant practices and philosophies.

One of the innovative dancers of the time, Loïe Fuller, wove Symbolist images into her performance. Stéphane Mallarmé, for example, wrote frequently about the work of Loïe Fuller, extrapolating her performances in terms of the medium of her dance and the messages they conveyed. For Mallarmé the problem of the contemporary theatre was one of 'monstrous mediocrity' and of the 'inadequate and primary ways of seeing of both audiences and artists'. (Felicia McCarren 1995: 223) Mallarmé's focus on Loïe Fuller, the dancer, reveals the extent to which her work and the nature of the dancing body in that work coincided with his own aesthetic theory and poetic practice. Fuller's dances illustrated those organic images, primitivist representations of flower, fire or storm, which are core constituents of the symbolist imagery of Mallarmé together with Yeats and other late romantics.

These images were contained and perceived in the imagination, in an abstract dimension, absent of time and space attaining aesthetic qualities of beauty, balance and symmetry. They came also to symbolise anything that was analogous with these qualities, such as forms of nature, the shape of a lily, the majesty of a storm or the quality of a human body in a perfect classical form.

Fuller consciously set out to invoke these symbolic images through experimentation with movement produced by activating voluminous silks on bamboo wands in the different angles and colours of light beams. Her dancing body was veiled with fabric and through the choreographed movement of the wands, she created the illusion of those images evocative of light usage employed by the Impressionists, the Symbolists and by the exponents of Art Nouveau. Her work, because of its association with light, movement and image also reflected early experimentation with film as in the phantasmagoria and magic lantern shows. These avant-garde dances were performed in a comparatively bare space, a technique that threw the dancing body veiled by fantastic images into high relief. Fuller inspired Mallarmé to formulate his aesthetic theory on his understanding of the dancer as:

not a woman dancing, for the juxtaposed causes that she is not a woman,
but a metaphor summarising one of the elementary aspects of our form,
sword, cup, flower, and that she does not dance..... (Mallarmé, in
McCarren 1995: 220)

According to Felicia McCarren, unlike other commentators of the time, Mallarmé disregards both the dancer's gender and her technique in favour of her identification as a metaphor.

A close examination of both Fuller's dances and Mallarmé's writing about them reveals that it is Fuller's technique of changing her bodily shape through the use of draperies and light which suggests to Mallarmé the genderless, semiotic subjectivity which he also applies to the poet. (221)

In preparing her works, Fuller's approach considered dance beyond the sphere of technique by interpreting the location of movement in a symbolic idea, whilst simultaneously illuminating her theory of physical mobility and its layers of meaning. Bourgeois patrons of the dance of this period could view the dance from the perspective of their location in the theatre or choose a closer, more intimate view through their opera glasses. Fuller's technique worked to detract the focus or gaze of the spectator and its implications from the image of the body to the fantastic display of moving draperies and light. In her autobiography, 'Fifteen Years of a Dancer's Life', (1913), Fuller wrote:

What is the dance? It is motion.

What is motion? The expression of a sensation.

What is a sensation? The reaction in the human body produced by an impression or an idea perceived in the mind... The mind serves as the medium and causes these sensations to be caught up by the body... To impress an idea I endeavour by my motions, to cause its birth in the spectator's mind, to awaken his imagination,

That it may be prepared to receive the image... (Fuller, in Sommer 1975: 54)

By motion, Fuller meant not only the dancing body but also the movement of light, colour and silk. In order to achieve the effects created by the bamboo wands, Fuller had to explore and develop new ways of moving arms, legs and torso. This required tremendous strength and fitness, as well as an ability to interpret and develop new movement concepts to create a form specific to her new genre. What she achieved, in essence was the corporeal displacement of herself while her fabrics acted as a huge screen, which she molded into fantastic shapes and forms evocative of early motion picture performances. This, together with her innovative choreography expanded and developed a new modernist dance and performance genre: one which shrouded the body, de-emphasizing the potential for readings of gendered stereotypes, in order for the viewer to be free to 'receive the image', opened by the imagination.

Delving further into Mallarmé's exposition of the dancer it becomes apparent that he distances Fuller in order to conceive her as a metaphor for disembodiment. He locates the dancer's 'objectivity between her feminine appearance, the body onstage, and a mimed object' (McCarren 1995: 218). The subject of her dance [and the content of what is represented by the dance] is layered upon the object represented by the dancer's presence. The question raised is that of artistic significance and the artist's subjectivity. Loïe Fuller was both the object and subject of her own artistic creations. She was at once creator, choreographer and designer of both costumes and lighting effects as well as of the performance. She the artist, was therefore the female embodiment of both the art form and a unique artistic conception, provoking an intriguing paradox. In her work it seems impossible (we are unable to tell exactly, as evidence of her work only remains in written

description or early photographs) to distinguish a signified content (an organic representation) from a signifying body, and the dance itself is also both content and the act of producing that content. Mallarmé's treatise (in 'Crayonné au théâtre': 'Sketched at the Theatre') of Fuller's enigmatic dances can be compared with Yeats' response to such performances in the theory of the aesthetic image. Of this Yeats expressed the dancer as the symbolic emblem of the work of art. Frank Kermode observes that Yeats' poetry of the dancer represents a unity of sense and spirit, pertaining to the whole body and not solely to the abstract intellect. Such an image has no one *explicable* meaning, but passion and particular or personalised meanings are brought to it and,

He who sings a lasting song/Thinks in the marrowbone' and his song defies
the dichotomy of body and soul. (Yeats, in Kermode, 1957: 56)

Yeats encapsulated this paradox of the aesthetic image represented by the dancer in the poem, 'Among School Children'. He examines the idea of the labour of the poet in which works of ideal beauty and wisdom are created by activity of the whole man, where body and soul coalesce in an expression of undiminished organic imagery,

Labour is blossoming or dancing where
The body is not bruised to pleasure soul,
Nor beauty born out of its own despair,
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
How can you tell the dancer from the dance?
(‘Among School Children viii’ in Norman Jeffaries 1974: 130).

In the poetic imagination of the 'seer' (formulations derived also from Blake and Coleridge) the dancer turns in her 'narrow luminous circle, still but moving, dead but alive' (59). In this Yeats maintained that the dancer had 'out-danced thought'. Concretely visualised, her body silences the mind and in moments of the dance, 'intellect and emotion... are for the moment one' (59). Yeats' theory of the unification of body and soul coalesce in the image of the dancing body. Specific illustration of this phenomenon can be seen in the expressive dance of Loïe Fuller and others of the period.

Yeats' poetic image of the dancer follows a line of argument wherein the dance is that organic whole in which the subject (i.e. the dancer) takes on the form of the dance and they both become one. This completeness cannot be defined satisfactorily in either intellectual or physical terms, but must remain an enigma of symbolism, enmeshed in the act of expression and thus liberated from the burdens of corporeal reality or from naturalism. Yeats' formulations emerged from an earlier Romantic notion of an organic society, in which each component was interdependent upon all of the others and in its idealised form, was perceived as a symbol of a society that existed as the sum total of all its parts. For Yeats the

style and form of the dance and the dancing body (the sign) were indistinguishable from the symbol. These formulations sought also to depart from the mechanical ethos of industrialism. The enigma of Fuller's performance as resolved by Mallarmé and Yeats in their poetic theories, reveals a cyclic re-creation of the writer's (performer's) subjectivity along the lines of that of the dance, taking form as a 'de individuated, disappearing or dead poet, performing a number of roles and yet, never entirely present in any one of them'. (McCarren 1995: 221)

This view encapsulates the ephemeral nature of the dance - the act of performing through the instrument of the body. Fuller who simultaneously dissolved the boundaries of choreography and performance whilst combining innovations in theatre technology, shaped a new approach to performance. Mallarmé studied Fuller in particular in shaping his dissertations on perceptions of performance.

In seeking exemplars of symbolism that captured the creative imagination, the 'Romantic Movement' extended its focus to the art of other cultures, particularly those beyond Europe. Dance artists, Allan and St Denis encapsulated this growing interest which occurred alongside a growth in European Imperialism. The dances of some early modernist artists illuminated the discourses of gendered oppositions embedded in the expression of the 'Romantic Image'. These ideologies both placated and embodied anxieties about female power and sexuality being raised by women's movements of suffrage and the inclusion of women in the workforce. Descriptions of dance during the early period of the twentieth century by critics and others reveal an interaction of racial and gender stereotyping that reinforced European bourgeois assumptions about the 'Oriental'. The binary, racist rhetoric of Orientalism was pervasive in England during the period of Maud Allan's popularity, 1908–12. Her representation of the oriental princess in *The Vision of Salomé* reflected the discourse of gendered insecurity and, at the same time, incorporated the idea of woman as the primitive 'other'. The historical background of the Salomé dance was well known and associated with the poet Huysman's discussion of Gustav Moreau's painting of Salomé (1876). Huysmans defines Salomé's fiction as 'a symbol of the pathological aspect of decadence' (Huysmans, in Kermodé 1957: 78). In Huysman's terms, the portrait conveys both the pathological and the aesthetic aspects of the dancer's symbolic motif. Huysmans also analyses Mallarmé's theories of the dancer, concluding that the dancer's role is a symbolic emblem of the 'Romantic Image'. He discerned that 'at one end of the scale we find Mallarmé's use of the dancer to represent a central and inexpressible aesthetic idea and, at the other the English intellectual's cult of the music hall'. (70)

Unlike Fuller, who was veiled by the illusion of fabric, Allen violated the terms under which the West assigned the morals of the middle class by appearing on a public stage in a daringly scanty costume. In this she provided easy access to a visualised gaze. However, Amy Koritz observes that frequently the press did not consider Allen's dancing transgressive and she achieved a precarious balance between notoriety and respectability. Other bare-foot

dancers, Duncan and St Denis, as well as Fuller (in Paris) appeared at the same time during 1908-10, but Allan had a popular appeal in the English music hall tradition that the others did not achieve. The dances of Duncan and St Denis were perceived as overly ascetic and scholarly, attributes associated with the higher romanticist notion of the symbolic image that represented the more academic tenets of modernism.

Allan performed in a context of dance practices and conventions that shaped her dancing and its reception. Her dance invoked primitivist themes and her scanty costume appealed to the tradition of dance as spectacle. This suggests that her dance absorbed those popularist aspects of nationalism and Orientalism that appealed at this time to the English public. Such content engaged the patrons more powerfully than the appeal of the dance as an art form. In addition, Allan's livelihood was dependent on the goodwill of powerful gentrified figures such as King Edward VII and women of the upper class, like Lady Asquith. Allan cleverly combined the performances of a number of 'classical' dances (in Duncanesque Greek costumes) along with *The Vision of Salomé*, the dance that ultimately made her popular and successful. By combining these dances alongside one another in the program, she mitigated the effect of the overly provocative Salomé dance with the respectability of the barefoot dances evocative of Botticelli's paintings, which Allan admired. English theatre critic W.R. Titterton compares Allan unfavorably with Duncan, observing nonetheless that,

She makes fine use of those beautiful hands of hers – say when she stretches her arms wide, and makes the music ripple from her shoulders to her fingertips. (Titterton, in Koritz 1997: 135)

By comparison with the 'chorus-line girls' of the music hall, Allan, possessed a 'wonderful instrument of expression, the reflection of beauty, the mysterious power, that dance becomes with Miss Maud Alan, our Lady of Dreams' (135). The association of Salomé with sexual transgression and moral decadence was frequently interpreted by critics as a subtext to her dance, whilst, as the story suggests (and Allan herself outlines), there was no associated narrative pertaining to the Biblical figure's spiritual conversion or rebirth interpreted in her performance. Rather the nature and bearing of female sexuality was read as the primary meaning and any other question of interpretation was marginalised. The penchant for male critics to laud the female dancers as stars and imbue them with those characteristics of beauty and grace of classicism reflects those convictions of high modernism so prevalent at the time and the dancer was a particular evocation for many of these theories which so easily lent themselves to the dominantly visual interpretations of performance and which Mallarmé criticised.

Unlike Isadora Duncan, who critiqued the gender ideology she transgressed, Allan attempted to underplay her transgressions and locate herself in that ideology that opposed women's suffrage. In her own accounts of her life and dance, she argued that women are overly

emotional, indifferent to principles, easily swayed by personalities and therefore unsuited to political life and action, an opinion also held by Yeats. This points to the paradoxical dilemma of prominent female artists in this complex period of early modernism that forces them to collude with the stereotyped image of body perception, as in Allan's case. Innovators like Fuller and Duncan discovered strategies to subvert gender stereotyping. Duncan defined dance as having an inner life that juxtaposed the psychological with the physiological, with the latter given dominance. Thus she connected dance with the soul, imparting her multifaceted expressionism with a spiritual component. In this regard she critiqued purely visual readings of dance.

A further demonstration of the power of popular culture to reinforce stereotyped images in dance is seen in an example of a publicity strategy undertaken by the manager of the Palace Theatre (where Allan performed) suggesting the power of the East as a sexual lure. The pamphlet circulated prior to Allan's debut with her Salomé dance uses Orientalist stereotypes of aggressive and dangerous, but inviting and available female sexuality to attract an audience. The pithy description is presented as,

The desire that flames from her eyes and bursts in hot gusts from her scarlet mouth infects the very air with the madness of passion. As Herod catches fire, so Salomé dances even as a Bacchante, twisting her body like a silver snake eager for its prey, panting with hot passion, the fire of her eyes scorching like a living furnace. (140)

But beyond such blatant use of sex to lure audiences to the theatre, critiqued by Mallarmé and to an extent previously by Gautier, as well as by some English critics of the day, namely, W.R Titterton, Allan's popularity analogous with that of Fuller and Duncan, was attributed to those internal contradictions enacted by the Salomé dances. On the most basic level, these formed the contradictions between an unknowable 'otherness' and an apparent mastery of the 'other' embodied in the western performance of the Oriental. As well, a contradiction existed between a stereotype of western femininity as devoid of sexual knowledge and sexual threat and western women's successful depiction of a character commonly held to embody both. The image of the dancer portrayed in the dance hall or salon performance evoked images of Orientalist and gendered representation.

Meanings in dance are rarely clear-cut. The actuality of the dancing presence in its complexity can never be fully grasped, consequently, presence in a performance, particularly in a dance performance, the site where the enigmatic figure of the dancer is shifting and indeterminate becomes a public space for personalised appraisal of the performer. Such writers as Yeats, Gautier before him, and other prominent literary advocates perceived and utilised performance's capacity to invoke ideas, prompting them to write from differing positions about the ballet, variety theatre and about performance in general. The etiquette of

ballet and the theatre of the period inspired Gautier, lauding the beauty and form of the ballerina's ethereal style and narrative power. Yeats held the dancer as the supreme emblem of holistic symbolism, representing the soul of art and so outlining a theory of art as operating independently of the intellect. In Yeats' theory, the dancing form embodied the art and, therefore could not be separated from art's framework and meaning - 'how can you tell the dancer from the dance?' He believed in 'the association of literature with music, speech and dance, to deepen the political passion of the nation that all would accept a common design'. Yeats argues his theory of unity,

I thought that in man and race alike there is something called 'Unity of Being' using that term as Dante used it when he compared beauty in the *Convito* to a perfectly proportioned human body. (Yeats in Harrison 1959: 811)

Mallarmé analysed the dancer as the symbol of poetry and the soul ('idée') of theatrical art, a 'central and inexpressible idea'. In crystallising this theory, he stimulated the idea of the dancer beyond her physical form, towards an abstract realisation of dance as poetry of expression. Yeats' theory employed the dancer as a universal symbol of unity. In this, both poets unveiled a fresh approach to the reception of performance.

A subsequent manifestation of these interactions of literature and performance was that dance, within the political fusion of modernism and in response to major shifts in European politics, began to be subversive in its questioning and exposure of the body and its images in cultural contexts. This process provided shifts in the emphases of bodily discourses or ways of de-emphasising or displacing the perceptions of romantic and gendered body images in dance practice inherited from ballet. The early dance innovators and choreographers through their examples have characterised the dancer in distinctive ways, projecting alternative cultural and political possibilities for dance and other art forms through the body. Ann Daly comments that these innovators

inherited no practice; the techniques and choreographic forms they developed were maps and reflections of the possibilities and propensities of their own originating bodies. (Daly, in Dempster 1995: 39)

CHAPTER TWO

THE ROMANTIC IMAGE:

RECLAIMED IN MODERNISM

Although Romanticism has been expunged in various periods of revolutionary development, as in that of High Modernism, it has become common practice to see the opposition of Romanticism and Classicism as a continuing dialectic process, with Western culture re-enacting the ideals and forms of each tradition in turn (Heath & Boreham 1999: 172).

If we accept this explanation, then it is possible to also see the influence of romanticism as much in the movements that reacted against it as in those that were directly inspired by it. Later nineteenth century symbolism and aestheticism reveal much in their borrowings from romantic ideas.

To expand the understanding of image in dance and elaborate upon a broader critical response, it will be useful to examine a range of material written about dance criticism and selected examples of innovation within the dance genre, whilst delving further into sociological and philosophical contexts in the evolution of modernism. The impact of these factors may be examined by also considering aspects of audience reception seen through the eyes of the critic and the implications of these premises within evolving modernism. The literature of this period, whether critical or derivative of authors and poets, provides a vivid picture of the audience and the viewing context, established ideals together with the public's informing attitudes and perspectives.

Mallarmé's response, after examination of 'ocular epistemologies' was to propose the intervention of the imagination and a rationale for perceiving genuine acts of performance. He aimed to counter popularist, simplistic paradigms for the reading of performance applied by way of purely visual modes of interpreting dance performance.

Constructions of 'Romantic Image' during the modernist period exemplified Yeats' poetic image of the dancer following a line of argument wherein the dance is that organic whole in which the subject (ie, the dancer) takes on the form of the dance and they both become one. Implied in this idea was the ability to envision or foresee at a deeper, more intrinsic level than that found in popularist levels of perception. The discrepancy between a reading of image primarily on a visual level and the original conception of the female image as symbol is expressed in the writing of critics who confirmed a simplistic, popularist conception of gendered identity.

This ocular epistemology presumes the primacy of visual perception as the dominant form of knowing. Perception, however is never pure, but is clouded by the structures of language that refuse to be anchored in the present – the site of so-called 'pure presence'.

(Denzin 1997: 35)

In her essay, 'She might pirouette on a daisy and it would not bend, Images of Femininity and Dance Appreciation', Lesley-Anne Sayers examines the viewing contexts of some of the leading writers and critics of this period, exploring perspectives on the female dancer in dance appreciation and images of femininity within descriptive writing on dance. Such attitudes took their origins from the high Romanticist notion of the symbolic image, demonstrating how, the

critic brings to a work a viewing context: a set of values and tastes, specialised and general knowledge. With this viewing context, the critic constructs an interaction with the work. (Sayers 1993: 164)

In the art of dance, most critics were resistant to the potential of altering their perception of a romanticised view of the body. As discussed in the previous chapter in relation to Maud Allen's *Salomé* dance, gender stereotypes, when employed in the discourse of nationalist unity and imperialist domination as evident in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in England and Europe, served also to resist the challenges being posed by the new woman and the suffrage movement. Representations of the Oriental princess in *The Vision of Salomé* reflected two discourses: Orientalism and the discourse of gendered insecurity.

Both discourses deployed the same rhetorical polarisation and tendentious normatives to contain and define two potential threats this dance posed to its audience – female sexuality and the racial 'Other'. (Koritz 1997: 135)

The stereotype of the Oriental woman embodied by Allan in her *Salomé* dance enacted all the subconscious anxieties that the male critics held about women and Orientals while also affirming the mastery of both by a western and male-defined truth, as expounded in the concepts of 'Empire'. In Homi Bhaba's formulation, 'colonial discourse produces the colonised as a fixed reality which is at once 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible' (138). Hence, successful media commentators of dance tended to reflect popular tastes reinforced by established mores of gender overlaid with conventions of contemporaneous art.

On the one hand, Théophile Gautier was inspired by the ethos of the Romantic to write ballets in celebration of its spirit, whilst critiquing the triviality of dance hall. Later during the 1930s and 1940s, critics such as Arnold Haskell, who epitomised an easier more accessible popularist response, emerged by lauding the ballerinas as stars.

His descriptions reflected graphic, lyrical representations of his subjects, idealised for their beauty of proportion and grace, subjected to a gaze that described in minute singularity details of her body. (Sayers 1993:165)

These responses embrace romanticism and were primary factors in manipulating and shaping the tastes of the incumbent audiences. Sayers argues that the Romantic Movement although coming late to ballet merged with elements of what became known as the aesthetic movement, defined as the nature of art to be read as discrete language and deciphered for its meaning. This was a product of early modernism. The description of aesthetic romanticism considered the corporate form of the dancer as embodying perfect body proportion, fluid movement and grace, all of which was employed to express the language of romanticism or symbolism. Aesthetic romanticism held in its ethos and its descriptions of female dancers particularly in classical ballet, both imagined images and images as frequently represented in visual art, of the idealised and frequently fetishised bodies of dancers.

It brought a flowering of the form as an expressive art and in terms of criticism it brought the approach of Théophile Gautier. The ballet became a focus of Gautier's Romantic aesthetics upholding above all principals of grace and beauty. (166)

In Gautier's writings, we catch sight of the serious aspects of romantic thought, the nature of idealisation within the unique language of the art, ironically juxtaposed against its more popular and trivialised simplistic visualisation. The image of the dancer couched in the ballet or the dance hall performance evoked symbolist images of representation. However, Gautier, maintained that the dance was unsuited to the expression of abstract ideas, being grounded purely in the physical domain of passion. He gleaned this from the ballet, stating that,

dancing has no other purpose but to display beautiful bodies in graceful poses and develop lines that are pleasing to the eye. Dancing is unsuited for expressing metaphysical ideas; it expresses only the passions. Love, desire coqueties, the aggressive male and the gently resisting woman - these are the subject of all primitive dances. (Gautier, in Sayers 1993: 169)

In contrast, a major aphorism of the avant-garde held that creativity was measured in terms of new creations and constructions and all traditional, academically learned models were potentially hostile and must be thrown away. The avant-garde developed into several

romanticism are seen in the types of innovation built into Fuller's work as a reaction to ballet. She utilised technology to reflect the industrialised world, but at the same time, her work reflected a central romantic emphasis on the spiritual, the aesthetic and natural creativity.

That is why the 'Romantic Image' and other movements such as symbolism appealed to artists, writers and dancers who embraced them in their work as a reaction to a mechanist vision of the future. But whichever of these styles were occupied, there remained a contrast, between the aesthetic expressed in the organic or the sublime and the aesthetic expressed in an ethos of bold modernity whether hostile, indifferent or merely vulgar. The bourgeoisie constituted the mass of the newly emerged social order to which these movements and the artists, who broached them, catered to, derided, shocked or attacked. According to Raymond Williams, in Visions and Blueprints - Avant-garde culture and radical politics in early twentieth century Europe (1988), our understanding of these once modern movements is veiled by the ambiguity of the bourgeois. Movements were historically dependent on the variable class positions from which the bourgeois were seen. For example, the attitudes of court or aristocracy towards the bourgeoisie corresponded with a view which characterised them as 'worldly and vulgar', being socially pretentious and hidebound in their attitudes. Such attitudes appeared moralistic and spiritually narrow to the intellectualised aristocracy. Allan's dance both reinforced and addressed the attitudes of the bourgeoisie. By contrast, the newly organised working class was equated with individuality, self-interested morality, comfort that represented a class of employers and controllers of money who held centre stage in a newly emerging incipient capitalism.

Responses of dance critics Crawford-Fritch, Titterton and Gautier represent the tastes and mores of the popularist bourgeoisie in their superficial interpretation of the language and ideas of the romantic and primitive as it applied to dance. Whilst their affirmations of the dancer as beautiful and graceful epitomise the strength of the 'Romantic Image', all is overlaid with a set of 'primitive' values and attitudes born of the viewers' stimulation. Whilst lauding the beauty of the dancers' bodies, they respond patently from their own sexuality, describing female dancers in sexually charged language, reinforcing stereotyped gender roles through the strength of their own subconscious desires. This is accomplished by evoking the spirit of the 'Romantic Image' as the dancer who symbolised beauty. However, in reality, the dancers are experienced voyeuristically through an (opera glass) gaze, which detaches them from their art and their artistic ability. For such critics this applied particularly to female dancers, as they 'notice' them and revel in the dancer's body and its attributes. Her smile, to them so fraught with a secret enjoyment, is interpreted as sexual. Gautier, in particular attributes a provocative undertone to the smile, ignoring both the idea of expression, the potential for the dancer's interpretation of her role, her talent and training. Whilst claiming the high tenets of modernism, these responses display the

contradictions underpinning the application of the male critic's gaze. Sayers suggests that, in

this style of discourse, both poet and critic cite themselves as active in the area of selection and seeing, but passive in the sense in which he is captivated and acted on by the dancer's 'charms'. These 'charms' constitute the expressive attributes of the dancer as she imbues her dancing role with her feminine passion as a source of his appropriation. (Sayers 1993: 169)

Her role as artist expressing herself through the dance is consigned to a 'primitive', 'secret' and 'sexual' essentiality.

Isadora Duncan, in her concentration on the solar plexus as the physical source within the body in which the soul of the dance resides, circumvents the discourse surrounding the paradoxical power of the ballerina. Through her notion of expression - what is invisible comes to visibility, Duncan makes movement's origins physical (in that she traces movement from the solar plexus) from where the dancer may detect the initiation of movement in the beating heart, the breath, the involuntary muscle moves. The movement stirs as a conversation between an inner self and the extremities of the physical body. However, she also locates this physical centre as the temporal home of the 'soul' the spiritual centre. Her claimed discovery of the origin of movement implied that worthy movement retained something of a spiritual nature. Thus she defined dance as an inner life that juxtaposed the psychological with the physiological, with the latter given dominance. This connection with the soul gave Duncan's multifaceted expressionism a spiritual component. This 'expressionism' according to Louis Untermeyer induces 'loss of body, which like ecstasy, induces vacancy' (Untermeyer, in Franko 1995: 2). In comparison with Mallarmé who attributes the death of the body as the object of the dance, Duncan's theory and those who speculated on her, attributed this death/void to a state in which the body's totality enters the void of ecstasy. By naming the flesh of the solar plexus, Duncan put her audience in touch with the person in the flesh and in its meaning. She wove her statements of movement between these two poles. She carries this self-expressive theme into her writing, highlighting the activity of dancing and its effect on the public. Her fetish with the solar plexus highlights her utilisation of spontaneous movement as material in the making of dances. She drew on the idea of classicism for inspiration so, her solo dance also invoked images of classical line and form evocative of Greek sculptural and architectural forms. Although costumed in thin robes, she evoked a purity of style rather than a provocative display of femininity.

Whilst Duncan is one early modernist dancer who strove to interpret the basis of movement and expressivity, Fuller was Duncan's forerunner in certain respects. She did not dance in the conventional way, but developed techniques of movement designed to facilitate the creation of images evocative of symbolist representation. According to McCarren, Mallarmé suggests that she did not dance, but wrote with her body, suggesting the corporeal equivalent of a poem. By comparison, Duncan extended Fuller's technological innovations in theatre craft to the organic spectacle of woman's body and the sanctity of all its parts. What Fuller made disappear into symbolism, Duncan made reappear as the essential female body. This body (and that of Fuller) was not a classical ballet body, but a body that was closer to the female form and firmly imbued with soul. However, Duncan's deployment of metaphor reveals processes similar to Fuller's at work. In both cases the female soloist was the ground connecting the vehicle (dance) with the tenor (nature). Duncan was grounded in sensation, Fuller in technology. The lyricism of both is enacted through symbolism and metaphor. Mark Franco argues that,

Woman is expressively displayed only to vanish in the production of metaphor. She is an unwritten body, but one could also say that sensation is the portal through which impressions travel in both directions. (Franko 1995: 15)

Thus Duncan created a space of freedom for women in dance. She did this by engendering notions of the body as self and flesh, overlaid by the idea of 'woman as nature and nature as the source of all dance' (Franko 1995: 7). The freedom of woman lay not in the public sphere of external events and their allocated roles, but veiled in the fabric of sensation that divides inner listening from outer response. This idea contains the essence of Yeats' Romantic Ideal, but illuminates it through the interplay of flesh and soul and from this perspective the image of a real or inner, as opposed to an ideal woman emerges. We are able to perceive the woman's voice, whereas the romantic woman is not allowed or does not have a voice; if she speaks in any sense, she ruptures the metaphor of her fragile beauty.

Duncan's dance was meant to suggest, indeed to instigate through suggestive practice, a new sort of social relation to the feminine body as an altered public space. ... (She delineates a) refusal to credit the inner/outer or male/female binary by occupying, literally dancing on, its boundary. (16)

By combining the idea of the body as flesh with the inner symbolic notion of the soul in holistic union, Duncan displaces the powerful binaries of inner/outer, private/public, male/female, and nature/culture. The private domain of the soul becomes the public forum

for a feminist form of self-expression through the medium of dance.

Consequentially, a deconstructive reading of these binary tensions in Duncan can be achieved by comparing her with Valentine St Point. Duncan's expression of the essential feminine is

revealed in her differences to St Point, whose dance style critiqued, laid bare and, thus, de-essentialised the feminine. Futurism as an avant-garde practice developed masculinist body aesthetics that implicitly critiqued Duncan. St Point rejected biological identity as a criterion of gender identity, instead postulating masculine and feminine principles in all people. Her dances represented through the movement of 'metachorus' (a multiplicity of movement techniques working in concert) an aesthetic discourse of gender identity. St Point also transcended the boundaries of performance identity in a context that de-emphasised both subjectivity and dualism. She like Fuller, presented an abstract choreography but her dance was metaphysical in that it aimed to reveal pure thought without sentimentality or sexual overtones. St Point fragmented all conventional and modernist images of dance and of the woman. Her dance presented the tenets of gendered cultural policy (according to a Futurist Manifesto) and is best described as 'rejecting gender norms and eluding the mimetic quality of dance depending on music as an analogy of women depending on men' (Franko 1995: 22). Reminiscent of Mallarmé's description of Loïe Fuller, St Point desexes herself to gain direct access to the essential idea of theatrical performance, as a serious mode of symbolist expression. She wrote of the dance as

but a plastic art – an exoteric materialisation, a bodily rhythm, instinctive or conventional – being separate of music –, as music is an aestheticisation of sentimentality. (St Point, in Franko 1995: 22)

St Point did not set out to reflect the nuances of a world that had redistributed its gender politics as a result of the unprecedented emphasis on the effects of modern, urban industrialisation. Her project was to embody futurist ideology's metaphor of the creative construction of a future. Within the newly emerging class-consciousness of movements such as Futurism, a desire to give social relevance to this new order was seen in creative avant-garde endeavours like those of St Point. Her choreography dramatised no transgressive position of gender polarity. She represents herself in 'metachorus' as both genders and neither. Dressed as a warrior, her face veiled and thus permanently absent from her performance, her choreography delineated an abstract, immaterial dance designed to embody pure thought. St Point executed her performances, entitled *Poems of Love*, *Poems of War*, *Poems of Atmosphere* in front of large cloth hangings, lit with colour. Mathematical equations were projected onto other walls, whilst a background of music by Satie and Debussy was played. From her disassociation with music, I assume that she did not dance or choreograph to the music as in the established fashion, but employed it to sketch the atmosphere and to underscore her performance. In so doing, St Point's

manipulation of dance elements had more in common with Mallarmé's 'poet's gaze' in that she eschewed narrative, codifying instead corporal inscriptions of poetic symbolism, couched in the Futurist Manifesto.

The Futurist Manifesto provided the blue-print for the form and style of St Point's stylised choreography through an ideology that aimed to liberate audiences from intellectual circles, stagnating codes of style, technique and form seen as outmoded, static, pacifist and nostalgic declamation. St Point's interpretations of this manifesto paralleled Fuller and to an extent, Allan, as all artists embodied both the object and subject of their own solo, artistic creations. Although St Point (1875-1953) represents no competitively strong moment in dance history, the French performer takes the final step possible in early modernism in de-essentialising the feminine and liberating the dancer/performer from the trivia of gaze. She was a significant female member of the Futurist movement and aligned herself with the most masculinist of the avant-garde movements of the 1920s, when she enjoyed a brief moment of renown at the height of the futurist period. Otherwise little is known of her work.

Both Fuller and St Point were solo artists who came from backgrounds in variety theatre, whose conventions configured a mixture of dance, film, song, acrobatics and satire. The authors, performers and technicians of variety theatre in that tradition, frequently urged audiences to new areas of intelligence, 'incessantly inventing new elements of astonishment' (Marinetti, in Goldberg 1979: 13). Marinetti urged Futurist performers to draw on elements of variety theatre and Dadaist form, claiming that 'variety theatre coerced the audience into collaboration, liberating them from their passive roles as 'stupid voyeurs' (13).

By comparison, Bronislava Nijinska was a dancer and choreographer who worked with the Ballets Russes and as an artist in her own right, shaped new innovations within the classical ballet genre. Nijinska revitalised the sphere of choreography in classical ballet as well as incorporating visual art and modern music, thus crystallising the relationship of art with the character of her overall production. She was interested in developing choreography of abstract forms, to convey symbolist representations of images to transpose the artificial realism of the classical ballet's narrative style.

Nijinska grasped the essence of her brother's (Nijinski) choreographic revolution, which relied upon the use of abstraction, or design, to convey symbolic meaning, and the insistence upon movement rather than pantomime as the primary medium of expression in dance. (Baer 1987: 26)

Nijinska constantly worked to enlarge the boundaries of classical dance by employing concepts of impersonality as a style of performance. Baer gives descriptions of Nijinska's ballet, *Three Ivans*, (1924) which included an adapted folk dance and tumbling movements as lively variations to that of classical narrative style. Baer suggests that she employed these devices as a choreographic development of a character's image, providing a reading of the persona rather than presenting the characters in the classical role of mimicry and gesture.

Her renowned and most frequently restaged ballet, *Les Noches*, (1923) presents spare sets and powerful abstraction, influenced by Russian avant-garde Constructivist theatre and, in keeping with the revolutionary ethos of the period, Igor Stravinski composed the music. The work represents the ritual of the peasant wedding, and interpretations of the feelings of bride and groom cast in a distinctly neo-classical style. Nijinska, in this same spirit of modernism, took the techniques of classical ballet and injected new forms that enabled fresh readings of corporeal deployment in space and time. Experiments with female dancers on pointe stabbing grounded rhythms in stylised form, as the legs repeatedly crossed and uncrossed, represented the intricate bindings of a plaited braid. According to Baer, this technique represented a central image of the ballet in which the bride's hair is braided before being cut off to symbolise her loss of virginity. She also employed flattened gesture, parallel stance, and movement in the two dimensional plane as well as the conscious arrangement of dancers according to height, placing the bride in *Les Noches* at the apex of a triangular arrangement.

The sets of *Les Noches* with their bare abstract form, were designed by leading artists and provided a vast minimalism, allowing the dance to be seen in conspicuous relief and thus foregrounding the new techniques of her choreography. This choreography is distinguished by the powerful architectonic configuration of the dancers' bodies in space, echoing the designs of Russian constructivist forms, which existed in the clearly constructed pyramids and poses reinforced by the uniformity of the simple monochromic costumes. She also included choreographic techniques of ground-weighted movement, frieze and mass ensemble effects, stillness as well as movement in simple geometric planes, resulting in sharply defined architectural images arising from all elements of the staging. Baer suggests that Nijinska furthered her antirealist approach by insisting that the female dancers perform on pointe.

Not only did pointe elongate the line of the leg, invoking the attenuated silhouettes of Russian icons, but it emphasised the abstraction and metaphor inherent in classicism itself, as it stripped naturalism from the movement. (34)

Notable also was Nijinska's focus on collaborations with the foremost artists of her day: Stravinski, Goncharova, Max Ernst and Alexandre Exeter. Collaborations with painters and costume designers infused and underscored her choreographic innovations with qualities of abstraction, minimalist monochromatic sets, costumes and backgrounds that complemented the abstract, impressionist choreographic structures. The costumes in *Holy Etudes* (1925) designed by Alexandre Exeter were unisex, unique in their day and not only complemented the choreography, but freed the dancers to execute the stately style of the choreography. 'According to all accounts, they added immeasurably to the broad flowing movement and stately rhythms (Bach) of the choreography, suggesting androgynous beings moving in harmony.' (Baer 1987: 50) All these features worked to liberate the dancing bodies from the aesthetic restraints and the sociological contexts of classical ballet. Nijinska's ballets reflected the revolutionary movements of the period, adumbrating the industrial and social ethos of revolution and highlighting changing social values in Europe. She brought together many elements of artistic innovation, melding them within the spirit of a modern aesthetic.

The outcome of these manifestations assisted in the movement of ballet from the nineteenth century realm of romantic ballerinas, costumed as swans and sylphs into the sensibility of modern form. Nijinska's repertoire of more than 80 ballets introduced a new classicism where modern art forms imitated and quoted the classics 'in order to view itself as the result of a transition from the old to the new,' (Habermas 1985: 3) that made dance a powerful medium of modern art. She was fortunate to have lived within the artistic climate that stimulated and permitted her modernist vision. The communist revolution in Russia and the ethos that produced Constructionist Theatre provided the political catalyst for the evolution of Nijinska's innovation. She travelled prolifically and entered into the discourse of her day, passionately involved in the experimentation, teaching, and writing of her findings. Like Fuller and St Point, she provided new insights through her tireless experiments with dancers in the studio. Her adage was that the body of the artist should not simply move, but be theatrically effective. In her experiments with the body, the medium of dance, she advocated that,

Designed for a specific task - action - every machine has its particular form, the result of the complex totality of its mechanism. So too, in choreography, the form, the plastique, the position of the body must be the result created by movement. (Nijinska, in Baer 1987: 85)

However, Nijinska was adamant about the cause of true innovation, maintaining that, 'one must sweep away what is unnecessary, but one must not unwittingly destroy the foundation, or basic mechanic of the art of dance' (86). Although she admired dance innovators such as Duncan and practitioners of the Dalcroze School, she held that their

must sweep away what is unnecessary, but one must not unwittingly destroy the foundation, or basic mechanic of the art of dance' (86). Although she admired dance innovators such as Duncan and practitioners of the Dalcroze School, she held that their project, although innovative, 'worked hard at creating a new school of dance. Their ideas were brilliant and legitimate, but why create a new scale of sounds? All they had to do was to add these ideas to the existing school and theory of dance' (87). Such an innovator as Nijinska revolutionised the form of classical ballet from within the genre to revitalize the choreographic forms of body movement and rhythms that emphasised more powerful choreographic configurations for women. Through the collaborative influences that shaped her work, as well as her own research, she eliminated many of the choreographed structures that disempowered women, replacing them with choreographic constructions as in her ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, (1926) loosely based on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Nijinska fragmented the narrative line by creating a play within a play and according to Baer, (41) consisted of a rehearsal followed by the performance of a ballet which set out to humorously satirise the theatrical and social conventions of their deaths, by instead having them elope by plane. Such departures neutralised the potential to perceive the body image as a stereotype. Through the manipulation of choreographic style and bodily articulation, these elements of expression and rhythmic style released balletic form from mimicry and linear narrative.

Similarly, the Russian ceremonial motifs and neo-classical style in *Les Noches* formed an eloquent statement of gendered reciprocity, highlighting the dancer's objectivity, allowing fresh images and paving the way towards new semiotic readings. Equally, Fuller's innovative experimental form of dance theatre developed her unique genre in response to the growing focus on individualism and expressionism. She rejected the codified form of ballet with all its social implications and developed a form that blended symbolist images projected onto her body, thus fore-grounding an imaginative organic interpretation. Fuller's techniques which so affected Mallarmé, prompted his new way of seeing, his 'poet's gaze'. This power of the dancer/performer also inspired, as is illustrated by the Symbolist expressions of Yeats (during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century) a new mode of seeing in the theatre.

Despite experiments of the Ballets Russes and innovations such as those of Nijinska, conventional attitudes of the ballet genre continued to re-appear. From the 1930s to the period of substantial change in the 1960s, few books were written on the subject of ballet that did not describe falling in love with the art. 'Most 'balletomanes' were men who were 'monistic in approach, and who constructed a hierarchy of criteria in support of their tastes' (Sayers 1993: 165). One of the most widely published and most popular, Arnold Haskell, was unconditionally blatant about his passion for a particular conception of the ballet, describing his condition as, a

man madly, but let us hope not blindly, in love with a certain conception of ballet, and consequently un-interested in, even hostile to, many other forms of the dance. (165)

The term 'madly in love with' communicates a passion borne out of the idea of romance, which presupposes a desire or attraction for the epitome of the romantic ideal, the dancer. The simplistic narrative style, role delineation of ballerinas and leading male roles all supported by the corps-de-ballet, invoked the responses that idealized the 'stars'. Indeed, in his descriptions of the female dancers, Haskell, like Gautier, reveals a gaze that highlights the dancer over the dance form and over the art form. This is not surprising, given the history of the patrons of ballet (particularly of the nineteenth century) who kept or supported dancers unable to support themselves, often in return for sexual favours. Although, during the early modernist period this proclivity had largely been eroded, many of the attitudes towards ballet dancers remained in the psyche, fuelled by a return to the ideal of the 'Romantic Image'.

Haskell was the most successful of his generation in speaking to the popular imagination in terms of the ballerina and the art of ballet, its history, aesthetics and technique. His books were widely read and often ran into many editions. He bequeathed a vivid repository of attitudes towards dance and dancers in his era, dating from the nineteen thirties through to the 1950s. His attitudes served to undervalue romanticism in terms of gender and reflected both the attitudes towards the canons of high art and the conservative backlash of postwar attitudes against women of the 1950s. Haskell's work was imbricated in a movement designed to reinstate the gender status quo of patriarchal dominance.

The 'Romantic Image' is appropriated to fulfil male sexual fantasies, in an outlet that attempts to come to terms with the feminine power of the ballet dancer. In so doing, such an appropriation both reinforces this mystique and deprecates it, constructing an alternative problem to that envisioned by Mallarmé. His theory provides a broader, more powerful and consequently, more balanced reading of dance and the cosmos of the theatre that were influenced by a range of cultural forces.

In the civilising process of bourgeois western society, the body is patrolled, and the range of acceptable behaviour is increasingly and carefully defined. The notion of civilising via manners and the etiquette surrounding dining and personal hygiene (grooming and toilette) was a development arising from the period of the Renaissance. From this civilising notion in Western culture arose that of the exclusivity and privatisation of the body and areas of bodily function to what Bakhtin called the 'classical body'. This body has no orifices and engages in no base bodily functions. The antithesis of the classical body is the 'grotesque body' (derived from the tradition of Carnival and Feast of Fools common in Bakhtin's study

on Rabelais and 16 century France) which has orifices, genitals, protuberances, discharges, and wrinkles. Various studies discuss and illustrate how the body was increasingly redefined and privatised, its sexual and other needs denied. Mary Douglas analyses Frances Baker's transformations of discourse in relation to changes in class structure, labour demands and the reconstitution of subjectivity.

The 'positive body' founded on the exclusion of desires and appetites which now constitute the 'absent body', is the ideal and necessary subject and object of rational science and bourgeois society. (Douglas, in Wolff: 1997 84)

Whilst the 'absent body' contained all those parts of the 'grotesque body' which were prohibited and rendered inaccessible, it became easy to spread rumours elevated to the status of laws about the deadly perils these bodies concealed. Klaus Theweleit, in his treatise of 'Male Fantasies' provides interpretations of the image of women in the collective unconscious of the male during the period of the two Great World Wars, by analysing male sexuality, power and gender representations from literature, memoirs and letters of men. Thomas Lacquer also affirms that in various periods of history,

being driven out of paradise is the penalty for trying to create a paradise: it invites guilt and punishment which converge into complex imaginings, behaviours and images which are often expressed through art. (Lacquer 1990: 119)

Representations of features that pertain especially to male or female bodies, because of the enormous social consequences of these distinctions, are frequently illustrated and examined by art and culture.

The many-headed dragons, Medusas and maidens that the hazy vision of oppressed men saw living in the vagina, were images of the authority of the ruler, ... who had established penalties for entering that grotto. They were, so to speak, the heraldic emblems with which he branded the bodies of his subjects. (Theweleit 1987: 415)

Gautier's response to the mystery of the ballerina's smile, his need to rarefy their 'classical' bodies whilst also examining them and the essential level of sensuality with which he has marked them, illustrates the tension between the complex fantasies that are imbued in his gaze.

Installing dark territories, sources of terror, anxiety in and on people's bodies of those they desired was a prerequisite for subjugating them with

an ideological assault . (415)

The idea of assault implies occlusion, perhaps removal or erasure of the threat and Theweleit develops this theme by describing the hierarchical system of female sacrifice that has persisted in many forms, and even up to today, becoming increasingly intricate. Under capitalist conditions of social production, akin to those that emerged during the period of modernism, evidence of threat exists as a readily available weapon in the arsenal of the technologies of power. Female threat (as that of the Suffragette) implied or imagined, has frequently entered the discourse of power. All hitherto existing forms of dominance can be reproduced under capitalism, including the domain of women representing the female 'virginally' as commodity. Theweleit argues that,

In the system outlined, man who takes his master's wife, worships a woman from afar, or manufactures an image of a highborn woman is exchanging his revolutionary potency for a share of potency in the existing society. (368)

Whilst Theweleit is referring to those who change or improve their social class or traverse the barriers of social convention, these theories illustrate some of the changes in the class structures and the social conflicts associated with the cultural and sexual politics of the period surrounding early modernism. The infusion of the 'Romantic Image' into the ballet and the celebration of the ballerina expressed by various 'balletomaines', made these bodies accessible to bourgeois sensibilities, if not in the flesh, then in the complex machinations of the male sexual psyche and imagination. The evocative power of the ballerina and the dancer is enunciated by examining and broaching the 'complex machinations of the male sexual psyche'.

This treatment of ballet as a narrative of patriarchal discourse has become one of our culture's most powerful models of patriarchal ceremony. The ballerina, in her repressed but necessarily compliant enactment of this ceremony, unwittingly contributes to her own oppression and ratifies her own subordination. This gender prescription is evident in the ballet's representation and deployment of the female body and is fundamental to the ballet form and the institution (training, performance hierarchy and multiple control systems) within which it is contained. Ann Daly argues that, ballet

would not be ballet without them, as any major gender redefinition which redressed gender-based inequalities would produce dances not recognisable as ballet. (Daly, in Dempster 1995: 39)

The extent to which the ballet form is or is not recognisable through innovation into new forms, needs to be discussed in the context of time and cultural location, free of gender

biased positions and binary discourses. Whether they are located in the consciousness, displaced in the subconscious or expressed through the interpretation of symbolist, representational imaging forms, innovators of ballet, such as Bronislava Nijinska have reshaped the classical ballet form to free it from discourses which would oversimplify or undervalue the skills or choreographic structures it encapsulates.

Furthermore, one of the most striking paradoxes of the classical ballet genre is that this most athletic, physically demanding of dance forms harnesses considerable strength, stamina and will of the female dancer in the service of narratives representing female passiveness, dependence and frailty, all controlled by the male hand. This paradox is occluded by the reinforcement of bourgeois or popularist overlays, frequently associated with dance criticism or historical accounts of ballet.

The paradox of the dancing body takes form in the sociological discourses that shaped both the fetishising of the female dancer and the dance practices they contained. Remarkably, the innovations of the early modernist artists set a climate in which the innovations, grounded in their sociological periods of European history, attracted responses that privileged visualisation over intellectual or metaphorical approaches to perceptions of performance. Images of dancing bodies liberated and celebrated through theories of romanticism may have become negatively reinforced, subsumed by moves towards imperialism and the growing sense of nationalism and capitalism in Europe. These much celebrated dancing images of corporeal representation, particular in shape, size or age, both fragile and robust femininity, whether celebrated through symbolist or expressionist forms, or watered down for popularist consumption, have done much in colluding with the image of body perception and bodily insight of women in bourgeois and other cultural contexts. Some are still evident in the bodily discourses and ways of seeing in dance and culture as Angela Seward expresses in her writing,

She is a beautiful thing, perfect, a beautiful thing, not dead,
not alive. Perfect. Seducing the eyes. Elegant. Almost not
there but for the idea of it. There but only in its distance. A
beautiful thing seducing the eyes and blood to forget their own
presence. If only we could be her, if only we could be pure idea.

(Seward 1991: 62)

Therein lies the enigma of the dancer and the dance. How and where is the dancing body distinct from the dance and where is the essence of the dance? What of the contradictory images surrounding the dance and the dancer, on the one hand signified as pure form, symbolist or romantic and, on the other, fetishised for the imaginative rationalisation of psyche. Unraveling this enigma will serve to gradually communicate bodily contexts of image displacement in contemporary dance.

CHAPTER THREE

READING IMAGE:

**IMAGE SCHEMATA IN CHOREOGRAPHED
DANCE**

*They are free, but contained within their spatial, temporal vigour,
Biting chunks of infinite distance in flight, step, fall, wheel, tilt, pause to sliding-
repose.*

He has depth and physicality, shades of lightness, strength.

*She infuses the moment with the physical largeness of her technical brilliance, slight
though her stature.*

They traversed a space of meaning's form.

Ephemeral designs, icons of knowing- born in the moment of their death,

Dancing bodies, form, flesh and idea,

*Binding their wisdom in the knowing of that moment – revisited again and over by
the memory's perceptions of those residing in that space.*

(Carolyn Griffiths, 2000)

In articulating a vision of movement, the dancing presence of the performer indicates bodily grounding through lived transactions of cognition, expression and movement, which are part of a dance. Given the diversity of methods employed by choreographers, performers and the approaches employed to articulate and shape dances, many questions arise. What are some common principles in the social and creative constructions of choreographic frameworks and how do audiences make meaning from the performance of these works?

Because it is embodied, dance always reflects life. Dance imagery, in performed choreography no matter how abstract, has a lived ground; influenced by everyday lived bodies, our mythic, poetic, chimerical bodies and our trained bodies. The worlds of dance are always temporal and spatial and are revealed primarily through movement. Moreover, no amount of analytical abstraction can ever transcend the lived actuality of the human body – it is of ourselves, of the corporal time and space in which we live, move and inhabit, as we live our world in relation to ourself and others. The lived body is the common, universal theme that encapsulates the dynamic ground of human expression. In early modern dance, Loïe Fuller, Isadora Duncan, Valentin St Point, the Ballets Russes and Bronislava Nijinska (to name a few) explored new types of art for a new kind of social world and its perceptions in modern dance and ballet. These artists developed work that explored varied relationships between the medium of dance and the messages engendered in modern industrialism. Discourses of the body emphasise a location where objective significations enable multiple readings, disregarding gender and technique in favour of the dancer's identification as a metaphor, but the enigma of the location of 'dancer and the dance' continues to underscore the presence of the lived body.

There is no *one* way to conceive of, or to perceive the imagery that is located in dance. Analysing imagery in dance, is best done by considering distinctly separate works from

different stylistic viewpoints and different historical times, applying theories of perception and cognition to their reception, juxtaposing these observations or findings with other principles of choreography and drawing some general conclusions. The style and purpose influences the imagery contained in the work. The imagery can be interpreted according to the whole and according to each variation, or it can be interpreted in terms of specific small phrases of movement motivated by specific ideas used in conjunction with choreographic themes. The rhythmic phrasing, musical accompaniment, performance spaces and the choreographic configurations of the dancing bodies can affect the projection and reception of imagery. Additionally the designated choreography often bears the potential to evoke subliminal associations, whether they are explicitly recognised or not, which suggests that imagery arising from the performed choreography can exist on varying levels of consciousness. This is true for the dancer and can also be true for the audience, those who receive and perceive the dance. The images and ideas used to stimulate movement injected into the choreographic process can resonate in the performance of the work. What constitutes process for the dancer and choreographer can work its way through to the reception by the audience. Certainly we do not all see the same things in a single work, but if the work is of a high standard, some clear, cohesive images, perceptions and ideas must impress themselves on the mind, or share a resonance in the body of each individual viewer. Audience responses are likely to be triggered, layered and organised in many ways and the processes of comprehension will be manifold. However, as Whittock remarks, 'interpretation cannot be completely unrestrained, nor just be subjective, for meaning depends for its existence upon restraints which govern understanding, and upon shared and common criteria for perception and cognition'. (Whittock 1995: 9)

An image is a signifier perceived in the mind, drawn from an internal or external stimulus. Images may invoke any or all of the senses. At the very basic level a word, a sound, colour, taste, texture or natural phenomena (a feather, a sunset) in visual or moving form may invoke images. At a more sophisticated level, images can be transmitted or transmuted through the choice and juxtaposition of an art work's aesthetic elements and the ensuing process resulting in the work. Kinaesthetic Imagery is a specific category of imagery, which sets out to capture physical sensation. The poet, Keats is often cited as the great exponent of the kinaesthetic image in nineteenth century poetry and it is from his work that the late romantic poets, Yeats and his contemporary Shelley, derive their ideas of poetic imagery as tactile and kinaesthetic.

Like Yeats and Keats, Shelley writes of the aesthetic image in poetry as evocative, aerial and 'compels us to feel that which we perceive, and to imagine that which we know'. (Harrison 1959: 240) Harrison elaborates the point that these poets took as their aesthetic inspiration the arts of music, spectacle and dance.

Whether performance, literature, visual elements or media, images can be implanted, defined and juxtaposed with selected art elements. A mental image is a complex sensory experience

perceived through a range of individual cognitive or bodily activities, in the absence of that which it represents. 'Although we hold it mentally, it may be kinaesthetic, visual, auditory, olfactory or gustatory in nature'. (Blom and Chaplin 1988: 12) A system central to the body's perception of image is the kinaesthetic system. Kinaesthetic awareness is sensory in nature and gives the body a sense of what it is like to move, fall, touch, rebound, support or roll. This awareness evolves as the various sensations and various knowledge systems of the body are integrated.

Self-awareness depends heavily on the proprioceptive (or 'perceiving of self') system by which the body judges spatial parameters, distances, sizes; monitors the positions of the parts of the body; and stores information about laterality, gravity, verticality, balance, tensions, movement dynamics, and so forth. (Blom and Chapman 1988: 18)

Individuals have learned without conscious pre-assessment how to judge particular physical relationships that are intimately connected with the senses and in dance the most prevalent kinds of images are kinaesthetic, visual or a mix of both. If visual, the image projected may be specifically representational or it may be a more abstract image, which conveys its message in a sensual, holistic, or kinaesthetic response that works at the level of sensation. For example, in my work, *Liquid Vertigo* the dance explores verticality as a metaphor for the idea of vulnerability and danger in personal relations. Dancers, through movement and expression can show the idea of falling, balanced suspension in verticality, a sense of dread or exhilaration of heights in relation with their proximity to sets and for other dancers' locations in selected spaces. These spaces were selected to reinforce the condition of marginality, and the location of dancers in them stimulated movement designed to underscore these spaces as liminal, emphasising the kinaesthetic, and relating to the sometimes indefinable quality of 'otherness' in personal interactions. On a broader level, the spaces indicated the 'otherness' of the private as opposed to the public self and the vulnerabilities subsumed in these binaries.

When viewed, the dancing bodies can either illustrate images through their moving or static dynamics or through the configurations of the choreographic and production elements. Certain events or movements within the choreography may also spark associations within the viewer, as the human figure in performance has a certain presence that is emotionally charged. Such images and associations may not be constitutive of the original choreographic intention. The choreographic themes, production elements (sets, costumes, music, title and theme of the piece, program notes), all work together to potentially evoke imagistic ideas and perceptions in the minds, bodies and consciousness of the viewers.

Expressed joy or fear of, for example, verticality in the movements of the dancers is sure to evoke muscular memories in the bodies of the viewers, whether immediately, conscious or surfacing from the preconscious. Although the theme of the dance work may be integrated with the movement, an image does not have to be about one thing: it can jump through time and space and be peopled with characters, events, sensual memories, or as abstract or emotional sensations. 'If the dance work with all its components strikes one or many chords in the viewers, the layering may bring an influx of details, or a rich array of distinct, but separate images' (13). Movement(s) can spark vivid sensations that provoke a detailed image that in turn fuels further images and sensations. Movements, sensations and images slip and slide against each other, gaining richness and value in the performed process. Sometimes the images spring spontaneously from the movement, but sometimes they are specifically directed or implied by the production or the intermeshing of both the spontaneity of the dancing and the controlled environment.

To illustrate and describe the use of imagery and image perception in modern dance, I will examine the work of Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey, as outlined by Sondra Fraleigh-Horton in her book Dance and the Lived Body: A Descriptive Aesthetics. Along with this approach I will apply Mark Johnson and George Lakoff's theory of 'image schemata' outlining a process for determining the artists' meld of image construction within the performed works. It is also premised that in any performance of choreographed dance, the viewer will be at some level, aware of the conventions of dance performance in a choreographed work.

In the late Romantic and early modernist periods meaning was created and expressed, as I have pursued in chapters one and two, centring on symbolic and abstract expression, which fragment binary and gendered perceptions of image. However, I wish to detour from the idea of the romantic to consider a theory that is specifically 'non', or 'a-romantic' in its definitions to show how the evolution of image perception in the period of modernism further withdrew from purely visual approaches in the viewing of performance. Such a withdrawal from visualisation echoes Mallarmé's idea that the dancer's nature as both female body and pure idea is resolved into 'the philosophical puzzle of the point between subject and object where the dancer is situated'. (McCarren 1995: 222)

In this idea there can be no clear demarcation between inside and outside the dancing body; the dancer seems to contain the space in which s/he is held; s/he is a container full of images filling the space and also another image in that receptacle of space. Mallarmé highlights the contradictions of an art generated by the body and ostensibly detached from the body. This detachment presupposes a clarification, that I believe can be further explored through Johnson and Lakoff's theory of 'image schemata'. Johnson, himself attests to the idea that the schemata propose a non-romantic definition. This model, suggesting a structure for defining images

grounded in body and mind, arise from some recent studies that interrelate cognitive psychology (Lakoff: Shepard & Metzler: Analogues of Spatial Operations), literature (Davidson, Searle: Projections of Metaphor), linguistics (Lindner: Verb Particle Constructions) and philosophy (Aristotelian, Platonic and Kantian theories of the Imagination), (Johnson Chapters 2 and 3). At the same time, the model that Johnson and Lakoff have developed bypasses the symbolic. I also refer to Trevor Whittock's essay, 'Potencies of Balance: Image Schemata as the Grounding of Dance Expression' in which he analysed the theory of 'image schemata', suggesting how they can be applied to a discursive reading of meaning in dance.

These studies map processes that are concerned with the principles of perception, sentience and thought, and especially with the key role played by imaging and metaphor in the construction of meanings in creative and artistic processes. Johnson and Lakoff's schemata provide examples, by which body and mind processes operate, by for example looking at 'schema' of,

in-out, back-front, up-down, near-far and so forth, what you have just experienced is not meaningful in the Romantic sense of being profoundly moved or significant (in the symbolic sense); but it is meaningful in a more mundane sense, namely, it involves an exceedingly complex interaction with your environment in which you experience significant patterns and employ structured processes that give rise to a coherent world of which you are able to make, sense. (Johnson 1987: 31)

Johnson argues that 'schemata are typically thought of as (clusters of) general knowledge structures, ranging from conceptual networks to 'scripted' activities to narrative structures and even to theoretical frameworks' (34). However, Johnson's use of the term focuses on 'embodied patterns of meaningfully organised experience (such as structures of bodily movements and perceptual interactions)' (19). We understand many situations by fitting them into structural frameworks, or schemata (or scripts) to include characters, settings, sequences of events, causal connections, movement, spatial goals and so on, all of which are the means whereby we organise our knowledge of the world. Johnson cites Rumelhart, Schank and Absolem, as cognitive theorists who also deal with the epistemology of cognition and perception. However, he goes beyond such 'propositional' structures of theory to elaborate his theory by considering physical functions, imaginative processes and metaphorical constructions. In bringing all this together he states that the

schema is not only the plan but also the executor of the plan. It is a pattern of action as well as the pattern for action. (21)

Further, these schemata go beyond simple visual images. They are structures that organise our mental representations at a more general and abstract level than that at which we form particular mental images. They are fluid and abstract and have a kinaesthetic character, but they transcend any singular sense modality, though they involve operations that are analogous to spatial manipulation, orientation and movement. As well, they are dependent frequently on linguistic contexts that contain and define them. Johnson explains,

Humans have the ability to scan and transform mental arrays and image structures in a fashion analogous to the scanning and manipulation of physical objects. It is as though we have a 'mental space' in which we perform image-schematic operations that may or may not involve visual images. (25)

Johnson ties the theory together (alongside Lakoff's empirical data to support their suppositions) by suggesting finally that their theory deals with 'preconceptual levels at which structure emerges in our experience via metaphorical extensions of 'image schemata'. (85)

I suggest that such theories can be applied to dance performance and choreographic process as a means of reading perceptions of image in dance and so elaborate the meanings a dance work may contain for the audience. Trevor Whittock in his analysis of Johnson and Lakoff's theory rationalises this view.

Understanding is a way we 'have a world', the way we experience our world as a comprehensible reality. Such understanding involves our whole being - our bodily capacities, our skills, our values, our moods and attitudes, our entire cultural tradition, the way in which we are bound up with a linguistic community, our aesthetic sensibilities, and so forth. (Whittock: 1995 11-12)

Johnson ties understanding to a total body-mind connection. In stressing that our understanding springs directly from bodily experience, Johnson and Lakoff's 'imaging schema' offer a powerful illumination of both the dance creation and its interpretation processes. Their 'image schemata' form a structure, which provides the conceptual basis for our construction of mental and physical images. Many schema are based on movement dynamics, and have elements common with theories developed by Rudolf von Laban. Some examples illustrate spatial, rhythmic and energy relationships, while others focus on cognitive and affective functions. However, the image schemata work to integrate the cognitive with the affective.

If much of human thought, understanding, feeling, and cultural constructions have, as building blocks and enabling devices a set of imaging schemata such as this sample listed by Johnson and Lakoff, their

employment in dance means that dance, even when fairly abstract, can express the development of ideas, explore feelings, express judgements, and generally make statements about aspects of the human condition. (Whittock 1995: 15)

The organisation of concepts and categories demonstrates that there are underlying principles governing the way we make sense of things forming constraints which prevent us from making arbitrary connections between things. Whilst we can apply these principles to perceptual understanding, individuals will frequently personalise universal ideas with their own idiosyncratic understandings or perceptions. These principles operate predominantly in all of us, normally beyond the threshold of consciousness. The 'image schemata' (because of its basis in cross-disciplinary research) also presents a broader interpretation of metaphor, exploring the extent and manner in which metaphors help create and structure our categories.

In essence, Johnson argues that there are groupings of basic metaphorical image schemata; that these are body based and are derived from our developmentally acquired physical experience. They have a preconscious form and logic of their own which we use as a means of structuring all aspects of our cognitive and affective life. This preconscious ability to perceive metaphor through integrated mental and physical body processes is learned from a very early age. We have learnt to project them onto all areas of our experience and with their aid we map reality; they are part and parcel of the process whereby most of our experience and categories are made possible.

One spatial example of a single image schema immediately relevant to dance is PATHS. Of these Johnson states:

In every case of PATHS there are always the same parts:

- 1 a source, or starting point;
- 2 a goal, or endpoint; and
- 3 a sequence of contiguous locations connecting the source with the goal

(Johnson 1987: 114).

These elements, 1-3, in their proximity to one another bring forth the concept of PATH. They illustrate how bodily constructions of the concept PATH, initiate ideas, all of which are integrated through physiological, cognitive and linguistic processes to form the metaphors of PATH. The interrelationship of these three elements form various cognitive, affective and physiological metaphors of PATH, which Johnson calls an 'image schema'.

The principles of 'image schemata' provide an interesting basis for illuminating the place of image in dance. The example of path is only one example of an 'image schema'. However, as it is frequently also applied in the construction of a dance, this one idea is indicative of a wealth of material with which choreographers and dancers construct movement. The example of PATH as an 'image schema' can work in actual representational space or metaphorical space, thus relating experience to multiple understandings in the perception of spatial and a wealth of other meaning in dance. Since this theory proposes that bodily movement is fundamental to the construction of ideas through metaphorical processes, making dance is potentially a significantly meaningful activity.

Johnson points out the pervasiveness of this metaphorical structure in language, describing ways in which we think of human endeavours. For example, sayings, 'He is just *starting out* in life'; 'What road will he *travel* in his enterprise'? 'She *sprinted* towards the *finish* line of her endeavour'; 'Never become *sidetracked* in the great race of life.' In these examples purposes are comprehended in terms of metaphorical spatial sequences, estimations, points of comparison and conclusions. The example of PATH represents linguistic, cognitive and physical levels of access to the integration of the moving body. Johnson and Lakoff have identified a large number of the 'image schemata' on which we depend. Some of these are:

SUPERIMPOSITION	BALANCE	COMPULSION
BLOCKAGE	COUNTERFORCE	RESTRAIN-REMOVAL
ENABLEMENT	ATTRACTION	MASS-COUNT
PATH	LINK	CENTRE-PERIPHERY
SYMMETRY	SCALE	NEAR-FAR
CYCLE	IN-OUT	DYNAMIC RISES
DYNAMIC DIPS	CONTAINER	(126)

These schemata offer a theory that is an alternative to western culture's previous reliance on body and mind dualism which seem to fragment and separate too much of what we experience simultaneously in the body and the mind. These theories underscore a premise holding the body as inseparable from the mind and so human logic is derived from total bodily integration and experience, which permeates every level of our mental and affective lives.

Feeling, or sentience is art's domain; we live art through the affective through moving out towards the artwork and being moved by it. Art becomes more meaningful as we relate it to our world at large and use it cognitively. (Langer, in Fraleigh-Horton: 1987 118)

It seems to me that these proposals can have an immediate relevance for the practice and interpretation of dance. Creative dance practitioners use these dance ideas, (loosely following Laban) in teaching from this basis. Such practice is grounded upon items in this list and when applied as an interconnected scheme of relationships can serve to illuminate process and meanings in dance. Choreographers form their own metaphorical vocabulary when making a dance and may, involve a combination of features commensurate with these schemata. Viable examples could include: the tracing of paths, the play with balance, counterforce, contacts and linkings, the merging and splitting of groupings and shapes. Movements can be focussed on central and peripheral action, proximity, the cycling of material, scaling by means of the accumulation or subtraction of bodies, visuals, sound or objects on bodies or space. The dynamics of movement can be linked to energy, structures, symmetries and much more. Choreographic classes often present students with just such notions and devices to stimulate movement exploration and composition. Conversely, they can be employed to analyse choreographic processes, ideas and structures in choreographed performance. I will use the 'image schemata' to identify and trace image perception in dance.

A direct example of the use of 'image schemata' in interpretation can be observed in well-known works, which explore themes of conflict, such as Martha Graham's powerful *Clytemnestra*, *Errand into the Maze* and *Cave of the Heart*. Her work reflects the psychoanalytic preoccupations of the 1930-1940s, articulating these concerns through the powerful representation of the inner feminine psyche as a dynamic outward flowing bodily projection. Graham, Humphrey and other dance artists in the period presented a newly defined dance practice in the public arena, and in so doing were articulating and defining spaces for dance and for women which had not previously been coherently defined.

In Martha Graham's work *Errand into the Maze* (1947), the heroine finds and faces the mythical Minotaur, a creature half man, half bull who devours human flesh. Graham refers to him 'as the creature of fear residing in the heart's darkness' (ABC Video, 1994). The woman encounters the creature as her partner in the dance, confronting him in a struggle for life and igniting her transformational powers to emerge triumphant from the maze into the light of, perhaps, self-realisation or self-affirmation. Graham frequently employed and explored the balance and counter balance of conflicting inner forces as a focus for duality in her work.

The dance is performed in a spare set comprising a large prong-like structure evoking a cave or entrance, (or perhaps suggesting a heart) in, out and through which the woman alternately struggles, clutches for support and weaves a rope, which she has threaded through the maze. Finally, she enters this 'doorway' traces its outline with her hands and departs through it in the last uplifting gestural moves of the dance. I will discuss the 'image schemata' of 'path,'

'container' and 'force/counter-force' to define and clarify perceptions of image in the performance of *Errand into the Maze*.

The rope is laid on the floor leading from this entrance to another tall, thin, angled shape, which frames the space. This rope or thread represents the internal 'path' of the maze and forms a 'containing' boundary, through which the movement travels in various 'paths' between the two structures. Much of the dance takes place inside, immediately outside and along the peripheral 'paths' of this contained space. The dancer begins in the entrance, wends her way within the enclosure, frequently also 'containing' her movement with sharp hand gestures that frame her face and torso, then proceeds with alternate criss-crossed steps to travel along the thread, tracing its pathway. Her movement oscillates between sharp, angular gestures, contractions and turns, while her face expresses intense conflicting emotions.

When the woman is confronted by the Minotaur, the choreography places the dancers in paired configurations of proximal containment, the male dancer frequently pushing, pulling, spinning, squeezing her to the ground, containing her with his power, continually evoking a play of 'force and counter-force'. The Minotaur carries a pole across his shoulders, over which his arms fit, restraining and enlarging his head and torso to represent the 'bull', whilst the lower human part of his 'human' body is free. On his head he wears grotesque make-up and horns, creating a vestigial mask, the bull's head. His costume 'contains' his torso, so that he looms large, accentuating the power and terror of the flesh-devouring beast, whilst reinforcing the 'image schemata' of 'force and counter-force' that 'contain' both feeling and movement. This movement travels 'paths' bounded by a 'container' that encloses the movement and hence its representational feeling. The choreographic struggles are always 'contained' with the dancers in close proximity. The woman's struggles with the Minotaur are dispersed with phrases of movement, in which she retraces the 'path' of the maze and articulates in repeated crossings of arms over torso and abdomen, the depth of her struggle with dark forces. In moments of freedom when she ignites her power, her movement opens out, freeing her arms and legs in 'relevé' and turns, moving outside the boundary of the maze. In a final forceful struggle, in which the pair push, pull, spin, the woman is taken upon the Minotaur's back. Her weight confines him after a brief struggle; she finally overcomes and is released. She gathers in the rope, emerges from the maze and, free from the constriction of conflict 'contained' in her body, is released from the mechanical metre of her physical and metaphorical 'path' of suffering. Her movement takes on the soft, outward release recognised in the freedom of actualisation, as the 'path' diminishes, the 'container' is dissolved and the Minotaur, the symbolic 'beast within' disappears completely.

Imaged associations of 'path', 'containment' 'restraint' and its 'removal' are clearly evident in Graham's choreography. Adult audiences through an interaction between kinaesthetic reception and prior knowledge will be influenced by such universal criteria of image perception.

The schemata are almost never experienced in an isolated or self-contained fashion; instead, a number of other schemata are superimposed upon them to define my orientation toward my world. (Johnson 1987: 25)

Examples of other 'image schemata' that relate to specific spatial and rhythmic knowledge such as 'dynamic rises and dynamic dips', 'centre-periphery', 'superimposition', 'near-far' or 'in-out' could also be applied from Johnson and Lakoff's list to elaborate elements of performed choreography in *Errand into the Maze*.

We almost always superimpose a container schema on our centre-periphery orientation. Where we draw the bounding container will depend on our purposes, interests, perceptual capacities, conceptual system, and values. But we tend to define both our physical and mental identities by virtue of their containment (within 'bodies and 'minds'). (125)

Similarly, in the 'image schema' of 'balance', the concept or expression of conflict may be seen in the act of struggle and counter struggle ('force and counter-force') from the maze-like 'paths' travelled through the space. These 'paths' act as symbols for conflicting mazes of emotional turmoil enacted in choreographic configurations within the dancers' personal space and the space contained by the sets and props. The metaphor created by the choreography employs an expressionist form to represent thoughts, emotions, and ideas as the woman interacts with the rope and the pronged set. Layers of experience are superimposed in the choreography, through the 'paths', stylised, sharp, angular, spasmodic movement and obvious struggles. As the title *Errand into the Maze* suggests, the dance represents the idea of conflict articulated through an expressionist representational movement form.

This expressionist movement form, characteristic of modernist dance, employed a formalist gamering of the body in significant and clearly identifiable choreographic arrangements of movement, technique and gesture and in its interpretation of themes pertinent to the period. Such notions represented a period of intense industrial growth, in which machines dominated, and was intensified through the conflict of war. Art sought a humanising relationship within the affairs of people in their everyday lives, seeking to extract from the speed and excess of industrial society the seeds of a soul in a metamorphosis through expressionism. In Graham's case, a return to the classical ideals of myth and legend to express and examine emotions such as conflict was pursued.

The choreographic 'force' and 'counter-force' location of Graham's work expressed an abstract representation of conflict, that must, at some level, touch an utterance of conflict or suppression in the viewer at either the conscious or sub-conscious level of experience. I argue that the 'image schemata' of 'force and counter-force' 'path' and 'container' constitute informing agents in our reception of this work expressed in the containment and release experienced in states of conflict and suppression. Within the individual psyche, these states are highly personal and yet universally acknowledged as human and sentient. Conflict must be experienced, in order to inform our comprehension of life, yet it must also be contained, (or worked through) lest it disrupt our ability to function in other areas of our lives. The contained quality of conflict expressed by the dancer, who acts as a sign for the actual state, activates, through the 'image schema' of 'force and counter-force' and 'container' the memories of past and present experience of the viewer.

By virtue of such superimpositions, our world begins to take shape as a highly structured, value-laden, and personalised realm in which we feel the pull of our desires, pursue our ends, cope with our frustrations and celebrate our joys. (126)

The dances of Doris Humphrey have been described as architectural in their style of movement and in their employment of height, width and depth, with all lines converging at the centre of the space. 'The style is more linear and angular than curved in shape... This style influences the imagery of the work as a whole.' (Payton-Newman, in Fraleigh-Horton 1987: 211). Humphrey considers the dancer's location along lines of power and weakness within the total space and within the body's sphere. Hence, her work consciously employs the use of symmetry in its choreographic scheme and is evocative of explicit architectural design. She juxtaposes dynamic group stability and shape construction with the vigorous flow of symmetry within the themes of her work.

Humphrey based the theory behind her technique of fall and recovery on Nietzsche's imagery of oppositions between Dionysian and Apollonian aesthetic tendencies. Her image for the zone between fall and recovery is 'the arc between two deaths'. She defines motion within that arc, both physically and emotionally. (Fraleigh-Horton 1987: Preface xxxi)

Humphrey's concept represents a metaphor of 'path', consisting of a source, (death/birth) contiguous points (arc) and the end point (another death); all working through the likening of dance as the movement following this path, which once completed, dies, but is reborn again. Its rebirth can trace a new path through the metaphor of dance in which the body is a symbol

containing and perpetuating an oppositional aesthetics of fall and recovery. In *With My Red Fires*, these themes evoke the idea of struggle within the confines of moral social structures couched in an architectural structuring of choreographed groups in space. The specific choreographic phrases in *With my Red Fires* delineate these arcs of life and death, in which the fall from grace and recovery through the affirmation of passion is clearly seen. In a similar paradigm, the imaging schema of 'symmetry' applies to the work. Throughout this dance, Humphrey frequently assembles symmetrically grouped dancers in straight or angled lines, in clear geometric shapes and on differing levels to replicate frieze and framed, 'contained' images symbolising the movement of interactive social constructions. Dancers move in groups of 5-6, in tableaux, which alternately move and pause exercising 'restraint' in the flow of movement and its 'removal', and in addition, 'symmetrical' body shapes create two and three dimensional configurations of image across the space. The movement is slow and stately and pauses are considerable, representing the weight and fixedness 'restraint' of convention and the established mores of Western (Christian) ideology. Both the arrangements of the groupings and their individual moves are by turns 'symmetrical' and 'a-symmetrical', 'constrained' and fluid, 'released'. The groups cross, blend, separate, creating a fluid, point and counterpoint 'near-far' conversation with each other and with the music. The structure of musical form serves to integrate and reinforce the choreographic symmetry of the work and elaborate the themes of opposition.

Two figures, woman and man, cast as lovers, who although initially lost in the mechanically moving symmetrically homogenous groups, begin to emerge, distinguishable by their counterpointed movement and costumes. The 'fires', at this establishing point of the dance are quiescent, glowing coals, 'restrained' by the forces of convention. As the lovers develop their identity as distinct from the group(s), their movement begins to take on the more fluid 'balanced' evocation of their unity as the fires of their passion emerge. This style forms a contrast to the images of control and 'restraint' of the mechanical, sharply rhythmic institutionalised feel of the 'symmetrically' arranged groups. A tension emerging as a 'dynamic rise' is created from the fluidly choreographed duos of the two lovers, whose defiance of social convention manifests a passionate opposition to institutional forces. As their liaison develops, they are at times 'restrained' by the static rhythms of social and cultural disparity and the choreography seems to orchestrate a disapproval of their actions as the 'symmetrical' groupings interact choreographically to 'contain' the lovers. In this 1978 restaging of the dance, the male dancer is black American and the female is white and blond haired. Whether the choreographer's original intention was to examine race relations, the casting of the dancers as black and white underscores an examination of race (other) and the implications of male/female binary oppositions as 'force and counterforce'.

As a sense of the lovers' unity in passion solidifies, a female figure named as 'matriarch' appears from behind a sketched set of plinth-like structures (buildings, establishment and respectability) and entices the girl away from her lover. In a duo of gestural and vocal lament, the 'matriarch' seeks to remove the girl from the temptation of passion ('blockage'). Her lover draws the younger woman away again and, although caught by the pull of oppositional forces (conscience, moral choice, 'force and counterforce') she succumbs to her passion. A grotesque dance of resistance ('blockage' and 'balance') by the matriarch follows, representing retribution and expulsion from the garden, in the spiralling, twisting, accusatory poses, and a-symmetric, rising and falling in waves of indignation and wrath. The draping folds of her twirling skirt, become an extension of the metaphor as she expresses the might of her authority and disapproval. The couple are punished for their illicit expression of passion as they are dragged, thrown and displayed by the mass, whose movement takes on the flickering of their fiery disapproval. As the protagonists depart, the lovers exiled but freed ('removal') in their passion achieves final release in an embrace, ('balance') symbolising their union through true passion, which transcends the constraints of ideology. Binaries coalesce in this union. Through the 'image schemata,' we perceive the use of spatial 'symmetry' and its counterpart, a-symmetry, all of which develop tensions of 'force/counterforce' and 'restrain/removal' to actualise a final 'balance' in the union of love. Viewers, through the sorting and integration of these 'imaging schemata' with personal experience, perceive emotional, affective and physically imaged meaning in this dance.

The 'imaging schemata' as Whittock suggests, allow readings of dance by interpreting the affect that the location of movement achieves whilst simultaneously illuminating choreographic configurations and layers of meaning. As Fraleigh-Horton has suggested, choreography evoking abstract images or perceptions such as expressions of strength, ease and exuberance are not imposed upon the motion in the dancer's portrayal. Rather they are evoked in the viewer as the dancer attains the integration of the idea in motion. He/she is the motion performed (the sign), unfolding the image (symbol) to our view. The image is about the emotion or association made by the viewer, who responds to the physical sense of the motion and the image it conjures. In addition, Johnson and Lakoff's theory of 'image schemata' provide the cognitive and affective structures, which allow the instant reception, processing and recognition of the meanings in the images and constructions projected in the dance. These processes occur during any single movement and also during the choreographic phrasings and episodes of the entire dance. Integration of perception through the processing of 'image schemata' can be personal, but is couched as well in universally applied criteria of the 'schemata'. Fraleigh-Horton asserts that,

The image is about her joy in motion – and about the joy we feel as audience in the leap itself. But this is not just any leap. It is stylised, one of a kind, composed,

uplifted and regally balanced in midair. The image does not symbolise those qualities for us (although it certainly may) but, in an immediate present, it draws us into these attributes as they are lived through. (Fraleigh-Horton: 1987: 220)

Further, the image of joy triggered by the dancer in turn, triggers any number of personalised associations made by the viewer, in his/her private domain of reception, as illustrated by the 'schemata', which constitute the 'attributes' that 'draw us into' the leap. Some of these will remain personalised and some will be shared through the more universal themes of the performance work. The images contained in any one work belong to the work as a whole and to the work's stylised theme or conception. Fraleigh-Horton suggests that 'Humphrey's dance expresses our desire for beauty in the expressiveness of the movement and our desire for clearly designed structure appeals to the intellect as well as the emotions' (221). The 'image schemata' go one step further in illuminating how and why the perception of the image is integrated at the conscious and preconscious level.

Johnson's 'image schemata'; supported by Lakoff's empirical research may be applied to the perception of structure and purpose in dance performance. Choreographers also employ elements and techniques of dance to create movement material in choreographic development that Johnson and Lakoff name in their theory of 'image schemata'. I concur with Whittock's view that these 'image schemata' can have 'implications for a hermeneutics of dance, and in particular, for providing us with a more detailed explanation of how dance movements in themselves beget ideas and affective meanings' (Whittock 1995: 11). Choreographic exercises as they are shaped and cultivated into a performance can be richly depictive or evocative of ideas, feelings, attitudes, social relationships, and dramatic situations.

By virtue of such superimpositions, our world begins to take shape as a highly structured, value-laden, and personalised realm in which we feel the pull of our desires, pursue our ends, cope with our frustrations and celebrate our joys. Much of the structure, value, and purposeness we take for granted as built into our world consists chiefly of interwoven and superimposed schemata of the sort described. (Johnson 1987: 125)

The 'imaging schemata' form an interactive device that is common to dance makers, dancers and audiences. The relation of the 'imaging schemata' to the perception and cognition of image and metaphor in performed choreography can be located and lucidly adumbrated in these early modernist examples. If much of the 'structure, value and purposeness we take for granted' in our world consists of these integrated corporeal processes, 'imaging schemata' can throw light on the metaphorical meanings and understandings encapsulated in dance as the corporeal form of human expression. The images perceived in dance moving from the subconscious to the

conscious may be penetrated and comprehended as shared meaning or on a personal level as the individual imagination's idiosyncratic reception of any one performance.

By examining Johnson and Lakoff's cross-disciplinary model of cognition and perception, we see an alternative to the dominant mode of perception through visualisation, which predisposes towards a gaze that foregrounds the look of the body, the body's image. The body as read and examined in Mallarme's 'poet's gaze', Yeats' theory of the Romantic Image and Denzin's rejection of 'ocular epistemology', all allude to the lack of purity in human perception. The site of so-called 'pure presence' is a complex matter and the tracing of the changing imagery of the body's deployment in space and time needs to be further examined.

CHAPTER FOUR

IMAGES IN THE ORDINARY: **POSTMODERN DANCE**

A straightforward celebratory art of the human body can have the potential for the welcome effect of producing positive images for women in defiance of the dominant constructions of femininity in our culture.

(Wolf 1997: 96)

The tenet of the modern dance genre, in breaking with the tradition of control of the 'classical' body evolved the 'natural' body (in the tradition of Duncan, Fuller, Allen and St Denis in the early 1920s and thirties) in which feeling and form are organically connected. The early modern dance genre was a repudiation of the classical ballet of this period. There were some newly emerging forms that arose in the avant-garde period following the great world wars which also worked in counterpoint to the tenets of ballet, introducing a strong female-centred movement, choreography for the female body, its representations and the imagery generated and the subject matter employed. The modern dance genre is now most clearly identified with the choreography of that second generation of modern dancers: Mary Wigman, Doris Humphrey and Martha Graham, all of whom developed training systems for differing emphases of modern dance. All of these artists and others developed vocabularies and techniques of movement, which have evolved in response to their own choreographic projects and experiments. Common to these contrasting styles of dance, and 'it is this that allows us to group otherwise disparate works under the one banner of modern dance' (Dempster 1995: 28), is a conception of the body as a medium for the expression of inner forces and ideas, an expression of interior feeling guiding the movement of the body into external forms.

The function of technique in modern dance, in Graham's terms, posits a 'natural' body in which feeling and form are organically connected a body freed from the socialised body and so cleared of any impediment which might hinder its capacity for true communication. In particular this body was of the gender hierarchies and outmoded narratives of proceeding eras. In this new form, licence was given to view bodies, ground weight and develop new qualities of line from different perspectives of female physicality. Modern dancers departed from classical ballet technique, introducing techniques of angularity, pelvic movement, grounded weight and liberated approaches to space, all providing emphasis to female perspectives of culture. The modern dance repertoire transformed the types of movement seen on the stage. Developed by women through an inclusion of powerful themes a strong female perspective emerged. Whether this new approach to technique or use of themes, actually 'cleared the social body of impediment for true speech' that was independent of social ideology, is questionable. Although freedom from the patriarchal perspective of classical ballet dictates enabled bodies to be read from different thematic and movement perspectives and in different contexts, the social body in

Graham's technique simply moved to a new domain of gendered perspective, one that echoed the male dominated discourse of Freudian psychology.

Ironically, perhaps, this concept of the 'natural' body in modern dance was expounded in support of highly systematised and codified dance languages and training programs, which inscribe relationships both conventional and arbitrary, between the body, movement and meaning. With codification into technique, the concepts guided by the female discourse of the 'natural' body can no longer be sustained. Now, separated from the creators' ideas and the sociological constructs from which they arose, the techniques are passed on through formalised training programs and, in this sense have become like the training system of classical ballet, which not only involves erasure of natural physical traits, but has become subject to the transgression of the cultural institutions of dance. The collective cultures of both classical and modern dance recognise dance as an institution through which dancers are selected and trained in techniques prescribed in their style of movement. The dance presented and the shapes of both male and female bodies best suited to perform as either classical or modern dancers conform to prescribed parameters.

Whereas such techniques meshed with themes that questioned social values and the gendered constructs of outmoded dance genres, practitioners gradually remodelled codified 'Graham' or 'Cunningham' techniques, thus replicating the structure of the cultural institution of dance. Such a structuring in modern dance re-imposed the rigours of physical and emotional demands through training and ironically of a body 'type' similar to that of classical ballet. Cultural Institutional structures like that of dance can only function according to the precepts, politics, ideologies and fashion of the period, which also determines to some degree, the tastes of our culture.

There has been a blossoming of feminist writers whose political intent has been to challenge the patriarchal institutions in art and culture and a great deal of writing and practice has taken place in the initial movement towards postmodern dance. The 'natural' female body in dance and other discourses has been circumscribed in terms of its primary biological functions and the perceived gender roles of pregnancy, motherhood, and its associated cultural relationships, some of which are socially inscribed and symbolically represented. Elizabeth Dempster discusses Elizabeth Gross' acute assessment of the feminist debate on concepts of the natural female body while commenting on the writings of Kristeva and Irigaray:

Both these feminists have shown that *some* concept of the body is

essential to understanding social production, oppression, and resistance; and that the body need not, indeed, must not be considered merely a biological entity, but can be seen as socially inscribed, historically marked, psychically and socially produced. (Dempster 1995: 42)

The body becomes visible as a body, only under some particular forms of gaze, including the gaze of corporeal politics. This is true for gender representations and the recent developments in linguistics, psychoanalysis and cultural theory, which have achieved an important task of challenging the naive nature of the natural body as 'essential' as designated by the early modernist dancers. Instead, the image of the body is deconstructed as 'woman' and 'man', and, in varying degrees, 'demonstrating its construction in psychic processes, social and historical relations, ideological struggles and discursive formations'. (Wolff 1997: 92) According to many commentators, the modernist body does not appear to have an image of body type as the issues surrounding the body became more political and emphasis was therefore deflected from the *look* of the modern body to the discourse surrounding it. However, it can be seen that these modern dance bodies maintained an appearance of slim, fit 'dancerly' bodies. Feminist analysis of the place and deconstruction of the body centres in part on the debate of essentialism and non-essentialism in which Janet Wolff concludes that:

In other words, the critique of essentialism does *not* amount to a proof that there *is* no body.... but the prospects of a feminist cultural politics of the body need not be doomed to negation or reincorporation by the male gaze and by a patriarchal culture. (93)

Graham's positioning of the unconscious feminine psyche may be uncomfortably close to the space traditionally ascribed to the female body, as subjective in contrast to so-called male rationality. Her projection of the feminine is not passive as in ballet, but extravagant and sometimes vigorously active. Her work reflects the psychoanalytical preoccupations of the time, articulating these concerns through the powerful representation of an inner feminine psyche as a dynamic outward flowing bodily projection. Graham and other dance artists presented a newly defined dance practice in the public arena, and in so doing articulated and defined spaces for women which had not previously been coherently defined. Postmodern dance has continued this process, even exceeding former strategies by choreographing for the body in a manner that deconstructs the politics of the body in a broader sense than that envisaged by the modernist dancers.

Postmodern dance does not present perfected, ideal or unified forms, nor bodies driven by inner imperatives, but bodies of bone, muscle, and flesh speaking of and for themselves. (Dempster 1995: 31)

Early postmodern dance, described by Susan Foster as 'objectivist', 'that is dance that focuses on the body's movement' (31-32), presents individual people in motion, the dancers not presuming to represent idealised, symbolist experience or experience mutual to all people. The play of oppositions and gender stereotyping embodied in ballet and perpetuated in a different manner through modern dance were systematically de-emphasised in the early period of postmodernism.

Dance is founded on the body as a medium of expression but the body is central also for performance representation, performance art and in the current climate, for the expression of and investigation of social contexts and constructs. In postmodern dance, internal dialogues are juxtaposed with choreographed movement to examine a diverse range of ideas and human constructions. This use of dance as choreographed form, gradually freed of narrative, expressionism and symbolism, together with its adherence to abstraction and exploration of the medium itself, reveals a site from which to examine the place and discourse surrounding the contemporary body. As the modernist idea of the romantic and the 'Romantic Image' have been gradually displaced in the experiments of early postmodernism, we begin also to see a profile of the body in a wider context of western sociological construction.

Postmodern dance is concerned with images of the body, which break down those binary stereotypes and locations of self and other that are dominant in contemporary media and social culture. This postmodern locus of dance is not so concerned with the shape of bodies, but in fragmenting stereotyped processes that dominated and continue to dominate the practice, so generating a more balanced consideration of contemporary culture in dance. Many forms of postmodern dance critique and satirise the prevalence of control over the body and the images of ideal beauty that are mass-produced through the media.

In further tracing the construction of images of the body couched in gender, social construction and perceptual cognition, an examination of selected early postmodern dance works will further highlight image location and its subsequent implications in an era where mass production and mass consumerism intensifies illusions of desire. The 'image schemata' employed in chapter three to illustrate image location and perception in dance performance, presents a broader interpretation of metaphors in regard to knowing. The

'image schemata' explore the extent and manner in which metaphors help create and structure our categories in the first instance. I will again draw upon these 'schemata' to identify and trace image perception in postmodern dance, paralleling and contrasting the structures and conclusions drawn in the previous chapter.

A point of convergence in post modern dance (from Merce Cunningham in the 1940s, but for the most part emerging in the 1960s and 1970s) has been to develop new forms of choreography. In this project, a major impulse has been the focus on the body itself and the 'fact of the body'. Innovations in the dance of this period seem to coincide with the rise and advancement of feminism, since western culture has invariably tied the corporeal to the suppression of women. Thus the metaphorical locus of social revolt is the body. It is the body and the rights of women to begin to take control of their bodies on which the newly emerging feminism of the 1960s also concentrates. The avant-garde experiments of early postmodern dance reflect the social perspectives of the feminist context in their work. Many men worked alongside women to develop dance forms which by-passed both classical and modern techniques and their gendered conditions. This, along with a post war industrial boom advanced a celebration of the ordinary everyday body. The practice of using trained bodies with untrained bodies and spaces outside the theatre for performance began to emerge. Apart from questioning what dance might be, they were also influenced by scientific explanations in response to the high regard for science at the time. Hence, Cunningham literally experimented with chance processes influenced by ideas derived from quantum physics.

The framework of dance itself is thus deconstructed and the operations and actions of the body are elaborated through the newly emerging choreographic forms, achieving a purpose and design in postmodern dance that reflects its sociological environment of freedom, scientific explorations and a questioning of social values. The body itself may constitute the theme of the dance and a good deal of postmodern dance is concerned with freeing the body from all 'technique', suggesting original attitudes that other dance forms had not previously considered and perhaps reflecting aspects of Duchamp's 'ready-mades' forms of pedestrian movement. The repertoire, the style, the ideologies and the illusion of transparency veiling body images of both classical and modern dance are fragmented by postmodern dance.

A democratisation of the body was heralded in the early postmodern period of the late 1960s and 1970s. After the experiments of work created by methodologies of chance, Fluxus and the Cage/Cunningham collaborations, new styles evolved and exchange of ideas catalysed the new processes in dance. Dancers in New York from the early 1960s,

Simone Forti, Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer, Lucinda Childs, Steve Paxton, Deborah Hay and many more, began their training in a traditional dance context. These dancers, having worked with Robert Dunn, who employed ideas derived from Cage and Cunningham, along with Dunn, began to influence new emerging forms of dance. The innovative practices of these dance artists developed and located discourses of the body in experimental dance to make statements about dance and about the body. Yvonne Rainer, (who started in a theatre context) points to the shape of her 'chunky' body not conforming to the traditional image of the female dancer. Various critics began to notice (and critique) the increasing emphasis on the look of the 'slack' bodies of the dancers of this period, later to be termed 'postmodern dancers'. Whilst Cunningham pursued a deconstruction of choreographic conventions through technically trained bodies, bodies which maintained the look of the (modern) dancer, increasingly, works of the postmodern period began to feature trained and untrained looking performers, allowing a range of body images to emerge.

Widely used choreographic devices such as rule games, — and improvisation of structures provided a frame for the perception and enjoyment of bodies in action - trained or untrained, old or young, thick or thin, male or female. (Dempster 1995: 46)

This reflected the concern of the dance artists, along with other artists, who wished to incorporate art activities into everyday life, to use everyday objects, actions and ordinary corporeality as performance material. They suggested entirely original attitudes and approaches to the deployment of space and of the body. The view of dance as a way of life, incorporating the everyday activities of walking, eating, bathing and touching had its historical origins in the work of pioneers such as Loie Fuller, Isadora Duncan, Rudolf von Laban and Mary Wigman. The new movement of dancers formed an avant-garde, whose experiments advanced towards a postmodern epistemology of dance practice. Dancers Simone Forti, Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer and Steve Paxton formed collaborations with musicians, architects and visual artists untrained in dance. These inter-arts episodes moved towards renewed collaborations of dancers and formed the inventive, energetic Judson group in New York. Their brief, followed Anna Halprin's injunction 'to find out what *our* bodies could do, not learning someone else's pattern or technique,' (Halprin, in Goldberg 1979: 89) and often used improvisation as a basic tool.

An important process employed to explore the evolution of choreographic structures was to freely associate a numbered set of anatomical movement combinations in an infinite variety of permutations. These experiments showed 'non-representational aspects of

dance whereby movement unrestricted by music or interpretive ideas' (90) developed according to its own inherent principles. Works such as *Parades and Changes* by Anna Halprin, revolving around task-oriented movement, allowed each performer to develop a series of separate movements that expressed their own sensory responses to light, material and space using numbered anatomical combinations. These exercises, developed in workshops, provided a basis for structured tasks, allowing 'loosely choreographed' movement that was completed during the course of the performance. Task and pedestrian movement were introduced in improvisations to free the dancers from technique previously used to train dancers. The importance placed on the ordinary, everyday movement was to alter the dancer's attitude, revealing a new perception of corporeal image in the dancer. The attitude of the dancer when improvising these mundane tasks becomes unselfconscious, self-absorbed, purposeful and easy. Their whole demeanour takes on a looser character, in keeping with the problem-solving tasks. Nora Blue, in her thesis, Changing the Dancer's Image: Rainer, Brown, and Paxton 1980 suggests that, 'It is unemphatic and non-committal: does not colour the movement as characterisation or interpretation of mood do'. (24) Task-like and pedestrian movement project a powerful visual image of the dancer's body and of the material of the dance. We perceive the muscular weight and mass of the body as it impacts on objects and the surrounding space, the actual intensity of the force used and the rhythmic intensity of the movement, all of which have value in and of themselves. 'These basic elements of dance can be observed and enjoyed as complete structures and not manipulated to serve the demands of dramatic nuance'. (24)

The introduction of quite different movement and dance possibilities added a radical dimension to performances by artists, leading them far beyond Cunningham and Cage's earlier exploration of chance or the permissive Fluxus events. Yvonne Rainer presented a work, *Terrain*, a ninety minute piece in five sections illustrating some of her famous principles that eliminated strong 'contrasts and oppositions, along with spectacle, virtuosity, style or illusion, overt emotionalism or seduction of the spectator by the wiles of the performer'. (Goldburg 1979: 90)

Having eliminated most of the principles and responses of conventional dance choreography and performance, Rainer set herself the challenge of defining how to move in performance without 'theatrical bloat' with its burden of dramatic, psychological meaning. Instead, her brief concentrated a focus on the imagery and atmosphere of the non-dramatic, non-verbal theatre: dance, with its 'ensuing assault of spectator participation' (Rainer, in Goldburg 1979: 90). Rainer refers here to the deployment of the body in some dance where the spectators are drawn into emotive or consciously complicit forms that evoke a potential for visual perception.

This radical dismissal by the Judson group of so much of the past and present in dance drew many artists into direct collaboration with disciplines and united the Judson group in its innovative approach to performance. The emphasis on collaboration of dancers and of dancers with artists from other disciplines (music, theatre, architecture, visual art and film) enjoyed a renaissance; elements of which are much in evidence today. These collaborations were distinctive to the 1960s innovation in that artists in their endeavour to reconstitute their art forms did so by exploring elements of other arts, combined with the utilisation of scientific processes in this period of expanded scientific development.

Since the undertaking of early postmodern dancers' projects was to expose and highlight processes that allowed renewed discourses of the body, I will again apply Johnson and Lakoff's theories to discuss a basis to comprehend the organisation of categories that embrace processes cognised in the body itself. This analysis can also interpret aspects of the discourse surrounding the change of image perception of the emerging postmodern practices inherent in these dances. The 'image schemata' indicate where and how ideas and structures are embedded in the subconscious and can be read through the conscious reception of images in dance performance. Since changes in postmodern dance practices emphasise a more conscious purpose of everyday movement in the lived body, I hope to inform the subtle differences in the alteration of image perception in these bodies. The mechanics of routine and pedestrian movement that constitute the primary material for postmodern dance, project easily accessible visual images, or in Johnson and Lakoff's terminology, 'rich images' created by the dancer's body. When applying 'imaging schemata', we perceive the muscular weight and mass of the body moving in spatial 'paths', rhythmic dynamics as 'rises' and 'dips' or other configurations of the dance as 'balance' or 'symmetry'. Early postmodern choreographers were not primarily concerned with making meaning. Rather the *form* of movement was explored and meaning may have been a consequence of this process. Whilst the choreographer may not have intended contextual meaning beyond the manipulation and exploration of 'task' and movement elements, meaning will, however, ultimately emerge in some form arising from the subconscious or related directly to the conscious reading of the movement.

Lucinda Childs devised a dance called *Pastime* performed at the Judson workshop Concert #4 in 1962, later described by Sally Banes in *Democracy's Body*. This was a solo in three parts forming a succinct statement that involved three different angles for viewing the body and the movements employed to elucidate these viewings. It was performed by Childs, who, in the first section of the dance rambled along a predetermined pathway, moving downstage, across in front of the audience, turning into another two pathways,

then moving upstage to the back, all of which happened on her right leg. Childs paused frequently, isolating the leg movement and repeatedly standing in profile. After this most physically demanding feat, she appeared in a blue jersey bag, seated on the floor. The same kinds of isolated movements with her right leg moving in and out of the bag were again performed, thus expanding and contracting the shapes made by the fabric and the movement. These actions effectively distorted the shape of her body. Banes suggests that this section of *Pastime* was evocative of Martha Graham's *Lamentation*. For Childs, this section was a humorous statement on the tension created by the contraction of a body encased, but visible in its creation of shape. The humour emanated from the appearance and disappearance of the foot moving slowly in and out of the bag. The fabric could also be stretched across the entire length of her body, thus providing scope for an intriguing range and configuration of movement masked by the fabric. In the final section, Childs turned her back to the audience with her head dropped backwards so that her face could be seen up side down. This ironic juxtaposition of lines and angles created by the manipulation of encased actions, 'balanced' (from the point of view of 'image schemata') the effect of her previous angled profiles, adding to the humour. What becomes obvious is that in Banes' description of this piece the writer/viewer has already applied 'schematic' processes of 'balance', and 'path' in order to explain the sense of irony achieved in the work. The piece was accompanied by the sounds of water in different rhythmic configurations and from different sources.

Whilst Graham's dance, *Lamentation*, (presenting a dancer encased in fabric, but leaving the face and part of the body free) represents the idea of grief and grieving articulated through an abstract, expressionist representational movement form. Childs explored the containment of movement in fabric to perhaps emulate Graham in a manner that played with abstract form rather than expressing an emotion. This work may also be seen through the 'image schemata' of 'centre-periphery' as Childs initiates the movement from inside the fabric, moving in and out of the fabric from the 'centre' to the 'periphery' formed by both the reach of the fabric and of her moving body.

Images and ideas arise due to perceptions gleaned from the configuration of the movement and associated ideas. Banes' description also suggests that Childs utilised pedestrian movement, reflecting the idea of an actual journey ('path' as a metaphor) and the difficulties encountered along the way. In addition, the contrast of a wider space usage followed by constrained ('restrain-removal') movement within the fabric reinforces the notion of struggle. For Graham, works such as *Lamentation* or more pointedly, *Clytemnestra* affirmed a return to the classical ideals of myth and legend to express and

examine emotions such as grief or conflict. Child's experiment had an ironic quality, whilst being 'precise and considered, slow moving, cryptic, physically demanding' (Banes 1983: 68) evoking the idea of difficulties experienced in the expression of a dance idea or a social context and the contrast between the expansive as opposed to the confined use of space. All of these aspects set up tensions, evocative of imaged meaning. Child's pathways circumambulated the space, not only to set the pace and scene for the cloth section, but also to counterpoint the metaphor of a 'journey' in a larger space.

This conscious act of travelling through the space slowly and dangerously creates a focus that draws the viewer in, analysing, sensing or predicting her intention, whether consciously or subconsciously. The 'image schema' of 'paths' in its configuration of 'starting point, 'set of contiguous points' and 'end point', must, at some level, touch an utterance of travelled corporal circumstance in the viewer at either the subconscious or conscious level of experience. The difficulties encountered on the journey may evoke a physical or emotional empathy, raised through the 'image schema' of 'path' as a metaphor of journey. Memories of past and present experience must travel a path, as does the dancer and the theme of the dance. This sense of processing, 'paths' travelled and the irony caused by the 'balance' and 'linking' of movement has, to a degree occurred in Banes' description of the dance.

During the 1960s objects or media were often used as a way of extending the body through space or heightening the audience's perceptions of the body's functions. Judith Dunn developed a piece, *Last Point* (1963), in which films were used to show dancers in other sites, whilst dancers also performed at the Judson Church. This meant that spectators were treated to multi-dimensional views of dance and dancers. Steve Paxton developed dances based on stimuli such as sport, photo images and Eastern movement forms such as Tai Chi. Tai Chi moderated movement by avoiding sharp angles and sudden force in order to 'pursue paths as subtle as water'. (Jowitt 1988: 326) Weight is rarely locked on both feet, but is in a constant state of transference. The dancer is soft in the joints, grounded, but not rooted to the spot, creating a three dimensional interplay of the parts of the body. 'In this interplay, obliqueness and directness, pressure and yielding can exist almost simultaneously'. (326) This style of work can be seen in later developments of Paxton's experiments with contact improvisation captured in the film of *Chute* 1972. The work is done in sections. The first, *Magnesium*, is a composition in which Paxton examines the

passage from up to down, looking at the range of the passage from the small dance of standing to the linked falls of walking, to swoops and dives from high points on other bodies. (Paxton 1982: 17)

In this project, Paxton experiments with exercises to develop the acts of bodies falling, adapting to the gravitational pull of the fall and learning to 'intuit' which part of the body will take the moment of impact. The work is a studio piece, quite improvised and has an unfinished, raw quality. It begins with movers each of whom jump towards another mover, who then takes the weighted impact on any body part. As the movers form pairs the partner taking the weight takes the other by the wrist, allowing him or her to fall to the floor. The partner taking the wrist then spins the other around, allowing him/her to rise with the momentum. The sequence is repeated with different partners. The momentum of these interactions then takes dancers towards one of several large mats where the first partner loosely throws him or herself down, followed shortly by another partner, who lands on a part of the other's body and is deflected by either a combined roll, flip over or around the first person's body. These combinations are repeated and developed so that a continuous set of movements is achieved, which split, merge and accelerate from and between different pairs of movers. The whole as the title, *Magnesium*, implies achieves an organic, kinaesthetic observance of energy, evocative of the energy and movement in natural elements, wherein bodies continually rise and fall, whirling on and off pivotal leverages of other bodies. The dance is elemental in its kinaesthetic qualities, as bodies incorporate, merge and split energy levels. The sudden accidents caused by the intersection of energy and gravity can be converted into controlled descents. Paxton sees this idea of energy and space as a sphere in which,

So many changes in spatial and kinaesthetic orientation in a short time have caused me to perceive space as spherical. The sphere is an accumulated image gathered from several senses - vision being one. (Paxton 1982: 17)

The 'image schemata' of 'dynamic rises' and 'dynamic dips' are those that relate to specific spatial and rhythmic knowledges such as the kinaesthetic qualities that Paxton describes. These 'dips' and 'rises' in energy and level replicate the suspension before a fall, a hanging in the moment when the weight achieves the pinnacle of its upward thrust, ready to drop back down into impact, to be released again by the momentum of the downward thrust. A partner to cause a 'restraint' in the momentum, whose 'removal' may lead to either collision or momentum, (the latter being preferable) guides collision with the

floor. Efficient falls tend to turn into slides or rolls, transforming vertical into horizontal travel by 'restraint and removal'. The continual repetition of these movements causes a 'scaling' as movers accumulate upon and then leave the mats. The dynamics of movement in Paxton's work, *Magnesium*, can be linked directly to these 'image schemata' because both Childs and Paxton's works are so obviously pedestrian and task oriented, employing key movement elements of energy, dynamic structures, paths and bodily intersections that are frequently 'scaled', 'restrained' as well as 'removed' from restraint. The manipulation and development of movement as a form in itself of these two dance artists clearly relates elements of dance to Johnson and Lakoff's 'image schemata', and the interaction of other 'schema' like 'balance', 'compulsion', 'blockage', 'force' and 'counterforce'.

As a choreographer, Paxton pushed at the limits of what was considered to be dance. He developed improvisation as both experiential research and as performance, describing the alternative consciousness in the performance of these exercises either in terms of 'muscle memory' or memory of the actual movement performed. The specific movements executed did not register consciously and could not be reconstituted. 'I felt transparent in the action, causing it only a little, and holding no residuals'. (17) When watched, however, the compositions, so loosely choreographed were recognisable as 'dynamic rises and dips', 'scaled' forces acting with and against each other, 'balancing' one another as well as 'restraining' and 'removing' the restraints of energy and timing. Child's choreography, similarly, achieves a perceptual purpose through the recognition of 'paths', 'centre-periphery' and 'restrain-removal'. Paxton's works were 'seemingly unencompassable in terms of psychological (symbolic or expressionist) meaning and could only be looked at through the basic elements of dance, light, space and sound'. (Dunn, in Blue 1980: 24) Dunn's primarily kinaesthetic perceptions of dance elements in Paxton's work underscore the relevance of the dynamics of falling - 'dynamic dips', and rising - 'dynamic rises', and of 'scale' and 'balance', movement observations that can be related to 'image schemata' in order to reinforce the artist's intentional experiments with energy, gravity and spatial pathways.

In both Childs' and Paxton's work, many considerations are brought to bear in coming to understand the dance - perception of a kinaesthetic sense of movement, experience of relationships ('attraction', 'link') and the ability to read kinetic metaphors. Much of our comprehension can be said to be channelled through the 'image schemata' specifically related to the themes of the pure exercises of movement. In pushing the limits of dance conventions, Childs, Paxton and others of the Judson group contributed to changes in the

dancer's image and of image perception in their movement experiments by providing alternative criteria for the shaping and performance of their works.

In the work of other postmodern choreographers, body images were directed into more abstract images of the body. Meredith Monk, another innovator of this period developed among many other works, *16-Millimeter Earrings* (1966). In this work (and also in *Education of a Girl Child*) Monk integrated elements of music, dance and film to develop strong images of what she describes as the 'rights of passage of a (female) child moving from adolescence to womanhood'. (American Dance Theatre Master Series, video). This idea is expressed with Monk dressed as a young child, wearing a red wig and standing in front of a large table, placing her in a 'scaled' spatial relationship with sets and audience. She moves minimally, repetitively and rhythmically, in 'symmetrical' metre with the sound, a characteristic of all her works. Later in this section of the work, she places a Japanese paper lantern over her head, onto which are projected images of her face, creating a moving mask, indicating the layers ('scale' and 'linkage') of meaning inherent in the awakening of a rite of passage. In this example, the use of technology can be said to be 'superimposed' as an 'image schemata'. The technology is 'superimposed' over the face of the dancer, the performing persona, causing layers of meaning to emerge. The 'superimposition' also distorts the shape of her body and partly obliterates her face. Many images or perceptions could be revealed through the masking. Also, the 'scale' of the body and distorted head would provoke new perceptions in the viewer, ('linked' with the 'superimposition and 'scaling') since the paper lantern was also transparent. This technique served to eerily distance Monk from her own image in a metaphorical 'near/far' relationship. Monk describes this approach as using technology to generate irony. The effect achieved is of instantiated 'scales' of emotional meaning, through which the images 'link', oscillate and resonate in unique 'near/far' configurations. Her juxtaposition and integration of film with dance and musical form infused a 'scaling'. Read through the 'image schemata' of 'scale' as a layering of lantern over face and film image over lantern, we discern the building of emotional and abstract layers of meaning. By providing the viewer with 'scaled' layers of 'superimposed' medium, 'linked' in 'near/far' configurations, 'each viewer hooks in and has their own thread ... because people have their own minds and imagination' (Monk, American Dance Master Series Video). Monk suggests that by experimenting with the layering of technology over her moving body each viewer will perceive their own personal meaning in some kind of emotional and/or imaginative response. Filtered through the universalised criteria of 'image schemata', choreographed elements can inform a balance between general and personal readings in dance performance.

To these innovative artists the status of media devices as contemporary artefacts was a given factor. The introduction of television reinforced and mediated both short and long-distance images in dance works. New and recent technology seems as apt for artistic commentary as, early in the century (Loïe Fuller, the Dadaists), when machines had ironically enlarged human capabilities whilst atrophying certain human skills.

Prior to the Judson experiments of the 1960s, the dancer's image was seen as an idealised image dictated by convention and the thematic concerns of the particular dance. Although the early and late modernists introduced locations of discourse and freed bodies from technique in a similar manner to the activities at Judson, bodies continued to be resolved through symbolism and expression. Even in the work of Merce Cunningham, the dancers although taking on a more disinterested, neutral presentation of the body, still maintained modern technique and the often formal carriage of the classical dance pose in very obviously trained 'dancery' bodies. The Judson experiments metamorphosed, instead, a less idealised, more personalised image of the dancer's performance within a particular movement or series of movements or through fulfilling a task. The dancers attained a diverse range of appearances, suffused with individualised bodies, each of whom maintained their personality, and each movement task was emphasised equally and simultaneously on the stage. Through such assemblage, the human figure loses its character as a vehicle of expression and instead is regarded as an object, interesting in its own right and deployed through movement to reveal its various bodily facets. No intended contextual meaning, as in the sense of the classical or modern works need be inferred from a collection of random events, however, with the application of the 'image schemata', meaning is seen not to be completely random. By applying examples such as 'path', 'superimposition', 'centre-periphery', 'balance', 'force and counterforce' all of which share a common bond in the processing of human understanding, I have illustrated that there are some commonalities underlying perception of both theatrical and non-theatrical dance performance.

Early postmodern choreographers applied processes, such as the utilisation of bare spaces or public spaces, in which dancing bodies were seen alongside everyday life blended with light and sometimes, filmic image. These images are reflected through the choreographic deployment of dance and movement exploration, frequently accompanied by voice, electronic or live sound-scape and choice of performance location, all of which serve to exemplify a multi-dimensional performance of industrially and culturally charged, technological messages. Postmodern dance artists through their manipulation of corporeal epistemologies have demonstrated new interpretations for dance as a cultural practice that cultivates public, everyday but creative bodies. The early postmodern dance

innovators and choreographers celebrated the ordinary body in distinctive styles, projecting other cultural and political possibilities for dance through the body. The contrast with the central romantic emphases on the spiritual, the aesthetic and natural in modernism could hardly be more marked, as the dancer's image now begins to occupy an actual image of the everyday, public and familiar.

CHAPTER FIVE

POSTMODERN SPACES:

PLAYING WITH IMAGE

Postmodernism, is a periodising concept whose function is to correlate the emergence of new formal features in culture with the emergence of a new type of social life and a new economic order - what is euphemistically called modernisation, post industrial or consumer society, the society of the media or the spectacle, or multinational capitalism. (Jameson 1985: 113)

Postmodernism, like modernism is a 'periodising culture', reflecting decisive historical shifts in social life, shifts which embrace capital and consumption, increased leisure and desire, and an increasingly globalised culture, which touches all the arts. The increasing sophistication and mass production of technology incorporated into our Western lifestyle ensures easy access to a wide range of arts practices. That lifestyle is increasingly expanded worldwide by the media and by the spread of access to technological change, even in the so-called third world. Postmodern dance explores, examines and reflects real life concerns, as artists delve further into social issues at a human level. Addressing configurations of the 'other' and frequently fragmenting stereotypic views of oppressed minorities and cultural difference deconstructs bodies. New approaches to the consideration of cultural difference and difference in bodily presentation, gendered, 'agist' and differently 'abled' bodies, are considered as part of performance. As well, examinations and juxtapositions of cultural oppositions, politics and questions of global economy are deconstructed in performance. Culture is not so much appropriated as laid bare. Stories reflecting real life situations arise out of the juxtaposition of, for example text, sound or image with dance. In our increasingly 'global' environment, the personal and the local are frequently juxtaposed with the particular to inform layers of meaning. Phillipa Rothfield maintains,

A broader emphasis on the particular characterises much recent thought, from poststructuralism to postmodernism and postcolonial theory. Against the ideals of universal law and generalisation so sought after within science, this way of thinking suggests that we ought to pay attention to specificity. Postmodern dance also works with particularity, eschewing the notion that we must adopt a single lexicon of movement, a univocal genealogy of dance and a universal style of performance. (Rothfield 1999: 3)

In a current framework that seeks to structure aspects of dance practice, artists draw from supposedly disparate disciplines to develop ideas. Ideas and theories are juxtaposed and examined through dance alongside other arts practice. Rothfield cites her 'particularities' as

dance and philosophy, which she brought together in two works, *Logic* and *Pensive*, 1999. In these works, she poses and seeks to answer questions about the philosophy of the body: 'Should we even divide such talk between minds, on the one hand and bodies on the other?' and 'what about sexual difference? Can it be placed on the backburner whilst we argue about other matters?' (3) Rothfield explored process in dance and movement to elucidate her 'particularities' more in the processes of finding the common elements of these two fields. She discovered during her process that, 'theory is not the ultimate lawmaker to which bodies must conform, nor is practice the all-seeing ground of knowledge. Each participates in an uneven dialogue,' (3) but each discipline can speak to one another when elucidated through a discerning choice and juxtaposition of combined elements.

As the notion of text and image have been fragmented, so are they incorporated into performance activities that enable a dissemination of messages as multifarious as the numbers of forms that art can embrace. Text, for example can comprise the object of dance, rather than the subject. Mass consumerism continually reinforces popularist conceptions of cultural value and, as mass media becomes increasingly sophisticated, the projects of art, the hermeneutics of self-expression and of imagination are communicated in postmodern epistemologies of contemporary culture. Susan Bordo argues that,

Metaphors of dance and movement have replaced the ontologically fixed stare of the motionless spectator. The lust for finality has been banished. The dream is of 'incalculable choreographies', not the clear and distinct 'mirrorings' of nature, seen from the heights of 'nowhere'. (Bordo 1993: 183)

The multifarious gaze of postmodernism is fluid and vigorous in its project of deconstructing ideas and practices in order to eschew modernism's 'clear and distinct mirrorings.' Art and theory may be able to enter into epistemologies of 'incalculable choreographies', but the reality of current technology is that it has alienated us from our essential corporeality, by exercising machinations of control. Our corporeality has been subsumed into Institutional Social Agencies (ISAs), frequently named and constructed as 'corporate bodies'. Louis Althusser has named these as 'Ideological State Apparatuses', (abbreviated to ISAs). Such cultural ISAs, art among them, act as brokers of capitalism and consumerism, through technologies of control that implant meanings to often deny or trivialise the significance of art forms by, for instance, mass-production. So it is in this western (and perhaps transglobal context, as the interplay between economies of East and

West are being shaped by economic globalism) sociological context that art and its discourses constructs 'incalculable choreographies' to consider modes of human expression. In so doing, artists disrupt, fragment and question established precepts and, whilst being caught up in this choreographing of ideas, address concepts as never before. In art, particular areas or disciplines that would not have hitherto been addressed alongside each other directly, as in Rothfield's example, are frequently combined.

In his book, Room to Maneuver-Reading (the) Oppositional (in) Narrative, Ross Chambers outlines Foucault's argument that in the modern social formation, power is diffuse - not localised but available in different situations and in different degrees to different people. Foucault also distinguishes between

'opposition,' which works within the structure of power and
'resistance', which challenges the legitimacy of a given power system, and perceiving it therefore not as 'power', but as *force* which seeks to overturn it by a counterforce. (Chambers 1991: xv)

Such a postmodern deconstruction of power, wherein institutions and hierarchies cast a network of relations, form a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localised in them. So too the swarm of points of resistance traverses social stratifications and individual liaisons. Through a similar web of interconnections, postmodern art practice penetrates the 'network of relations' and, in so doing, isolates gendered stereotypes of the body within power structures.

Examples of these power tensions are evident in the work of Pina Bausch, demonstrating the postmodern propensity to fragment and search for points of resistance. Sue Broadhurst argues that 'Bausch's work is close to Luce Irigaray's concept of the 'female imaginary which brings into play 'scraps', 'uncollected debris' and is not too narrowly focussed on sameness'. (Broadhurst: 1998: 20) Bausch's use of the body, particularly the female body in performative acts, proposes gender not merely as culturally inscribed, but as difference that reveals itself through the imagination. Hence her work is rather 'dream-like', revealing tensions that deliberately do not resolve questions of being.

Pina Bausch's hybridised dance theatre is manifestly concerned with the nature of private life and claims, in this sense, to reflect broader truths expressed through a new type of body politics. Her works are mostly staged in bare grey or black 'rooms', cafes, or abstract spaces. During the performances of *Café Muller*, for example, female dancers run their hands over their bodies, hurl themselves against the walls, slide down them and lean against them for support. Their bodies suggest images of isolation, alienation and despair.

The agitation and emotion of the choreographic theme compel the movement, suggesting separation, the pains of love, compulsive behaviour and despair that are even more poignant as the performance takes place in a café, a cogently social setting. Bausch frequently employs disparate elements, such as a hippopotamus, water and formal attire in her work to express the unpredictable, erratic nature of human social encounters, 'a kind of (Artaudian) organised anarchy'. (Broadhurst 1998: 21) She also employs movement tableaux often interspersed with fragments of conversation set at dinner tables; mimetic poses, some comic, some evoking tragedy while others are bizarre and unsettling. At all times, the dancers' bodies are displaced into both the form and the meaning of the performance experiences, in such a way that the moving bodies become the medium. Her subject of delving into what moves the body, personal and male-female relationships shapes the movement quality and her style of dance theatre. In her departure from dance 'technique', Bausch layers her work with Brechtian techniques of 'epic theatre', employing large spaces where intricate tableaux in which dancers represent human endeavour on a grand scale, merge with frequently overlaid Kantian experiences of 'negative pleasure', in scenes where dancers move or interact in dark, often frantic modes. Bausch's work is typical of the postmodern style that sets out to fragment established notions of power, finding another 'place' for the choreography of ideas within the practice of choreographing bodies.

The postmodern impulse and preoccupation is to play with ideas, mediums and genres. Postmodern theorists also examine literary, cultural and philosophical phenomena of politics, technology and change. Ironically, whilst technology distances us from our bodies, a central focus still remains on the body, as a site of deconstruction. Whether bodies are perceived as gendered or not, they are inscribed through social or cultural patterns or through the training systems of performance and movement cultures, as well as through the manner in which words or visual images chart conceptions of physicality. According to contemporary feminist critic, Susan Suleiman, these inscriptions need to take on the qualities of 'socio-political knowledge' and find alternative approaches, such as that of Bausch's work, to free bodies from the structures of gender duality and hierarchy, which oversimplify them. In order to free the body from its stereotyped fictions, it is necessary to create an approach that addresses a combinatory scheme of possibilities, or to use Derrida's phrase 'to invent incalculable choreographies'.

For all its radicalism, modernism remains engaged within the scientific discourses of duality. Modernism is still Cartesian in that it is based in the post Renaissance humanist idea of the individual mind as the subjective core of the body. But modernism also

embraced aspects of anti-humanism: machine/body and the primitivist reception of Western civilisation. These engagements of humanism /anti-humanism with Cartesian subjectivity failed to deconstruct the humanism modernism sought to deny. For this reason, postmodernism departs from the modernist search for holistic, totalising narratives or in François Lyotard's terms for 'grandes recit', or narratives of the 'big picture'. On the other hand, postmodernism searches for knowledge in deconstructed patterns of 'petit recits' couched in particularities. 'Lyotard defines discourse as modern when it appeals to one or another of these 'grandes recits' for its legitimacy; the advent of postmodernity, then, signals a crisis in narrative's legitimising function, its ability to compel consensus.' (Owen 1985: 64) Hence, Derrida's metaphor to induce 'incalculable choreographies', which removes discourse from fixedness by playing with ideas.

Some current postmodern choreographers, among them Meryl Tankard and Gideon Obarzanek employ technology and multi-arts approaches to performance, displaying the body, whilst choreographers Claude Brumachan, Russell Dumas and Lucy Guerin eschew meaning and grand display, preferring to concentrate their choreographic propositions on the workings of the body: its joints, limbs, muscle and breath. These latter choreographic approaches tend to ignore or subordinate cross-disciplinary influences and spectacle. Whether cross disciplinary or otherwise, choreographers work from techniques derived from a range of sources: modern dance, pedestrian movement, Eastern martial arts or other cultural dance forms, popular dance, yoga and ballet. Whether concerned with the choreography of the lived body or with hybridised forms, dance genres are frequently blended, shaped by the choreographer or in collaboration with other artists, to create contemporary postmodern dance.

The complex critique (including that of feminism, technology, politics and philosophy) that now surrounds postmodern dance practice has the potential to fragment the dancer's image, thus configuring a new perspective of image construction in dance. Choreographers reflect this critique by exploring what the body can do in terms of social signs, work, place and the training systems of performance and movement cultures. Coupled with the use and influence of technology, new constructions and reading of image are emerging in current dance practice. In the preceding chapters I have discussed the relevance of the avant-garde and its origins in early modernism and early postmodernism. From the context of these discussions, I will make reference to contemporary postmodern dance models to further crystallise the tracing of image in dance.

One current example, evocative of this style is a contemporary dance work, *Paradis*, developed in 1997 by the French Compagnie Montalvo-Hervieu. It is made up of seemingly

dissimilar, but surprising associations combined in its blend of dance and video. Filmed images of moving and still bodies are projected onto large white screens comprised of split panels at the rear of the space. A continuous interactive game is established between the dancers and images of themselves which are choreographed in such a way that they form amusing mirror images and physical/spatial distortions, so that it is often difficult to distinguish between the real dancers and the projected images. The figures rotate, lie horizontally in the air, are placed at impossible angles to one another high on the screens and appear or disappear behind these screens. Dancers appear, perform movement phrases, and then reappear in a totally different location in space, often so quickly and realistically that one wonders where the suspension wires have whisked the figures. Bodies are enlarged or reduced in size and it is very difficult to tell which are real and which are not. Various other images of grandmothers, children and animals also periodically appear and disappear in the same manner.

Paradis also incorporates different kinds of dance styles from various cultural backgrounds. This diversity also depicts a range of different body shapes, genders and sizes, a feature that adds to the sense of choreographic irony and comedy. The performance plays with different races, cultures and styles of dance, intermingles Vivaldi's opera, with hip-hop music and dance, burlesque and ballet, African contemporary dance and rap dance. In particular, the struggles of the small Western classical dancer, who seems to be caught in the confining pointe technique of classical ballet, makes a gently satirical statement about ballet's attempts to find a place in the postmodern 'melange'.

Within the juxtaposition of choreographic styles and media elements references to the influence of Surrealism and Dadaism can be detected, broaching the familiar debate between modernism and postmodernism. In this process a taste for the heterogeneous, the art of collage, a mixture of body and mechanics can be gleaned. According to José Montalvo, the company's director there are several themes running through the piece,

Paradis invites you to witness happiness and joyfulness. On stage, there are different styles of dance going on all at the same time, engaged in a sort of choreographic conversation, creating a poetry of juxtapositions. There's also a melange of different styles of dance reflecting different cultures... it could be a reference to those who, even in the worst situations know how to transfigure life and make lights shine. (Montalvo, in Festival Of Perth Dance program, 1999: 5)

Among these themes is the play between the real and the virtual, picking up on the postmodern preoccupation with deconstructing our sense of reality. The audience is left questioning who is actual and what is an image and even whether such a distinction matters in the end, as in this age of high technology input, audiences recognise and accept leaps from the actual to the cybernetic. *Paradis* applied the metaphor of playfulness to represent social change and the recognition of a new order of cultural interaction, albeit a utopian one.

But, unlike the avant-garde movements referenced by the work, *Paradis* seeks to make a playful, ironic statement, rather than write or state a manifesto for revolutionary change in the tradition of the Dadaists, Surrealists or Futurists, or to replace institutionalised dance techniques with new ones. By comparison with early postmodern experiments and happenings that worked completely outside the boundaries and conventions of classical ballet and modern dance, *Paradis* borrows, juxtaposes and transforms images of the body, reflecting the variety and complexity of contemporary life in a grand spectacle of comedy. In so doing, it allows a greater range of readings of the body, both personalised and dependent also on the recognition of sociological context of the viewers. The petite, lean, controlled and frustrated body of the ballet dancer confined within classical pointe technique is compared with the large, rotund, freely rhythmic African woman and athletic male dancers, whose vibrant expression and free, fluid joint isolations celebrate their integrated corporeality, affirming their 'body' of African culture. A celebration of youth and freedom is also echoed in the men's rap and break dance, performed by a European dancer, (Is there comfort in this exchange?) where highly physical, acrobatic configurations, and a multifarious assemblage of limbs is grounded as the base of dance: head, knees, shoulders and back. The virtuosity and spectacle employed raise the question of a postmodern dance split, in which one school (American dance) eschews this kind of spectacular display of virtuosity (European), in preference to the presentation of austere dance in bare spaces. However, both take on a new canvas for dancing bodies thrown into high relief, as they become air-borne in dance and cyberspace. This virtuosity, in *Paradis* however, is presented as a fragmented exchange between cultural dance styles. The ballet dancer, whose skill is clearly demonstrated, presents her body as a 'lived' body, but she looks insubstantial alongside the more expansive and vibrant bodies of non-Western corporeality.

Paradis seems to feel no need to either shock the populace, or stage a blueprint for social change, but to show a world in which dance styles can begin to exchange ideas in cross-cultural articulation. The difference also is that this contemporary postmodern dance (as

with other contemporary art forms) sees its art illuminating aspects of postcolonial binaries in culture, thus throwing light on aspects of cross-cultural interaction. The difference in dancers of divergent cultures and their dance styles are juxtaposed as consciously piecemeal. Bodies are presented in their 'lived' encultured shapes. The play is of dance forms and ideas, encoded through the context of ethnicity and media culture that disembodies lived experience, or confounds it at least, in contrast with the early postmodern avant-gardists, whose employment of task-like activities and scientific experiments consciously set out to break conventions. This production, in part, satirises notions of the body's beauty and form from a Eurocentric perspective, showing by contrast a deconstruction of cultured bodies, and in so doing, a deconstruction of body image. By consciously contrasting cultural difference, I believe it also sets out to affirm positive aspects of variety and to deny any form of cultural dichotomy.

This performance was very popular and attracted a wide audience from dance purists, to festival patrons who would probably attend a mainstream type of festival offering, where blends of art forms are familiar. The point about *Paradis* is that it worked through a process of metaphors, collage, a mixture of styles and juxtaposition of images to illuminate the personal meanings of the choreographers, to communicate messages of inter-cultural location. Whilst the use of irony and humour added to its popularity, it did not set out to either address or resolve the subject of cultural dichotomy, but to

Create something harmonious from this diversity of styles. I wanted to show how diversity has enriched and expanded our imaginations, and how dance has benefited from cultural diversity. (Montalvo 1999: 7)

Paradis although humorous, memorable and engaging presented a rather utopian vision of intercultural exchange from a Eurocentric position of cultural privilege.

A choreographer who has risen in prominence during the 1990s in Australia is Gideon Obarzanek, who formed the popular company, Chunky Move, increasingly well known for its penetrating insight into contemporary youth culture. The major issues that have shaped Chunky Move's work, *C.O.R.R.U.P.T.E.D. 2*, are the isolation of movement elements from narrative concerns and the notion of physical corruption as metaphorical of degradations seen to occur in digital technology. In putting these two disparate elements together artistic director, Gideon Obarzanek is exploring the relationship between form and content in the work. Both the form and the interrelationships of its parts frame an integral approach to the movement design, the soundscape and production elements. Two dancers, distinct from

the group become central characters, both of whom 'frame' the work through a continuity of behaviour and expression, and are distinct from the other dancers in *C.O.R.R.U.P.T.E.D.* 2, in that their movement material characterises a persona. The other dancers constitute homogenised bodies within the structure of the choreography. These characters are contiguous with previous Chunky Move's works *Bonehead* and *C.O.R.R.U.P.T.E.D.* 1.

The dancer who opens the piece is placed in such a way that he shares a spatial relationship with the huge screen occupying the space. He does not travel much, his arms, head and body negotiating the space around him with intricate, fast and infinitely varied movements. He is self-absorbed, working incredibly hard, whilst the large blank presence of the screen oversees his activities in synthetic surveillance. The dancer moves in a manic, habitual manner (evocative of all generic 'habit') causing him to appear in symbiotic ease with the mechanistic environment. The movement is intricate, difficult and the 'difficulty of his task and his incredible skill make him seem 'unnatural', not in the way dancers can seem 'sublime', but in a tortured, misused way' (Obarzanek, Chunky Move cd-rom *C.O.R.R.U.P.T.E.D.* 2). The dancer is discussed and dissected in terms of a lived body, where struggle is expressed as a sign of movement, distanced by the style of contemporary dance that delineates a troubled fragmenting of the movement of upper and lower body. The technique is emotionally charged and eloquently delivered, but rather than a display of virtuosity, the movement communicates the metaphor of corruption. He is *not* removed through virtuosity or through his distancing as symbol, but through the exposed struggle of his everyday body. The pedestrian style of 'task-like' movement is not an end in itself as in the Judson sense. The movement becomes an abstraction of everyday movement vocabulary. Lines and angles of the body torqued and twisted mechanistic, multidimensional, and highly physical, act as if the cycle of a washing machine were controlling his movement. He gives the impression that his body is 'working in this world', truly enmeshed in the labour of technology that maintains and incorporates a surveillance of his struggle. Whilst the body contests its corporeal mechanisms, its relationship to technology reflects that pixilated manipulations of digital logarithms. This perspective of a body surrounded in the discourse of 'struggle' removes the dancer's body from a desiring gaze. By contrast, the female character unfortunately appears to be lost in this world. Her movements are slow, tentative and have a childlike quality that sits uneasily with her woman's body and platinum hair.

Her unintentional sexuality is the most complex issue in relation to corruption; who is sexually corrupt? The character, the creator or the audience? Or are we all implicated? This is the common and

difficult tension between critique and reinforcement that art must negotiate. (Obarzanek, *Chunky Move* cd-rom 1999)

The notion of corruption and the imbrication of the audience, the artist and the art are suggestive of the influence of the 'gaze theory'. Who is gazing at what and what are the sociological contexts or associations made when confronted with a female figure, scantily clad, vulnerable, yet seeming to place herself in this position? What does western culture value in the body? How is the body manipulated or controlled by the gaze of media culture? By placing the female body in such a position, the choreographer is examining not only the gaze of the spectator, the image of the female dancer and her representation in dance, but is also examining the crises within locations of identity. Obarzanek explains this from an experience he had when in New York where he noticed a woman in tight shorts and skimpy singlet on the street, and assumed that she was a prostitute. He found that he had to rethink his assumption. This episode was the motivation for the female character in the dance. It also determined the nature of the choreography, which Obarzanek suggests is the major element in the piece. The characters and assumptions about people, together with the degrees of comfort associated with self and identity in environments of technology constitute the motivation for the movement style. The theme of 'corruption', he also applied to choreography by favouring a fragmentation of the body, with limbs moving independently, out of kilter, disharmonious, to reflect this idea of the corruption of bodies, damaged by their life contexts, victims of contemporary society. There is also a sense of laying bare the choreography onstage so that it is clear and naked, to be perceived not as a 'dance' but as a choreography of ideas. The inscription of female as sexualised is disturbing, as is the propensity to cast the male in a role which integrates him with the environment of technology, whilst alienating the female. The choreographic moments in their final duet and the use of chorus as a 'line' of dancers seems to undercut oppositional readings of gender inscription. In the duet, the dancers remain separate, moving in close proximity to one another, seeming together, but separate while the screen, revolves so that the dancers must duck to avoid it. In this, the metaphor of technology displacing bodies and seeking to examine gender images can be positioned. By casting the female as sexualised, disembodied and weak, Obarzanek assigns her a role that, unfortunately casts her in the stereotype of prostitute. This theme is not fully explored in the work and the potential to liberate the woman from one of dance's most powerful hierarchies of gendered control fails.

The large screen was designed for the dancers to work around, bisecting the space and rotating through angular vertical planes. Images projected were of static filmic 'corruptions',

(reflected also in the soundscape), rough, blurry large figures, performing fragments of ordinary movement, inter-cut with diagrammatic models of the body, developing a juxtaposition of actual and cyber bodies. Unlike *Paradis*, there was no attempt to play with illusions of appearance and disappearance. The theme of corruption and damaged aesthetics examines the grotesque and questions the place of beauty in dance. This work is driven to fragment the traditional idea of dancers and choreography presenting aesthetically pleasing images of the body. Although, it does not succeed entirely, as ironically, the dancer's bodies whilst expressing metaphors of corruption, remain aesthetically pleasing, especially, it can be argued, the figure of the sexualised female.

Currently, contemporary choreographers and dance artists are particularly sensitive to the representation of the female dance as stereotype and frequently sift choices of content and presentation in order to construct affirmations referring to the body and/or make reference to the discourse that surrounds the body. The need also to diversify responses to dancers' body shapes is currently determined by the dancer's skill and suitability to the role, rather than the dancer's body needing to conform to a predetermined shape or size. Contemporary dance artists seek to articulate and critique stereotypic processes and responses to body image to avoid reinforcing popular stereotypes.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PRACTICAL PROCESS OF INQUIRY INTO IMAGE IN DANCE

My research revolves around the idea of bodies in liminal space, soft bodies in hard locations. I am particularly interested in developing performance that explores the relationship of bodies with the (primarily urban) spaces we inhabit and how human intersections in confined, marginal or high spaces resonate with conscious and subconscious dialogues. This performance, *Liquid Vertigo*, grew out of previous explorations in studio and spaces in an old inner city dwelling. Throughout these explorations I employed imaging process to stimulate movement work that related to the different spaces including doorways, roof, passageways and stairways. During this process, I became increasingly interested in liminal spaces such as staircases, roofs and verandahs, which define and dissolve the boundaries between fixed loci. Such spaces seemed to unearth specific phrases of movement, motivated by specific ideas gleaned from improvisation in or on the spaces. These notions reflect my thesis research in tracing and dissolving defined images of the body, which are often trapped in discourses of power, gender, race or within traditional aesthetics of the dance, which emphasises bounded roles and limiting boundaries for human identities. In the current piece, *Liquid Vertigo*, I have taken these often vertiginous liminal spaces, such as staircases and ladders, as locales for an exploration of edges which represent spaces of danger and imbalance, where the

choices we make about identity and emotion lead us to the edge of our self-conceptions. By choosing liminal spaces for performance, I aimed to fragment the theme of vertigo by presenting 'dancing images' of human corporeality on the edge of consciousness.

Liquid Vertigo incorporated postmodern themes that emphasise interaction between the real and the virtual, reflecting the current preoccupation with defining our sense of reality. The metaphor of vertical location and the idea of vertigo explored both. The piece was designed to work through these metaphors to inform the meanings in personal relationships and sketch individual resistance to power structures represented by those liminal spaces chosen for the performance. Representational and real images are projected onto a wall in the performance space; the real dancers dance in different locations within the performance area and interact to a degree with the projected images. The audience is invited to travel part of the space with the dancers, to reflect on or question perceived relationships in the intersections caused by the conjunction of space, image and lived experience, all reflecting conscious and subconscious associations. In this, the performance also takes on a 'filmic' quality of location and a journey (albeit brief), through the space. At times, the audience is distanced from the dancers, due to the location, but at other times the spectators are quite close, as in the section performed on the inner stairwell in the entrance to the studio where the remainder of the performance occurs. The atmosphere in all sections is intimate. The choice of locations indicates a kind of dancing in the margins, whether they relate to social structures, personal interactions or reflections on identity.

The theme of vertigo draws on the fear or sense of exhilaration of heights in both a physical and a metaphorical sense and is employed to integrate the measured and uneasy interactions within the current complex climate of change and its effects on personal relationships. All this relates to the current postmodern preoccupation with the instabilities of identity. Reactions to heights are varied. For some, height evokes dizzying sensations and danger, whereas for others height is the trigger for challenge and a sense of freedom. These sensations are explored in narrow confined spaces, hence, the stairwells and ladders. The audience is brought into viewing positions where they watch and interact in different relationships with the dancers and the spaces.

The performance begins outside, and then moves to an internal stairwell, where dancers and audience are brought into close proximity with each other in a dark closely confined space. The dancers then lead the audience into the studio for the remainder of the performance, where they can watch seated from a conventional perspective. Here, the movement is consciously expanded and restricted in space. On entering the studio, viewers are confronted by a dancer at the top of a ladder, balancing precariously, but

appearing alternately at ease with or frustrated by this situation, evoking a desire for playfulness, but with the knowledge of restraint. She performs playful movements that alternate with constricting/confining encounters with the ladder, which seem to make her uneasy and more aware of the dangerous, vertiginous aspects of the ladder's height. At the same time she is determined to master the challenge. This idea is later revisited when the dancers play a game of chase on (sets acting as) stairs and again, when the dancer is 'stuck to the floor', picked up and carried from one dancer to another, representing the unease of fixed locations. In collaboration with the dancers, I intentionally explored elements of playfulness, constraint and control through choreography and juxtapositions, of media and actual soft bodies with hard liminal spaces.

Processes of collaboration with improvisation contributed to the interpretation of thematic material and the shaping of the choreography. Imaging processes in which dancers explored liminal spaces, danger, anxiety, exhilaration, play, challenge and the emotions associated with fixedness, confinement and vertigo were used to stimulate movement work. Our work began with studio improvisation sessions in which the performers explored images of verticality from various spatial placements. I facilitated movement by having the performers 'image' situations and improvise from these, placing limitations on space and rhythm. They were asked to envision vertical places, associating them with emotions and specific events. I was interested in the personalised responses of each to the problems such as: 'you are in a high place. In a space of about one square metre, show a sense of extreme depth and your physical reactions to the sensation of depth. Revisit your previous improvisation with altered rhythmic patterns'. We discussed this process, each articulating their various movement responses to the problem. We noted the differences in the way each worked with the image presented and mirrored or reflected each other's approaches, thus sharing and exploring both personal and common experiences and relationships with readings and discourse. The poem, 'To Liquid Vertigo' was introduced, adding another dimension to the aesthetic of the movement and discussions. There were times when all performers would work individually in another space, return and share their material with the group. I worked with each performer individually and the group as a whole. Studio sessions included a range of related image explorations and were alternated with improvisations on public and private stairwells, passageways and fire escapes. Improvisation on staircases and ladder constituted the most stimulating period of development, when much useful movement material was generated. When in these spaces, the physical sensations or juxtapositions associated with them came more cogently into play. Discussions and reflections on the meaning embedded in the use of the different spaces and the improvisations that emerged were crucial to the work. The choices made in developing this performance were designed to expose and dissolve views of the body and its images.

All images and ideas presented related to various aspects of the theme vertigo, with emphasis on perception, memory and emotion. Phrases of movement were selected from each session. We would discuss, select and refine these phrases. After an initial open exploration phase, most sessions were video taped. This assisted our process of refinement and selection. Each performer and I injected phrases of movement into the work. I melded the whole together, consciously working selected movement phrases employed from the original image improvisation exercises, so that imaged associations would resonate in the final performances.

By placing the performance in vertically oriented and more open spaces, I was exploring the potential to reveal multiple significations of the body; to focus the dancing bodies both as loci of meaning and also as integrated in the sites of their performance. The photographing and videoing of many work sessions were crucial to the process, as many of these exercises formed the basis of the movement work, as well as of the projected images. Video sequences projected alongside, over and independent of the performers were selected and processed to abstract and, hence separate but underscore themes of the work. Video of lifts and other stairwells were inter-cut with still images, to develop a collage of developing themes in and out of which the dancers performed. During the final rehearsals, I experimented with various methods of juxtaposing media images of the bodies alongside those of the real dancing bodies. In doing this I did not wish comment on technology as such, but to employ technology to create a juxtaposition of corporeal imaging schema. I did not achieve my desired effect, but wish to continue this style of work to further explore the notion of soft bodies and hard, liminal spaces alongside media images.

The video images employed enabled connections with contemporary culture to reflect the location of bodies within various discourses, so that the metaphor of vertigo reflected relationships with their sociological contexts of gender, power and boundaries. Text was employed to stimulate movement material and to echo or reiterate themes. Shadow play and stair wells, in conjunction with the choreography and video created an atmosphere evocative of early film images and unreality, the dancers moving in and out of loosely choreographed sequences, with movement varying from lyrical to pedestrian. Shadow play was an unintentional by-product; a result of the dearth of dance focussed lighting, resulting in the potential for an altered tapestry of perceptions, occurring independent of my intention.

The meanings in the physical language of the body remain embedded in sociological relationships with society's structures and perceptions associated with liminal or confined

spaces. By bringing performers and audience together in a small, enclosed space, shared perceptions of closeness, confinement, group identity or even claustrophobia may have resulted in the viewers. By beginning the performance outdoors, a differing relationship with the performers and the space invokes an atmosphere, which changes as the performance develops. Dancers performing in *Liquid Vertigo* were of three distinctly differing heights. Their individuality as dancers and people was emphasised, allowing them to express their personalities and the movement of 'lived' corporality through the performance. Performance, dance in particular, is ephemeral in nature. By blending technical images, both still and moving with the dancing bodies, the dance is layered with other meanings. The body in the screen is shifted in and out of representation, allowing an extension of the live body's meaning through a multiplicity of choreographies, in a postmodern sense. We see a performance and recapture those spaces, layered with multiple meanings and transformed by the imagination.

This enigma of the dancing body and the multiple images it implies or represents is fundamental to choreography and performance in contemporary practice and style. Works such as *Paradis* and *C.O.R.R.U.P.T.E.D. 2* embodied these elements which I explored, in part, in my own work, *Liquid Vertigo*.

CONCLUSION

The history and tradition of the classical ballet genre shaped aesthetics of refinement and beauty, achieved through images of unattainable (ethereal) corporeality, embraced and desired by patrons of the ballet. Hence, images of women in Western dance have been moulded in the traditional genre of classical ballet, perhaps because of the power implicit in narratives portraying women as seemingly powerful princesses or enchantresses. This discourse is inextricably rooted in the notion of 'inborn' or 'natural' gender differences.

Across the centuries these discourses have attained an unabashed hallmark of classical ballet at every level: costuming, body image, movement vocabulary, training, technique, narrative, and especially the 'pas de deux' structure. (Daly, in Dempster 1995: 114)

Dance classicism is an ideology devoted to tradition, chivalry and to hierarchies of all kinds: gender, performer's rank, role delineation, spectator's placement and stage organisation. Instead of confronting patriarchy in representation, critical and scholarly writing has frequently reinforced it, often in the guise of 'aestheticism' and 'romanticism'. Romanticism's emphasis on personal expression also relies on the dichotomy of feminine and masculine essentialist temperaments. These classical and aesthetic images of sublimity and elegant beauty were desired by men who, whilst celebrating the sublime foregrounding of the romantic image, monopolise also a sexualised gaze of the female dancer whose submissiveness reinforces patriarchal mechanisms of control.

The early modernist Loie Fuller inspired a fresh perspective liberating the romantic notion of body image through her manipulation of choreography as well as through the illusory effects of drapery, lighting and technology. Her role as soloist also freed her from the constraints implicit in dance hierarchies. Whilst Fuller worked from the new, freer movements of the period, Bronislava Nijinska revolutionised classical ballet genre from within, by similarly combining various elements of art to highlight and complement her innovations in choreography. Refocussing attention towards the choreographic form rather than on the bodies brought about new criteria for the acquisition of meanings in bodily contexts. The innovations of dancers, Valentin Saint Point and Isadora Duncan, critiqued binary oppositions by operating outside the ballet genre. All of these performers as well as contemporary writers such as Yeats and Mallarmé both examined contradictions of an art generated by the body that ultimately detached the dancing image from the body, altered criteria for performance and opened new perceptions of the body. Later innovations in dance technique developed by Graham and Duncan, whilst freeing dance from stereotyped fictions, gradually became encoded in a similar manner to that of classical dance, setting a dangerous precedent for readings of dance that reinforced a cultural politics of woman as expressive of a universal stereotype. It might be argued that dance may be subversive when it questions and exposes stereotypical formulations of the body in culture. The avant-

garde scientific experiments of the early postmodern dance artists were subversive in questioning all aspects of dance culture from the codified movement techniques, the hierarchies, the training and ownership to the venues of dance performance. As postmodernism expresses partial 'truths', perceptions and characteristics of the newly emergent movement towards global capitalism, the movements of the avant-garde in the contexts of the world war periods seem less relevant to us today.

The experiment of postmodernism continues - that is the exploration, which enables dance artists to continue to change the object of dance itself. These 'objects' may incorporate techniques derived from modern dance but may favour other movement processes, among them, Tai Chi and other Eastern movement derived from martial arts and yoga. As well, Skinner Release techniques or movement derived from improvisation, along with everyday movement, animate contemporary dance in collaborative, cross-art performance, which is frequently blended with technology. Experiments with pedestrian and task-like activity have been replaced with movement annotated into sharp, angled, direct, 'authentic' movement forms, which stem from the arts of listening to breath and the awareness of movement originating directly from bone and muscle. Imaging techniques penetrate deeper into the body and the mystery of 'muscle memory' in an attempt to develop new dance vocabularies. Russell Dumas maintains that 'studio practice and research' is necessary because 'dancers will often see the material through the frame of a certain technical training rather than through the frame of their everyday patterns of walking and so on' (Sally Gardner p3). Dumas maintains that these everyday patterns inform and are connected to everyday life, allowing dancers to understand physicality as a means of being in relationships with broader culture.

These practices model the mandate of postmodernism to change the object of dance by fragmenting and examining its processes and power structures. Jameson has noted that the fragmenting effect of avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century (from late modernism through the 'avant-garde' of the early twentieth century to postmodernism), have evolved as by products of two major world wars and the industrial capitalism that have supported these events. In his essay on 'Post Modernism and Consumer Society' he argues that,

The concept of post modernism is not widely accepted or even understood today. However, an endless list of works that developed in the 60s can attest to the varieties of what can be called post modernism. Most postmodern works emerge as specific reactions against the established forms of high modernism, against this or against that dominant high modernism which conquered the university, the museum, the art gallery network and the foundations. (Jameson 1985: 116)

Consequently, there will be as many forms of postmodernism as there were modernisms in place, since the former are at least initially specific and local reactions against the modernist models. But as Jameson elaborates, the 'unity of this impulse is given by the very modernism it seeks to displace', as postmodernism by combining 'particularities' and local associations creates interrelationships that connect ideas on a more 'global' level - an intriguing contradiction. In a sense, postmodernism recaptures this limitation in a way modernism failed to do and, as a result, refuses to embrace an ideology of total, radical change.

Artistic responses to multiplicity takes form through the injection of multi-media and multi-cultural or art hybridisations, ingredients injected into dance practices as illustrated in *Paradis* and *C.O.R.R.U.P.T.E.D. 2* and which I have emulated in my work. Such principles have shaped and affected my approach to research, in addition to the use of improvisation and everyday movement, text and imaging processes as bases for generating movement vocabulary.

Postmodern dance is undergoing a definite period of growth and is still in the process of positioning itself within the confines of competition, institutions and conventions of changing social contexts. The current arsenal of the contemporary body's myth is the mass production of images of a perceived ideal. We see a dissemination of these images in the order of millions through print and visual media. This frantic aggregation of imagery is a collective reactionary hallucination willed into being by both men and women stunned and disoriented by the rapidity with which technologically driven capitalism and gender relations have been transformed. This mass depiction of contemporary 'beauty' is a contradiction: where contemporary women are growing, moving forward and expressing their individuality, 'beauty' is by definition inert, timeless and generic'. (Naomi Wolf 1990: 6) The romantic illusion of the woman as symbolic of the ideal beauty coded, for example, in classical ballet, still exists in these images. This anomaly is dangerously close to contemporary consciousness of image in dance in its omnipotent presence and surveillance. Moreover, there has been a recent tendency for photographers to idealise the beauty of bodies in books and magazines that celebrate the 'ideal' bodies of athletes and dancers. Such a tendency continually recycles and reinforces those notions related to beauty and the beautiful body, which reinforce gendered stereotypes.

The poets of the romantic period sought theories to counter automation and a bourgeois inclination to embrace popularist images in art. Periods of the avant-garde rejected, attacked or democratised dance processes. The early modern dance innovators and choreographers have inscribed the body in distinctive styles, setting a precedent for the projection of other cultural and political possibilities for dance through the body. Postmodern

dance takes this evolution a step further- simultaneously articulating the discourses that surround dance practice in a culture of mass production. Contemporary postmodern dance practice plays with conventions, but in so doing must always develop ways to highlight the negative features of mass produced images as in *Paradis* or *C.O.R.R.U.P.T.E.D. 2*, so penetrating and resisting the celebratory art of the female body. *Paradis*, although presenting diversity, also celebrated the gendered image of both male and female bodies equally. The risks perpetuated in dealing with the body's images in dance are that they can be reappropriated by the dominant culture and read against the grain of their intended meaning. Currently many contemporary choreographers such as Lucy Guerin choose to reject spectacle and technology, preferring to concentrate on choreographic forms that by-pass the presentation of gendered image in dance.

The readings of body image may be as many as there are viewers, as illustrated by my application of Johnson and Lakoff's theory of 'image schemata' in the reception of image in any performance or location where the body is prominent. These readings may also be moderated or overlaid by views derived from the institutions of dance and current perceptions of popular body culture. What may be viewed as a movement image located in a choreographic construction may also be dependant on the features of the choreographic conventions and the choices that are made in the performance site, all of which underscore the ways of seeing embedded in the performance.

Even the perfect 'media' body of the multi-faceted contemporary female resembles the form of the classic body. It is detached, manipulated or reconstructed by media to project images of the idealised beauty reminiscent of the 'Romantic Image', as much an enigma now as then, subject to the whims of fashion. Media manipulates these images of female beauty by erasing physical imperfections through lighting effects and by processing to alter shapes, colours, textures and even locations. Furthermore, we are influenced through advertising captions that induce women to diet, choose clothes and pastimes that enhance or change our appearance to emulate a *slim*, tall, elegant or, *slim*, boyish, homogenised image. However, the tension between the myth of beauty and the reality of women, is that today, women increasingly recognise the myth and can choose to actively resist, by-pass or ignore media coercion. The result is a tendency for women and men to experiment, to play with the myth in the postmodern sense and, in so doing penetrate beyond the myth. Participation in the construction of popularist images of beauty is governed by the discourse of stereotyped media constructions that reflect binary oppositions. There is an increasing gap between consumerism on the one hand and the need for communities and individuals to reject the clutter of consumerism, or if not, acknowledge that the accumulation of paraphernalia is undesirable. The images of body in *Paradis*, *C.O.R.R.U.P.T.E.D. 2*, and many other postmodern dance works resist romanticised gendered stereotypes, deconstruct their

meanings and promote dance's ability as a dynamic field of corporal endeavour, to effect expressions of disharmony/inconsistencies in the contemporary climate of stasis.

While theorists seek to transgress binary oppositions through the discourse of 'incalculable choreographies,' capitalism seeks to continuously reassert the status quo. Where now do we venture into the new millennium in times of the rapid advancement of 'globalisation', multiculturalism, feminism and economic rationalism and the integration of technology into our rapidly diminishing physical world? My assertion is that whereas modernism borrowed, experimented and reconstructed, the avant-garde attacked, satirised and questioned, and current postmodern dance practice employs new meanings and contexts to make sense of and look beyond the present. The avant-garde today has become intellectualised and can now be seen as a growth period from which postmodernism borrows techniques, but from which it is separated by a relative lack of concern with art's role as an agent of either political or social revolution. In a sense, for better or for worse, the revolution is now within and images in dance still continue to embrace social change but refuse to become fixed in their forms. Instead images in dance represent broader postmodern sociological narratives and webs of control, through which dance in its ethereal, embodied form *purposefully* wends its way whilst developing points of resistance in the landscape of art.

She moves slowsteadygrace, a white tract across a landscape of ice. We measure her movement but we do not know it, it does not resonate, since we must move close to distinguish white from white. We are nowhere other than there in her walking dance. A dance like a light at the end of a tunnel. In that place we are all of us the surface dwellers, the reeds that grow on ice. We are almost there. White on white. Landscape of mind.

(Seward 1991: 62)

Within the discourse of the symbolic energy of bodies, choreography as the balancing and structuring of ideas, becomes a thinking discipline, the critical inscription of motion that informs and instructs the design of corporal meaning. Choreography provides the means to rethink the way in which disciplines carry out their work. At a time when the rigid demarcations of the Cartesian universe are crumbling, and the notion of the unified subject is no longer tenable, the 'mythological trickster' and the cyborg invite us to take pleasure in, as Donna Haraway puts it, 'the confusion of boundaries' to fragment fixed notions of identity, thus affirming a dream of 'incalculable choreographies'. In contemporary dance practice, the image of the dancing body embraces multifarious layers of meaning all of which capture as well as fragment the reality of the everyday body and its ever-increasing encounters with the 'technological' body.

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APPENDIX A

Video Recording

A vide^o recording of the second and final performances of my work, *Liquid Vertigo* accompanies my thesis. The video captures 26 minutes of the performance, which ran approximately 37 minutes. Clips of the entire performance were taken on the second night of the performance. These were inter-cut with clips taken on the final night of performance.

APPENDIX B

Poem

I wrote this poem as stimulus material for the imaging process of movement improvisation in the creative working process of *Liquid Vertigo*. I also incorporated this text into the visual images as an element designed to underscore a fragmented textual narrative in the final presentation.

To Liquid Vertigo

Clapping the door too, in the little light,
In the stairwell's deepening plunge,
I see in the opaque dark vertical dip of
Metalpearlsheengrey stair a cast of breathing life.
Glimpse the refrain of stamp, flap, clap, rubberleather shod
Patter, clatter of life on the ascending, descending,
'Going..... Up?'
Echo tread, 'going ... down?'
Now the whisper of a silent glide in the glass cage,
(Flapclaps silent),
Floats up, down, to floors of daily endeavour.

Why go down, where are you?
Why away - to mark your risk elsewhere?
Your trace abandons this dropping shaft.
The groove mark of your tread, the shadow of your DNA
Your form, flinging the day's faces down and out of my way,
But not away from you.
I mark what way the dropping shaft-light of you went,
Down my turbulent memory well,
No dream, you're etched in, to tread the grounded edge of my being.

I rose to the peak of my memory's end and walked on the edge of it,
A watermark on the brink, always seeking the balance,
In the resonance of that precipice,
I stare down the sheer face of that cliff.
I'm falling into your grace.

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