Inscribing the Body: Feminist Choreographic Practices

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Note: Accompanying videocassette

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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22 December 1994
Abstract

'Choreography theory' is situated at the interface between contemporary feminist thought and choreographic practice as an interdiscursive, interdisciplinary practice which seeks to address feminist ways of knowing through the moving body. The female dancer is constructed as a stereotype of femininity within dominant representations of Western culture, yet the activity of dancing has operated as an enclave of female/feminist endeavour within modern and postmodern dance practices. Dancers, whose principal significatory mode is their bodies' often silent articulations in space, perform within Western representational systems which historically have constructed the category of Woman as object through the subordination of the female body. This leads to the paradox that in attempting to 'move' as subjects within dance discourses women are simultaneously negated through their objectification in the process of representation itself. The issue facing feminist choreographers is that of demystifying, whilst politicising, the artistic experience of dancing. Deconstructive strategies can be critically engaged to work through the legacies of an essentialist tradition in dance and the understandings brought to its reception as performance. However, the risks of these methods of resistant representation need to be addressed, in particular the "linguistic determinism" which theoretically underwrites semiotic and psychoanalytic analyses; the erasure of the body as matter and its substitution as a set of codes and signs; and the dangers of deconstructing a tradition in which women have had a degree of control as cultural producers. In response to these problematics the need to act simultaneously on the discursive and material registers of subjectivity becomes apparent. The 'tool box' of Foucauldian analysis and Irigarayan philosophy enables the feminist choreographer to envisage transformations of movement and meaning in her practice. Strategies for reinscribing the body through feminist choreographies engage in the deconstruction of essentialist assumptions about the female body whilst simultaneously seeking to revalue its significance for women. Two dance theatre works, Bloodsongs and The Mechanics of Fluids emerge as the creative outcomes of these critical explorations.
Contents

Inscribing the Body: Feminist Choreographic Practices

Chapter 1: Introduction: Towards a Politics and Poetics of Choreographic Practice

1.1 'Whose Body is it Anyway?' 1
1.2 Feminist ways of knowing 6

Part One: Bodies of Knowledge

Chapter 2: Feminist Theory and Dance Practice

2.1 Feminisms and the legacies of androcentric knowledge 24
2.2 The 'crisis of reason' 30
2.3 Feminism and postmodernism 34
2.4 Dancing bodies of knowledge 38
2.5 The ontology of dancing 41
2.6 Dance and feminism 43
2.7 Dancing through the 'wild zone' 48

Chapter 3: Dance, Theory and Politics

3.1 Body-writing 57
3.2 Constructing dancing subjectivities 66
3.3 Typologies of dance 77
3.4 Postmodern bodies 81
Part Two: Addressing the Problematics

Chapter 4  The Politics of Representation: celebrating or deconstructing ‘women’

4.1 ‘Images of women’ 88
4.2 Woman as *marked marker* 92
4.3 The politics of experience 94
4.4 Woman as ‘unrepresentable’ 100
4.5 The reproduction of desire through the apparatus of performance 102
4.6 The limits of representation 107

Chapter 5  Feminism, Deconstruction and "the body"

5.1 Woman as ‘sign’: psychoanalytic and semiotic perspectives 112
5.2 Body ‘matters’: challenging deconstruction 124
5.3 Essentialism versus constructionism 127
5.4 The case against ‘dereliction’ in women’s art 133
5.5 Identifying the problematics for feminist choreographies 137

Chapter 6  Re-Figuring the Subject: critical and creative ‘tools’

6.1 The embodied subject 141
6.2 Irigaray and the feminine imaginary 144
6.3 Foucauldian ‘practices of self’ 148
6.4 Feminist inscriptions 154
Part Three: Strategies for Inscribing Difference

Chapter 7 Deconstructing gender through reinscribing the body, or learning to move 'otherwise'

Introduction 158
7.1 Encode and decode 159
7.2 My Body/Your Body: the politics of location 164
7.3 Moving beyond gender 172
7.4 Double Dance: An economy of exchanges between women 178

Chapter 8 Performing feminisms

8.1 Framing desire 186
8.2 Exteriorising the gaze 193
8.3 Transgressive border crossings 197
8.4 Feminine impersonations 203

Conclusion Dancing Beyond the Ending 214

Appendix I 230
Appendix II 232
Appendix III 234

Bibliography 236
Acknowledgements

My heartfelt thanks go to Janet Lansdale my supervisor for her support and criticisms in guiding me through this process. I would also like to thank Liz Aggiss for taking the time to respond to this work and for doing so with such inventiveness. A big thank you to Josephine Leask and Jacqui Wilson for giving of themselves so fully in the making of Bloodsongs and for keeping an ongoing interest in the works outcomes. I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to share many of these ideas with other research students through seminars and performances and am extremely grateful for their feedback and support. Thanks also are due to Amanda, Lesley and Mary in the Dance Department Office for their technical support and encouragement. And of course Russell, for your music and your wisdom I am ever grateful.
Chapter 1  Introduction: Towards a Politics and Poetics of Choreographic Practice

1.1 'Whose Body is it Anyway?'

1.2 Feminist ways of knowing
Chapter 1

Introduction:
Towards a Politics and Poetics of Choreographic Practice

1.1 "Whose body is it anyway?"

A woman, for we have no other way to describe her, sits, poised, expectant, on her 'haunches', her 'cheeks'. Facing off-stage her gaze is directed to a space beyond. She postures - posing for the fixed stare - with hands held behind her head recalling the soft porn images of faded postcards "bathing beauties". She touches herself, squeezing her nipple between thumb and index finger and with dexterous hands reaches down below to re-arrange her too-tight underwear. Fingering her chin, she remembers past admonitions "you must lift your chin and take your gaze out in order to be seen", and, turning her face to her still silent audience speaks:

"I have all this critical baggage, I hope you don't mind if I share some of it with you"

Lilian Baylis Theatre, London 9 December 1994

The post-humanist subject at the end of the millenium is shored up in discourses of dismemberment and displacement: the 'crisis of reason'; the 'crisis of cultural authority'; the 'crisis of representation' and the 'death of the Subject'. The "post modern condition" (Lyotard 1984) begins with recognition of the need to reassess the foundations of modern knowledge, in particular the "cognitive mastery" of the humanist subject (Butler and Scott, 1992 p.xv). This crisis of values and representations, coupled with the perceived need to move beyond the conceptual constraints of dualistic thinking, has lead to a proliferation of discourses on the body.

The first part of the title of this thesis, Inscribing the Body, alerts the reader to its location within current discourses caught up in the vertiginous spells of current theories' fascination with the "the Body". In particular it references debates centred around the 'inscriptive model' of Foucauldian conceptions of the body as, "the inscribed surface of events, (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of
a dissociated self, (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity) - and a volume in perpetual disintegration" (Foucault 1984a, p83).

Foucault’s work has had a central role in the retrieval of the body within current theoretical discourses as he has shown how power, as a productive and positive force, acts on and through the body and, how the construction of the body is coterminous with the construction of subjectivity. Feminists have however challenged Foucault for his ‘gender blindness’ in failing to account for the sexually differentiated constitution of the body (Barkty 1992; Bordo 1989). As a voice off-stage in Bloodsongs exclaims, "Whose Body is it anyway?...A woman’s perhaps?". This woman’s body is not singular nor sedentary but mobile, unstable and multiple - "I" am porous, malleable, mutable flesh - constituted by and constitutive of experience. Being positioned as a woman within society means having certain kinds of experience and recognising that certain modes of embodiment contribute to my construction as a subject. In addition, being positioned as a woman for whom a primary mode of identification is as a dancer and choreographer, the field of my embodied subjectivity is necessarily implicated in discourses of dance. The second part of the title of this thesis, Feminist Choreographic Practices, indicates this interface in my attempt to position feminist embodied subjectivities through choreographic inscriptive processes.

The emphasis on embodiment and sexual difference in contemporary feminist thought is allied to a radical rejection of essentialism. Essentialism can be defined as a belief in an unchanging and universal female nature (Humm 1989). Speaking ‘as a woman’ in a postmodern context takes on a non-unitary, non-essentialist significance.
In feminist theory one speaks as a woman, although the subject "woman" is not a monolithic essence defined once and for all but rather the site of multiple, complex, and potentially contradictory sets of experiences, defined by overlapping variables such as class, race, age, lifestyle, sexual preference, and others.


Notions of sexual difference can be regarded as part of the postmodern deconstruction of the ideal of transcendent reason over a naturally given body. But, as Gianni Vatimo has argued, much of what passes as postmodern and poststructuralist theory, with its emphasis on depthlessness, textual play and anti-foundationalism, marks the dissolution of the materiality of the body as a contemporary category (Butler 1993). Disengaged from its classical subordination to dualistic hierarchical thinking, with its vision of one unified body-subject, "the body" proliferates throughout the discourses of postmodernity as "panic bodies" (Baudrillard 1983), "outlaw bodies" (Kroker and Kroker 1993) and "constructed bodies" (Foucault 1980). As Kroker and Cook claim, "postmodernism emerges from the bleeding tissues of the body", from the need to re-think the bodily roots of subjectivity (1986, p10). But given this proliferation of discourses on "the body", from a feminist standpoint it is necessary to ask: 'what are we in the process of becoming?" In repeatedly speaking its name, "the body" is both over-exposed and absented through the "epistemological fantasy of becoming multiplicity" (Bordo 1990, p145). The postmodern dream of limitless and multiple embodiments leads feminists to ask whether the body in this context does not become yet another fleshless abstraction. Feminists recognise the need to reformulate the notion of bodily materiality in order to move beyond the political stasis of a postmodern standpoint which, to the extent that it can be said that there is "no-body" out there, dissolves matter entirely.
To move beyond the political stagnation of postmodernism as the endless play of signifiers new subjectivities need to be located through the "metabolic repossession" of meanings and representations; that is, through the paradoxes, contradictions and controversies of embodied postmodern subjectivity (Braidotti 1994, p279). For the feminist this can take the form of "strategic essentialism" (Gayatri Spivak 1987), the "politics of location" (Adrienne Rich 1986), "écriture féminine" (Luce Irigaray 1985b, Hélène Cixous 1986, Julia Kristeva 1984), "corporeographies" (Vicky Kirby 1989) or "feminist poetics" (Linda Hutcheon 1988). Feminists in this "post-humanist landscape" (Haraway 1992, p86) recognise the urgent need to elaborate new visions of subjectivity through the articulation of new frameworks, new modes of thought and new images (Braidotti 1994). This follows Butler's claim that "the critique of the subject is not a negation or repudiation of the subject but, rather, a way of interrogating its construction as a pre-given or foundationalist premise" (Butler 1992, p9). Feminist figurations of embodied subjectivity offer a way out of the hidebound constraining fictions of a modernist humanism presumed generic, universal, 'natural', they also escape the 'fleshless abstractions' of poststructuralist representations of "the body" as a metaphorisation of difference. This follows recognition of the need for a feminist humanity to take another shape, with different gestures and modes of inscription, for as Irigaray states, "if we don't invent a language, if we don't find our body's language, its gestures will be too few to accompany our story" (Irigaray in Humm 1992, p210). In patterning these figurations of feminist embodied subjectivities through choreography, knowledge is situated in the 'in-between spaces' as interconnections are made between mothers and daughters, practices and theories, bodies and knowledges.
The textual traces of these choreographies enable the female performer to 'speak' through her critical baggages, "breaking out" of her historical silence (Stanley and Wise 1993). For the "woman" figured above is also the woman inscribing this page.

Following Foucault's (1980) theorisations of the 'materiality of ideas', in which he locates subject positions through the in-between spaces of discourses, new positions of enunciation are opened through philosophy and choreography, theory and practice. The staging of feminist figurations through tactical discharges of energy in choreographies is both a material and a symbolic process. As part of the wider project of feminist embodied subjectivity such an intervention enables the dancing subject to construct her presence as cultural agent and interlocutor.

The 'becoming' process of this project has involved the construction of texts and choreographies and choreography-texts. As material artifacts of this inter-discursive project these embody some of the problematics and possibilities for feminist choreographies. The main critical themes concern the issue of how women's dancing subjectivity, as a stereotype of femininity, is constructed within the context of a dualist heritage but also how, as an enclave of female endeavour in the arts some women have constructed spaces for the positive articulation of sexual difference. The dangers of essentialist attitudes towards dancing, both inside and outside the discipline, are examined in relation to attitudes towards the female body, as 'other', absent, or aberrant, throughout the history of Western Enlightenment thought. The problematics for feminist choreographic practices are therefore identified through current debates on essentialism, deconstruction, embodiment and sexual difference.
The creative and critical tools which can be brought to the tasks of deconstructing and reconstituting subjectivity through choreography are located in this context.

### 1.2 Feminist ways of knowing

Rosi Braidotti (1994) sees the task of finding adequate forms of representation for the feminist subject as crucial for feminism in the 1990s:

> Alternative figurations are crucial at this point and great creativity is needed to move beyond established conceptual schemes. To achieve this, we need not only a transdisciplinary approach but also more effective exchanges between theorists and artists, academics and creative minds.

Braidotti 1994, p165.

This follows Pollock's view that new significations of feminist subjectivity will not emerge from "a repressed culture of those always-already women", nor from a position of "radical alterity", but rather from a "calculated strategy of transgression of the system's own divisions and orders" (Pollock 1992, p168).

Excluded from many established ways of making art, women in the past frequently turned their bodies into the artistic artifact itself. As model, muse or dancer, women have been engaged as subject matter and source for the creative endeavours of mainly male, but also occasionally female artists.⁷ As feminists have extensively argued, 'Woman' has existed as the great theme of art (Bovenschen 1985). This presents the woman artist as an agent of cultural production with a central problem because though "a power in her own work", she is "an artifact in most of the traditions of meaning on which she draws" (Blau du Plessis 1990, pviii). As Blau du Plessis states, "this
bifocal subject/object position creates a staggering and fascinating problem" and points to the complexities involved in locating a feminist art practice (1990, pviIII).

Given this conundrum the need to maintain flexible models of understanding which transgress the subject/object divide becomes apparent.

Feminist theory is made productive within feminist cultural production as a reflection on practice and experience. Rather than being abstract and aloof, feminist theory is about confronting experience and "changing women's lives concretely, materially, and through consciousness" (de Lauretis 1984, p184). In this sense the notion of "feminist praxis" is helpful in demarcating some of the parameters of feminist ways of knowing. Personal experience is registered within this construction as "the prime test of theory" (Stanley and Wise 1993, p92). The 'tool box' of feminist theory allows the feminist subject to interrogate her own position within gender formations as well as examining the phallocentric configurations of power which underlie these activities and their institutional frameworks. Contemporary feminist theory, as a "dynamic unity of thought and the experiential" (Humm 1989, p224), also enables the feminist subject to articulate her differences from a feminism first encountered as a monolithic entity (Dolan 1989). Re-positioning myself within the theatre of feminisms, postmodernisms and dance practice, I find a 'speaking' position through which to articulate the perspectival space of a personal and political engagement in feminism through dance.

Theory can be characterised as a way of organising and making sense of experience. This attempt at 'choreographing theory' is born of a desire to assimilate aspects of
a long-standing personal and political engagement in feminism with that social and cultural activity through which I most fully realise my sense of self, dancing.\textsuperscript{13}

Maintaining a mobility of points of view through the interaction of varied discourses, such a practice, being inevitably interdisciplinary, refuses the rigidity of rationalist thought with its desire for order and homogeneity. However in working through the metanarratives of feminist theory as a dancer/choreographer, its gaps and omissions in failing to account for the experiences of the female dancer/choreographer are encountered. Linda Nochlin's notion of a "paradigm shift" in relation to feminist art history is helpful in this regard (Pollock 1988, p2).\textsuperscript{14} Rather than tacking or adding dancing subjectivities onto existing bodies of feminist thought, the realisation of the inadequacies of feminist theories and dance theories in explaining the phenomenon which is the prerogative of this undertaking, requires both methodological and epistemological shifts in understanding.

Through postmodernism, interdisciplinarity has become the privileged mode of discursive production creating new spaces for the development of theory through practice. Within this context, the University environment can function as a privileged space for debates which combine academic work, critical writing and feminist art practice.\textsuperscript{15} Theory materialises in cultural production and the androcentric legacy of disembodied thought is deconstructed.

The work of Mary Kelly, in simultaneously combining theorisation and visualisation is, according to both Janet Wolff and Griselda Pollock, exemplary of such an
approach. Combining text, images and critical analysis, Kelly’s work functions, not as an illustration of feminist theory, but as a contribution to it, in that it moves the debates on (Iverson in Campbell 1992). This is important because, as Griselda Pollock explains in relation to Kelly’s work:

Feminist cultural practices have been such a rich and vivid place for the development of theory that they can easily be taken over by theory and left there; rather than being rigorously attacked, taken hold of, used and explored, with both respect and disrespect. The idea is to see what theory does for us in terms of practice.


Mary Kelly’s art practice works to destabilise ideological constructions of femininity through a complex, reflexive process which combines the insights of psychoanalytic theory, feminist theory and postmodernism. Kelly describes how she engages critically with her own work by writing about it after it has been completed, identifying the problematics it signifies and engaging in the debates which it engenders (Kelly 1992). This is a "parallel discourse, something unsettled, hopefully exceeded, by the art itself" (Kelly 1991, p59). Theory is thereby dialectically constructed as it is, in the words of de Lauretis, "checked against, modified by, transformed along with, practice" (1987, p84). It follows from this that through theory we can begin to articulate those gaps and omissions we perceive in feminisms representation of ‘women’s experience’. This involves a further dialect as Pollock explains, "the dialectical relation between being a person positioned as in the feminine within historically varying social orders and the historically specific ways in which we always exceed our placements" (1988, p10).

However, it is important to recognise that theoretically informed art practices also
bring with them dangers in relation to the issue of women’s visibility. Poststructuralist, semiotic and psychoanalytic perspectives on the female body encourage an awareness of how it is coded and ‘overwritten’ as ‘sign’ to the degree that its representation becomes, though not impossible, highly problematic. Indeed this is a position which Mary Kelly adopts and which is resolved (as discussed in Part 2 Chapter 5.1), through the erasure of the female image.

Feminist artists’ understanding of their location within gendered formations of power combine with cultural theories of the construction of gender through signification to provide theories of intervention for the destabilisation of hegemonic structures. Feminism, according to Pollock, "provides a theory of interventions within a field of signification, rather than an alibi for female expressivity" (1992, p146). Binary distinctions between artist and critic, object and critique, studio and university break down as feminist cultural practices become the seeding ground for the development of theory. Rachel Blau du Plessis locates the potential this space opens for new representations:

I think we haven’t even grasped the most radical implications of feminism for a theory which mediates back to practice: that we have a vision which men have barely glimpsed of what dialectical thought is really about - about a total, specific, feeling and thinking subject present in her interaction with "objective" materials, overcoming the division between thought and action.


The notion of an aesthetic practice which relates back to theory is a particularly postmodern phenomenon. Linda Hutcheon describes the "'poetics' of postmodernism" as, "a flexible conceptual structure which could at once constitute
and contain postmodern culture and our discourses both about it and adjacent to it" (1988, pix). As Rosalind Krauss (1980) has pointed out, such a practice involves the making of work which insists on reflection on the conditions of its own construction.

The postmodern embodied subject, in engaging both theoretically and experientially in cultural production, refuses to be fixed within the divisions of phallocentric thought. Postmodern theorists' critique of the subject/object divide is not new for feminists for whom the reconceptualisation of the role of the subject has been a major concern. By operating in dialogue with my own choreographic constructions through parallel discourses, the subject/object divide is collapsed, opening spaces for my dancing body to 'speak' on a number of different levels. This re-visioning of subjectivity is based on an understanding that within Western culture, "Woman" has functioned as the generic object whose subject is the male gender. Theory certainly acts upon and influences practice but similarly dancers, through the motional writing of their bodies, are capable of producing theory.

The use of an interactive epistemology allows for the co-presence of polyvalent voices and motilities. As a form of "passionate scholarship", I attempt a tone of voice and a speaking position which is both visceral and intellectual which, in combining a range of modes of practice - autobiography, theory, choreography -, resists totalisation and a stasis of position (Du Bois 1983, p105). Dancing bodies are figured within this multi-discursive production as active presences resisting the hegemonic
authority of androcentric constructions of knowledge.

Both dance and feminism exist as fields of knowledge interpolated by ideologies. This work is deliberately positioned at the interface between these fields as experienced through my own dancing body, and as such is concerned with the effects, constructs and problematics of their mutual engagement. Part One, Bodies of Knowledge, broadly outlines the knowledges and perspectival spaces of feminist theories and dance discourses which have informed this research. In Chapter Two the heterogeneous character of feminisms is stressed and the fracturing of the humanist Subject is analysed in relation to the challenges of feminist philosophy. In particular the valorisation of the ‘feminine’ within poststructuralist theories is identified as key to debates about feminist embodied subjectivities.

Chapter Three is an analysis of the parameters for training and production in dance mediated through my own understanding of the multifarious practices which exist within Western theatre dance practices in the twentieth century, and is therefore a partial and situated point of view. This account is based on an analysis of the hierarchical distribution of power within dance discourses and the dualistic assumptions which construct our understanding of the subject. It identifies the focal points for analysis in discourses on the body, theory and politics within philosophy, feminism and dance. In positioning my own experience of dance as a discipline in relation to a female lineage, I also attempt to show how as a "skill at which women have always excelled" (Kramarae and Treichler 1985, p115) dance has existed as a privileged site for woman-centred cultural production but how this tradition, if not
critically elaborated, can lead to the ghettoisation of women's theatre dance practices. Given this, it is the critical and tactical acknowledgment of female genealogies in dance making which is recognised as providing support for contemporary women choreographers' incursions in the symbolic realm. Postmodern dance practices are located in this context as fruitful sites for the explorations of postmodern embodied subjectivities through their emphasis on a redistribution of power through the body and the doubledness of the dancer/choreographer's vision in interrogating the process of representation itself.

Part Two, Addressing the Problematics identifies the 'politics of representation' as key to locating feminist choreographic practices. In the absence of substantial critical literature on feminist choreographies, literature on deconstructive feminist art practices is drawn from to explore the ways in which theoretically-informed artistic practices have negotiated the problematic representation of the female body. Viewed in this way, through critique and comparison from a dancer/choreographer's standpoint, this analysis is helpful in locating the specific agendas and problematics for dance. In Chapter Four, by locating the material specificities of choreographic practice in relation to debates on 'experience', the 'politics of visibility' and the 'unrepresentable', the particular problematics for feminism through dance are identified. Central to this is the recognition, in Chapter Five, of the need to move beyond the opposition between essentialist and constructionist positions in relocating subjectivity through a notion of embodiment which is not assumed to be originary, fixed or stable. The strategic interventions deemed suited to this endeavour then begin to take shape.
In Chapter Six, Re-figuring the Subject: Critical and Creative Tools, the combined insights of Irigarayan and Foucauldian theories are seen to offer the feminist choreographer resources for the strategic re-inscription of embodied subjectivities. Irigaray’s theories of the feminine imaginary and her assertions of women’s need to find their own symbolic home through their genealogical frameworks provides theoretical and creative resources for the situating of a feminine-identified culture which is not reducible to ghettoisation as the ‘other of the same’. Foucauldian discourse theory provides analytic tools for decoding gender constructs through the body and for recognising how individual practices intersect with disciplinary regimes of power. His theory of ‘practices of the self’ is considered as a critical resource for feminist agency in enabling the reconstitution of identity through micropolitical practices and cultural constructions. Theories of performativity as developed by the feminist philosopher, Judith Butler in relation to literary criticism, are seen to offer further resources for feminist interventions in actual performance events through their emphasis on the construction of gender as a category through the repetition of stylised ‘acts’.

The final section, Strategies for Inscribing Difference (Part Three) delineates the specific theoretical strategies enacted through this research process and, as an intertext, traces both the choreographies these gave rise to and ‘other’ choreographies which have informed this process. In particular, the work of Liz Aggiss, Emilyn Claid and Deborah Hay is discussed. This text should be read in conjunction with the accompanying video documentation of this work and with a view to the solo performance which forms part of the submission.
The feminist strategies which emerge from this investigation are not exhaustive, but partial, fragmentary and situated instances of specific techniques, choreographic devices, improvisational processes, preoccupations and tactics. For there is no singular feminist aesthetic rather, as Rachel Blau du Plessis states, a feminist construction begins when women take and investigate the structures of feeling which are theirs and, in trying to give them substance as voice and as movement, find conflict and contradiction between these "inchoate feelings (coded as resistances, coded as thirsty animals) and patriarchal structures of feeling - romantic thralldom, fear of male anger, and of our own weaknesses of nerve" (Blau du Plessis 1990, p11). Moving (thinking) through feminism in this way reminds me to be cautious of the tendency to polarise intellect and feeling. As Chadwick (1989) sees it, it is frequently the artist and not the intellectual who most quickly embodies the ideological contradictions between these domains of lived experience. It remains for feminist artist-theorists therefore to embody new possibilities through negotiating new relationships to institutions of power through refusing to ignore issues of race, class, sex, and age and by speaking of the difference of femininity.

Discourses can be regarded as competing for ascendancy within individual consciousness. This work, in being constructed at the interface between feminist theories and dance practices is exposed to the risk of territorisation of one discourse by another. Though both dance practice and feminist theory can be regarded as existing on the margins of hegemonic discourses, a space privileged by many for mounting a transgressive politics, the feminist dance scholar is challenged by an abundance of theoretical resources on feminism in constrast to the relative
paucity of literature on feminist dance practices. Whilst the theoretical discussion which follows may in some instances seem heavily oriented towards research in the fields of feminist criticism and philosophy, the absence of detailed feminist research into dance, militates against a wider field of debate pointing to the need for future research in the field; but, more importantly, it is necessary to recognise the role of studio practice in underpinning and directing the orientation of this research. It is this which grounds the selection of particular feminist agendas and my construction of these within the text.

Three performance events have emerged from this process of embodied research, Dancing Through the 'Wild Zone' (1992), Bloodsongs (1993-94), and The Mechanics of Fluids (1994-95). Each of these touches upon specific themes and preoccupations which accompanied particular periods of the research process. Although discrete performance events, each of these works, as a crystallisation and distillation of numerous explorations, improvisations, movements, phrases and sequences embodies and conceals polyvalent, multitudinous practices. Like Braidotti's characterisation of embodied subjectivity, these constructions are "molecular", "nomadic" and "multiple" (Braidotti 1994, p171). They are also easily forgotten. What remains of the earlier events, Dancing Through the 'Wild Zone' and Bloodsongs are video representations of various versions and fragments, and recurring movement themes, some of which have found their way into the current work, The Mechanics of Fluids.

Each of these events used a different format, a different set of space-time parameters
and a different combination of performers. **Dancing Through the ‘Wild Zone’**, as a collection of new and revived works focusing on female heroines and feminine cultural spaces drew from my own repertoire as a choreographer and as a dancer (Appendix I). Through my performance of **Joan of Arc: The Trilogy** (1947), a solo choreographed by Gertrude Bodenwieser on my dance teacher Shona Dunlop-MacTavish in 1947 and reconstructed on me in 1991, I located my dance lineage within a succession of creative women and affirmed the presence of "mother knowledges" (Walker 1984). My own choreography, **Heroics** (1991) as a contemporary reflection on the strength and vulnerability encompassed in women's visibility as cultural heroines, was inspired by Barbara Morgan's photos of modern dance pioneer Martha Graham. **Making a Woman** (Brown 1990) comprised a trilogy of dances - **Frost, Sugar, Essence** - relating stages in a woman's development and the making of differing modes of femininity through processes of socialisation and feminine coding. The duet **She Who Laughs Last** (Brown 1992) explored the pleasures of ‘women-amongst-themselves’, their laughter, but also their suffering and, "what they dare - do or say - when they are among themselves" (Irigaray in Whitford 1991b, p136). **Sink or Be Saved** (Brown 1992) as a dance for six young women, used the image of life-saving drills as a metaphor for exploring themes of trust, intimacy and competition between women.

**Dancing Through the ‘Wild Zone’** emerged as an initial fielding of the possibilities for this research and, in hindsight, acted as a clearing space for the emergence of new choreographic techniques and approaches which were more deliberately informed by feminist theories. Much of the practical research subsequently undertaken
materialised in *Bloodsongs*, a dance theatre work of 70 minutes duration for three dancers, including myself and with original music and costume and lighting design (Appendix II). The initial experimentation for this project began with my own improvisations undertaken in a bare studio with a selection of tapes, a tape recorder and a video camera. The second stage of this process involved the participation of a group of dancers who volunteered to attend workshop sessions exploring particular themes. This period gave rise to a 'work in progress' showing in October 1993. Some of the work shown survived this preliminary performance event and was developed further in the next stage. With the assistance of a grant from the South East Arts Board, I was able to employ two other dancers one of whom, Josephine Leask, had been involved in the initial work in progress, for a six week rehearsal period culminating in the performance *Bloodsongs* (Appendix III). This work was premiered at the University of Surrey on 28 January 1994 and subsequently performed at venues in the South East region of England.

Choreography is a social and relational activity. I am indebted to all the dancers, performers, musicians and composers, costume designers, costume makers, video operators and photographers who have contributed to the making of this work. I am especially grateful for the contributions of Jacqui Wilson and Josephine Leask as the two dancers who performed *Bloodsongs* with me. Their movements, their criticisms, their stories, their feelings, their embodied subjectivities are co-present in much of this construction. In working from my own understanding of the problematics and possibilities of feminist choreographies to the communication of these to Jacqui and Josephine and their resulting analysis through the rehearsal process, I was able to
perceive the possibilities for moving on.

The final stage of this research process is running concurrently with this writing and involves the construction of a number of solos choreographed and performed by myself. The demands of this writing are matched by the demands of making in the studio so that in maintaining this dual focus the critical and creative are constantly brought into play with each other. This is no easy task; I have become aware of how the demands of writing within an academic model encourages a singularity of focus within a unitary mode of production. By choreographing and writing concurrently I am forced to keep an at least bifocal approach and to resist the temptation to allow the totalising effects of any one discourse to take hold.

Classical rationalism has represented thinking as a single-minded and sedentary activity privileging clarity, logic and coherence. The image of Rodin's sculpture, Thought comes to mind as an individual sunk into his body in the act of mental concentration. But feminists have long acknowledged that the rules of the discursive game of reason need to change. In the postmodern context of shifts in the perception and representation of the subject it becomes imperative to think through the body, to heal the Cartesian split through multiple locations and styles of embodiment which acknowledge cultural diversities. The issue of mobility is primary to this reinvention of knowledge. From Aristotle to Freud woman has been described as passive and immobile (Braidotti 1994). Women who take the opportunity to "get up and to go someplace else" in a physical, intellectual, creative and topographical sense have a stake in the process of redefining subjectivity through their ideas, their
choreographies, their travels. 18

The "nomadic" conditions of feminist consciousness have been a very real part of this research process as I have moved between discursive and non-discursive spaces; I have alternated between practical and theoretical researches (and in doing so blurred the distinction); I have operated within at least two disciplines at once; and literally moved between hemispheres, in travelling from Aotearoa (New Zealand) to England to pursue this focus. 19 As a feature of this research process these nomadic excursions have demanded that a mobility of points of view are maintained through diverse theoretical and choreographic practices, journeys which have been guided by my own passionate commitments to dancing and feminisms.

Notes

1. Lyotard (1984) describes the ‘postmodern condition’ as the crisis in cultural authority emerging from the need to reassess the foundations of modern knowledge within an advanced stage of capitalism. Postmodernism is however a slippery term for which there is no consensual definition. Within the arts the term has manifested itself in work which can generally be characterised as "self-conscious" and "self contradictory", which simultaneously "install and reinforce as much as undermine and subvert the conventions and presuppositions it appears to challenge" (Hutcheon 1989, p1). Poststructuralism, as a body of critical theory arising from France, can be regarded as the theoretical discourse about the crisis of the subject. Butler and Scott pose the question: "To what extent do words like "poststructuralism" and "postmodernism" become terms which become the site for all sorts of fears about the diffusion of power and the loss of cognitive "mastery"?" (1992, pxv).

2. See for example Butler, Bodies that Matter (1993); Goldstein (ed) The Female Body (1991); Gallop, Thinking through the Body (1988); also recent and forthcoming conferences, 'Meaningful Bodies' (St. Martin’s College of Art, 18 November 1994, Cochrane Theatre, London); and 'Body Matters' (University of Hull, 4-5 April 1995).
3. Bloodsongs is the title of the performance attached to this research. The recorded text for this performance was derived through movement/text improvisations and is spoken in this instance by myself.

4. The term 'sexual difference' carries both positive and negative connotations for feminist theory. A primary and positive meaning is that women have a different voice, a different psychology, a different morphology and a different set of lived experiences which can potentially structure different modes of subjectivity. The negative connotations of the term are found in the effects of dominant power relationships on women, in particular through their exclusion and subordination. (See Humm 1989). Within contemporary feminist thought, the concept of sexual difference has largely replaced that of gender difference as it is seen to offer greater flexibility as a category which allows distinctions to be drawn between, "differences between men and women", "differences among women", and "differences within each woman" (Braidotti 1994, p158).

5. Baudrillard describes the postmodern condition in terms of the triumph of the depthless image: "He [sic] can no longer produce the limits of his own being, can no longer play nor stage himself, can no longer produce himself as mirror. He is now only a pure screen, a switching center for the networks of influence" (1983, p133).

6. This follows Simone de Beauvoir's central claim for feminism that, "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (de Beauvoir in Humm 1992, p48). For a discussion of the 'becoming-woman' of philosophy see Butler (1989).

7. See Derrida (1982) for an example of the representation of the dancing body as a metaphorisation for the more general philosophical problem of difference.

8. Haraway describes "figuration" as, "the mode of theory when the more "normal" rhetorics of systematic critical analysis seem only to repeat and sustain our entrapment in the stories of the established disorders" (Haraway 1992, p86). Figuration in this context encompasses feminist choreographic and literary inscriptions.

9. Bodily materiality refers to the body as a supplier of forces and energies, whose materiality lends them to being used, manipulated and socially constructed (Braidotti 1994, p44). Symbolic processes are those practices through which one becomes a subject, in particular through the acquisition of language. Whitford describes the symbolic as, "the junction of body, psyche, and language, where the descriptive fields of psychoanalysis and linguistics (or semiotics) meet" (Whitford 1991a, p37). See de Lauretis (1987) on the "technology of sex" and the construction of subjectivity through both material and symbolic processes.

10. Not all women have been iconised and fetishised to the same degree. Whereas white women have been over-exposed in Western art, black women have not figured prominently, indeed as Hortense Spillers (1984) makes clear
where black women are represented their images are constructed through the theatre of white masculine mythologies. Their invisibility needs to be countered by the active intervention of the feminist in both explaining their absence and positively reinscribing their presence (Brown in Layson and Adshead-Lansdale 1994, pp.203-204).

11. Stanley describes "feminist praxis": as a non-reductive method of feminist inquiry; as representing "knowledge for", rather than "knowledge what" in relation to feminist demands for cultural transformation; as a mode of knowledge production which refuses to separate theory from "research", that is, manual from intellectual activities; and which acknowledges the primacy of method in shaping the outcomes of the research (Stanley in Stanley 1990, p15).

12. Maggie Humm describes feminist theory as aiming to "create a deeper understanding of women's situation" (Humm 1989, pp.223-224).

13. In relation to this Yvonne Rainer's account of her early experiences of dancing is one that I would share, "My first intense feeling of being alive was in performance....It was like an epiphany of beauty and power that I have rarely experienced since...an intense feeling of being in the moment. It was the first time I had experienced myself as a whole person. There was no part of my consciousness that was anywhere else....In 1961 [performing] was the most urgent thing I could do". (Rainer cited in Copeland 1983, p120).

14. The idea of a paradigm is in this context borrowed from Thomas Kuhn's, Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1962) and is understood as delineating objectives, aims, procedures and boundaries of a particular field of research within a specific discipline (Nochlin 1973).


16. This follows Stanley and Wise's advocacy of the "analytic use of feeling and experience" as the medium for feminist research (1993, p174).

17. Genealogy is understood in this context within Foucauldian conceptions as "an analysis of descent...situated within the articulation of the body and history" (Foucault in Rabinow 1984a, p83).

18. This follows the text performed with Imposture in the work in progress for Bloodsongs: "If you think till it hurts, you have to get up and go someplace else, if you move till it hurts, you have to lie down, lying on the ground you feel your heart, pounding. We have been armchaired for too long. Your body is yours, take it!" (Text devised and performed by Carol Brown, University of Surrey 19 October 1993).
Braidotti describes the significance of nomadism for feminist consciousness: "Nomadic shifts designate...a creative sort of becoming; a performative metaphor that allows for otherwise unlikely encounters and unsuspected sources of interaction of experience and of knowledge" (Braidotti 1994, p6).
Part One: Bodies of Knowledge

Chapter 2 Feminist Theory and Dance Practice

2.1 Feminisms and the legacies of androcentric knowledge

2.2 The ‘crisis of reason’

2.3 Feminism and postmodernism

2.4 Dancing bodies of knowledge

2.5 The ontology of dancing

2.6 Dance and feminism

2.7 Dancing through the ‘wild zone’
Chapter 2

Feminist Theory and Dance Practice

2.1 Feminisms and the legacies of androcentric knowledge

Feminisms are especially but not solely about women. As "an historically diverse and culturally varied international movement" feminisms comprise a conglomerate of practices, theories and activities through which the rubric, "the woman question" is explored (Humm 1992, p7). Within the context of this multidimensional, late capitalist society, feminist subjects are positioned at the confluence of differing group identities and are not reducible to a singular entity. Gender, whilst recognised as important, does not subsume other affinities - ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, age - which are also significant in shaping postmodern subjectivities (Young 1990). To be a subject in this sense is to be a 'subject-without-a-fixed-identity'.

The women's movement's original claims for "sisterhood" and "solidarity" have been superceded by an emphasis on the differences among women. Women of color, working class women, aged women, lesbian women and disabled women have exposed the false universalism and exclusivity of white, middle class Western feminism's claims to represent all women. Feminism emerges within this critical context as a much more heterogeneous movement one that, in attempting to uncover and understand the diversity of experiences and situations of women, transforms the logic of identity politics into notions of difference understood as relational specificity (Young 1990). Such an understanding does not entirely reject the category of 'women', but insists upon what Stanley and Wise term "feminist fractured
foundationalism" (Stanely and Wise 1993, p232). Accordingly, women are not presumed to have a fixed essence but are recognised as occupying varying social, economic and cultural positions, and racial and sexual identities. One of the main tenets of this understanding of feminism can be understood as "equality through difference" (Young 1990, p15).

One of the fundamental demands of the feminist movement has been for the recognition of women as autonomous subjects, that is "to attempt to transform women from an object of knowledge into a subject capable of appropriating knowledge, to effect a passage from a state of subjection to subjecthood" (Delmar 1986, p25). In this way feminisms are about giving women a 'voice', making them visible ('coming into the light'), and providing access to power previously denied them. In relation to academic feminism the challenge has been in the particular sphere of what constitutes knowledge and how women have come to be excluded as 'knowers'? Both excluded from and coopted by patriarchal discourses, feminists argue that women function as the silent support of all systems of male theory and that they have been denigrated through a combination of sexist, patriarchal and phallocentric manoeuvres in the constitution of Western knowledge formations: sexist, in that through acts of exclusion women have been denied a role within knowledge production and have been considered unworthy as objects of investigation; patriarchal, in attitudes which differentiate and accord men's actions and words higher value and status than those of women; and phallocentric, in the universalising and abstruse generalities made on the basis of male experience which, it is assumed, also accommodates the experiences of women (Grosz 1988).²
Androcentrism, that is the male centredness which characterises dominant culture based on male norms, impinges upon theory not only due to the male dominance within hierarchies of power in universities and research institutions, but also through the subjects deemed suitable for research, research policies, theoretical concepts and research methods (Humm 1989). Feminists have demonstrated the very maleness of theory. The combined weight of classical, medieval religious and Enlightenment philosophies has sedimented in the still privileged pursuits of Truth, Reason and Knowledge within modern philosophy. Reconstructing the pageant of Western knowledge formation from a feminist point of view exposes the blind spots, omissions and exclusions of 'malestream' thought which parades as objective knowledge.

Carol Pateman (1986) discusses how developments in feminist thought have uncovered the dependency of 'theory', and the structural organisation of knowledge, on the conceptual oppression of women and all that is symbolised by the feminine and corporeality. Indeed the foundations of Western thought are, according to Spelman (1990), found to be fundamentally misogynistic. Beginning with Plato the distinction between soul and body assumed a hierarchical relation of worth. In casting the soul as 'manly' and conjoining it with positive attributes, and the 'body' as 'womanly' and conjoining it with the liabilities of carnality, Plato effectively constructed a founding dualism of modern Western philosophy. Aristotle's writings are similarly dualistic in their representation of a hierarchy of power relations which are gendered according to perceived ideas about the proximity of women to nature. For whilst reason is presumed to be a fundamentally human characteristic, according to Aristotle, women were deemed faulty reasoners and therefore imperfectly human (Aristotle 1948).

26
Within Aristotleian logic, man emerges as the norm against which women are measured, by these means Aristotle enacts an isomorphic closure on women in presuming them to be "lesser" men (Lloyd 1989, p112).

Whilst it was the classical philosophers who provided the foundations for Western thought, it was the Enlightenment which committed modern knowledge to the discovery of the overarching principles of human nature through reason. Enlightenment philosophers inherited from religious scholarship the ideal of a "God's eye view", and set about valorising the "Man of Reason" as that individual capable of transcending the limited perspective of particular individuals and groups. As Lloyd reveals, although claims of women's inferior capacity for reason had been theorised earlier, it was not until the emergence of Cartesian dualism that such claims were aligned with the "down-grading" of the sensuous life (1989, p116). Descartes, in articulating a division between rational and non-rational action, cast a parallel distinction between the capacities of the two sexes. His valorisation of reason coincided with the increasing alignment of women with nature, setting up the dichotomy of masculine reason and feminine nature. The very "maleness" of the 'Man of Reason' thus precluded the participation of women in knowledge production (Lloyd 1989).

The ideal conception of rationality has been articulated in terms which directly oppose qualities associated with the feminine. Philosophical divisions between the rational and the non-rational are worked out in Cartesian dualism to reflect a division between the sexes, and between the intellect and the corporeal. It follows from this, that the
history of Western philosophy, through its invocations of transcendent reason, has relied upon a set of shared assumptions through which Woman as Body persists as the precondition of dominant cultural values. The secondary status of the natural, the feminine, the private, and the body has functioned conceptually as the precondition for the existence of the dominant terms, of masculine, public, reason and culture. Given this the body has been and remains associated with women and the feminine, whereas the mind is closely connected at a conceptual level with men and the masculine. Of fundamental importance to the transformation of prevailing knowledges is the analysis and exploration of these "phallocentric alignments" (Grosz 1993, p195). In particular feminists have sought to examine the role of the body in its subordinated and excluded position as the "unacknowledged condition of the dominant term reason" (Grosz 1993, p195). This point is lucidly made in Le Doeuff’s critique of the Enlightenment project and its unacknowledged debt to the feminine as foundation and ‘prop’ for masculine Western philosophy.

Le Doeuff (1987) explores the contradiction of Western philosophy which in its search to affirm presence and truth, presupposes a lack or absence. Taking Hegel’s set of Pythagorean oppositions - limit/infinity, unity/multiplicity, masculine/feminine, light/dark, and good/evil - she asks from whence do these sets of oppositions derive? She proposes:

That the philosophical creates that which it represses. This is firstly because the discourse which we call 'philosophical' produces itself through the fact that it represses other forms of knowledge, even though this other discourse or forms of knowledge may not have existed as such prior to this operation.

Le Doeuff 1987, p194.

Philosophy, like any other kind of discipline, is bound by sets of rules and
conventions delimiting the horizon of its vision. The delimitation of borders necessarily involves the denial or exclusion of other realms of knowledge. Le Doeuff contends that what has been excluded from philosophy "cannot be properly defined" but is metaphorically signalled in the language of the paternal signifiers (Le Doeuff 1987, p195). As she states:

But then this nameless, undefined object, this indeterminable otherness, can only be described metaphorically, I mean by making use of an available signifier, seized upon by philosophical discourse to pinpoint as difference.

Le Doeuff 1987, p196.

According to this account philosophy constructs that which it cannot include, so that women are constantly confronted by images in the name of 'Woman' but which they do not recognise as belonging to them:

The feminine, a support and signifier of something that, having been engendered by philosophy whilst being rejected by it, operates within it as indispensable deadweight which cannot be dialectically absorbed.

Le Doeuff 1987, p196.

Underpinning and 'propping' the mind/body opposition which is the foundation of Western constructions of reason is a notion of "Woman" as prone, static, an excluded, unchanging realm of otherness in a naturally given body. Treading as they do on the supports of her body, all systems of Western thought derive their mastery from the exclusions of the feminine from the symbolic realm.

Whilst it is difficult to conceive of new modes of knowledge beyond the "logocentric-phallocratic phantasmagoria", Le Doeuff claims that change can be made at the level of philosophy's self-awareness (1987, p198). Through acknowledging its
incompleteness philosophy can begin to avoid the assumption of binaries -
masculine/feminine, mind/body, reason/unreason - and recognise its exclusive
practices in relation to what counts as knowledge and who can be classified as
'knower'. Central to this project is the construction of new relations between
knowledges and bodies.

2.2 The 'crisis of reason'

The postmodern 'crisis of reason' is directly related to the denial and denigration of
the body within Western knowledge formations and the historical privilege accorded
the conceptual. As Grosz describes, "it is a consequence of the inability of Western
knowledges to conceive their own processes of (material) production, processes that
simultaneously rely on and disavow the role of the body" (Grosz 1993, p187).

The primacy of the dualism between mind and body within classical systems of
thought foregrounds the bodily realm as the privileged site for the disruption of the
"ideophilia" of humanist culture within poststructuralist discourses, in particular
deconstruction (McNay 1992, p13). Deconstruction was initiated as a form of
literary criticism by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. His work has had a
significant impact on feminists, for example Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray and Gayatri
Spivak. There are two central strategies of deconstruction: firstly, the inversion of
hierarchical binaries such as the opposition between reason and emotion, spirit and
matter, culture and nature; and secondly, "the unpacking of what are held to be
mutually exclusive elements in the dualism in order to show how they are imbricated
with each other" (McNay 1991, p126). The practice of deconstruction begins by
privileging the subordinate term of the opposition which Derrida recognises as being held in place by force:

In a classical philosophical opposition, we do not find a peaceful coexistence between the two sides, but a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms dominates the other (axiologically, logically, etc), occupies the higher place. To deconstruct the opposition one must first of all, at a given moment, reverse the hierarchy.


A further stage from this involves the insertion of a 'third' term which prevents the oppositional field from reasserting itself. These undecidable terms are incapable of re-appropriation by the binary terms and are most commonly characterised as "différance", being both difference (spatial) and deferment (temporal). Derrida can be said to be in agreement with feminists such as Irigaray, who designate the transcendental signifier as male. However although Derrida's vision of endless différance has been considered attractive to feminists his critique, as Irigaray points out, risks colonising women's potential space as subjects. This is because in deconstructing the male/female opposition, Derrida then claims the possibility of speaking 'like a woman' glossing over the fact that he is speaking 'as a man'. The distinction between 'like' and 'as' is crucial for, as Irigaray points out, speaking 'like' a woman is a long way from being socially positioned 'as' a woman (Irigaray 1985a).

Notions of embodiment are crucial to the feminist critique of Derridean
deconstruction as Whitford explains:

One of the points of feminism is that it attempts to create a space where women can be speakers/agents as women. Derrida's deconstruction of metaphysical identity has had the effect of disconnecting the deconstructor from embodiment. If masculine and feminine positions are not connected to social positions in the world, to embodiment and the social effects of that embodiment then, however his intentions, the effect of his stance is to make it seem as though one could enter the intellectual arena - deconstruction, say - as a disembodied and non-social intellect...In this sense, at any rate, the philosopher repeats the familiar gesture of exclusion; to enter philosophy as a woman, one must leave behind embodiment.

Whitford 1991a, p129.

Feminist attempts at "embodied theory" emerge in this context as attempts to counteract both sexually specific theory which parades as objective knowledge and the epistemological fantasies of becoming multiplicities within deconstruction.

The 'crisis of the subject' and the 'crisis of rationality' are not sexually neutral. Jardin (1985) and Braidotti (1991) have described the sexual subtext of these epistemological crises. Jardine (1985) documents the interest that poststructuralist and postmodern theorists, in particular Lacan, Derrida, Deleuze, Blanchot and Tournier, display in the feminine and problematises the crises of legitimation as a fresh attempt at re-territorialising the feminine body. Braidotti (1991) also locates fascination with the 'feminine' as a preoccupation of contemporary philosophy and explains theorising on difference as privileging a series of 'others' previously constructed in a deprecating mode: the body, the senses, affects, dreams, madness, and Woman. Following Derrida's influential interview with Christie MacDonald, 'Choreographies', it is possible to argue that metaphors of dance have also entered the language of poststructuralism in its invocations of difference.9 As Bordo explains
in relation to postmodern theories, "metaphors of dance and movement have replaced the ontologically fixing stare of the motionless spectator" (Bordo 1990, p143). Dance and movement (choreographies) are located within the logic of Western reason on the side of the irrational, the feminine and the corporeal and as a site for metaphorisations of difference within Derridean deconstruction.

According to feminist critiques of deconstruction, the discovery by the humanist (male) subject of his gaps and lacks, is responded to through the, "logic of domination through metaphorization" (Braidotti 1991, p143). Renewed interest in corporeality, in the irrational, and the multiple, as represented in metaphors of 'dance', can be viewed as evidence of poststructuralist attempts to re-legitimate the subject of modernity through the appropriation of the feminine. The salvaging of 'man' through Woman can be read as a further violation of women, one which reiterates the eternal projection of the corporeality of the human species onto woman as 'pure body'. Feminists therefore need to be alert to the political subtext of contemporary philosophy as they can be said to "have quite a different message to convey about the non-fulfilment of thought and the fracturing of the Cartesian certainty of the subject" (Braidotti 1991, p144). In particular they need to be aware of how theorising on the 'feminine' cut loose from the actual experiences of women leads to the abstraction of the 'maternal space' through metaphorisation. In relation to this the 'crisis of reason' has been described as, "a minefield for women" (Braidotti 1991, p144).
2.3 Feminism and postmodernism

Feminism has been a major force in the collapse of the 'man of reason' yet the intersections between feminism and postmodernism remain contested. Owens (1983) challenges postmodern theorists indifference to debates on sexual difference and suggests that "women's insistence on difference and incommensurability may not only be compatible with, but also an instance of postmodern thought" (Owens 1983, pp61-61). Whereas Elspeth Probyn attributes the postmodern turn as being precipitated, not by the passing of modernism, but by the "questions feminists brought to diverse modernist disciplines" (1990, p178). Yet many feminists maintain a distance from postmodern and poststructuralist allegiances. Nicholson (1990) admits that though outwardly the two appear to be natural allies - both feminists and postmodernists share a critique of, amongst other things, notions of objectivity in scholarship, the modern sense of self and subjecthood, the idea of a linear, progressive history, binaristic thought and transcendent reason - feminism retains a "causal" attitude towards naming the specific oppressions women encounter and continues to identify women as a category, however tenuously constituted. Feminism may therefore be read as an instance of the universalism and humanism which postmodernism seeks to deconstruct. Similarly, Christine Di Stefano (1990) points to the rootedness of feminism within an Enlightenment belief system, and argues against the conflation of feminism and postmodernism.

To the extent that feminist politics is bound up with a specific constituency or subject, namely, women, the postmodernist prohibition against subject-centered inquiry and theory undermines the legitimacy of a broad-based organized movement dedicated to articulating and implementing the goals of such a constituency.

Di Stefano in Nicholson 1990, p75-76.
This is one of the most persuasive arguments against postmodern pluralism for feminist theorists, as Nancy Harstock asks: "why is it that just at the moment when so many of us who have been silenced begin to demand the right to name ourselves, to act as subjects rather than objects of history, that just then the concept of subjecthood becomes problematic?" (1990, p163).

Whilst endorsing some of the characteristics of postmodernism, feminists have been cautious of participating in a conceptual framework that involves the disavowal of collective goals and the recognition of the futility and redundancy of political agendas based on Enlightenment ideals. As Hutcheon explains there is undeniably a major difference of orientation between postmodernism and feminism. Postmodernism, being "doubly coded - both complicitous with and contesting of the cultural dominants within which it operates", needs therefore to be held in tension with feminism with its, "distinct, unambiguous political agendas of resistance" (Hutcheon 1989, p142).

In light of this debate on the relationship between feminism and postmodernism, it is possible to enunciate two different models of feminist knowledge and position these within differing relations to androcentric thought. The first category can be considered in relation to the frame of "humanist" feminism. It attempts to supplement and extend existing knowledges by adding the experiences and perspectives of women. This work was a fertile area for feminist critique in the 1970s for example in the fields of marxism, psychoanalysis, and literary criticism. Justificatory strategies for this mode of feminist inquiry involved the assertion of women's agency and role as subjects. As a result of their inclusion, systems of
knowledge were adapted and refined to accommodate the experiences of women and methodologies were constructed appropriate to the analysis of these experiences. Such an approach maintains and keeps intact existing frameworks and boundaries of knowledge but significantly alters their content through a thorough overhaul from a feminist perspective. Titles such as ‘Images of Women’ and ‘Women’s History’ have come to characterise feminist knowledge in this mode. Contemporary feminist thought has problematised this approach through its critique of the ontological commitments of the categories of subject and object. That is, as Elizabeth Grosz explains, "where feminism remains committed to the project of knowing women, of making women objects of knowledge, without in turn submitting the position of knower or the subject of knowledge to a reorganization, it remains as problematic as the knowledges it attempts to supplement or replace" (Grosz 1993, p207).

The second broad category of feminist thought is that which seeks to disengage itself from the so-called ‘paternal signifiers’ through addressing the issue of subjectivity itself. Feminists within this category have sought to develop altogether different epistemological frameworks and positions of enunciation. The usefulness of this approach is that it openly acknowledges the sexual specificity of a speaking position. The work of writers such as Luce Irigaray, is an instance of this as she seeks to shift the parameters of knowledge beyond the isomorphism of phallocentrism by dissolving oppositional thinking and constructing new knowledges through an emphasis on the feminine imaginary.11 Her texts openly acknowledged their partial, partisan and
motivated perspective, challenging and subverting claims to sexually neutral knowledge. As Grosz explains:

For [Irigaray], the crisis of reason does not represent an impasse but rather a path for women to explore and judge for themselves. Her work is a facing up to the implications of this crisis - to know (as woman, as other) the knower (as man has been and woman is now becoming).


To be a feminist in this "post-humanist landscape" is to recognise the sexually particular positions from which knowledges are produced, represented and interpreted (Haraway 1992, p86). Feminist philosophers like Irigaray, whilst in agreement with Derrida on the violence of patriarchal metaphysics, point to the difficulties from a feminist point of view of adopting a position which involves the deconstruction of ontology. Irigaray's theorisations of the feminine imaginary can be read as an attempt to resymbolise women's identity 'for-herself' from a position which does not regress to patriarchal metaphysics, that is through subject/object oppositions. Theories of embodied subjectivity in this sense involve moving beyond the binaristic oppositions of rationalist thought.

Feminist conceptions of the body differ from those of male theorists for example Freud, Lacan, Foucault and Derrida, in that bodies and pleasures are recognised as sexually specific (Grosz 1993). Increasingly feminists have recognised the centrality of bodies to accounts of power and critiques of knowledge but in spite of this they have frequently expressed ambivalent attitudes towards the body.¹² As Grosz explains, "although feminists have frequently struggled around issues involving women's bodies - the right to abortion, contraception, maternity, reproduction, self-
defense, body image, sexuality, pornography, and so on - there is still a strong reluctance to conceptualize the female body as playing a major role in women's oppression" (1993, p194-5). Feminist attempts at re-conceiving the female body have been condemned through charges of biologism, essentialism, ahistoricism, and naturalism. In particular anti-essentialist poststructuralist feminists resist attempts to naturalise the differences between men and women through a reliance on beliefs in the immutable essences and fixed properties of male and female bodies (Fuss 1989). Whilst these charges are understandable within a patriarchal context which reduces women to the status of natural passivity, it is important not to presume that only anatomical, physiological or biological accounts of the body are possible (Grosz 1993).

To move beyond the impasse created through the charge of Essentialism means deconstructing notions of the humanist subject founded in mind/body, nature/culture, subject/object dualisms. As Irigaray sees it the difficulties that women have in gaining access to their social and political rights are founded in the inadequately thought out relation between the body and culture (Irigaray 1993). It is therefore through addressing this relation that women can begin to uncover the sources of their oppression and locate their subjectivity.

2.4 Dancing bodies of knowledge

Subjecthood has previously acted as the point of departure for feminist politics based on identity. Assuming, however, the subject as the goal of feminism is to defer the question of the political construction and regulation of the subject itself. The idea of
a subject presupposes the existence of an object. Feminists assert that throughout the history of theory subject/object relations correlate with gender categories as masculine subjects act upon and observe feminine objects (de Beauvoir 1949, 1983; Coltheart 1986; Thompson 1986; Thiele 1986). The exclusion of women from philosophy and knowledge production, and the alignment of women with nature, have formed the foundation of patriarchal categories of subject and object, self and other. Feminists’ recognition of the ontological investments in categories of subject and object are therefore of primary importance to their critique of knowledge in its Western humanist frame. For, as Judith Butler reminds us, "It is important to remember that subjects are constituted through exclusion, that is, through the creation of a domain of deauthorized subjects, presubjects, figures of abjection, populations erased from view" (Butler 1992, p13).

The androcentric bias of Western thought has had an all pervasive impact on the conditions of social existence and culture (Wolff 1990). Feminists describe how priority has been traditionally proffered in institutions to 'malestream' areas of specialisation. Dance is a good example of the exclusions engendered by this tradition. Popularly associated with the feminine, and with the body, dance has only relatively recently achieved University subject status in this country (in the mid 1970s), and within my own country of New Zealand it has yet to achieve this recognition. Indeed the incredulity which greets my admission to being a PhD student in dance is a constant reminder of the suspicion that any sustained attention to the body is outside the realm of serious intellectual endeavour.
The disavowal of the body within Western traditions of knowledge has implications not only for epistemologists and feminist theorists, but also for dancer-theorists. Knowledge accrued through the moving body in dance can be theorised as one of the 'blind spots' within a Western intellectual tradition which values the capacity of a reasoning mind over the body. In foregrounding women and the dancing body as the frame of reference, feminism through dance, requires fundamentally altering the character of knowledge. The dancer-philosopher in enacting a form of embodied theory makes incursions into androcentric knowledge. As a form of "passionate scholarship" this involves the destabilisation of a Western intellectual tradition which valorises the 'man of reason' and His 'god's eye view' (Du Bois 1983, p105). In this way sexually specific theory which parades as objective knowledge is transformed so as to account for sexual differences (Pateman 1986).

The academic study of dance does not have a long tradition and as such can be regarded as free of some of the intellectual baggage which inhibits new developments in other fields of knowledge. Feminist methodologies offer dance research a range of possible approaches for the interdisciplinary study of dance and for the reformulation of knowledge from the subject position of the dancer/choreographer.¹³ To position my own dancing body within the frame of this research is to collapse the subject/object divide which subtends rationalist discourse. It is in this sense to position the dancer as knower.
2.5 The ontology of dancing

*Philosophy is to thinking as dance is to moving.*
*Frye 1992, p125*

The activity of dancing (as explained in Chapter 2.2) has appeared as one of a number of metaphors of difference within poststructuralist discourses. Feminists have sought to counter the sexual subtext of these metaphorisations by foregrounding the lived experiences of women and the sexual specificity of embodied subjectivities.

It emerges from this, that dance as a form of cultural production on the margins of hegemonic discourses can be located as a site of resistance to the historical privilege afforded disembodied reason within Western culture. As Nancy Fraser states: "The rhetoric of bodies and pleasures...can be said to be useful for exposing and opposing, in highly dramatic fashion, the undue privilege modern western culture has accorded subjectvitiy, sublimation, ideality and the like" (1989, p62).

In relation to feminist theories of embodiment the activity of dancing appears intrinsically relevant, for it can be understood as at once the most embodied of the arts and the most elusive. Dances occur at the confluence of motility and corporeality and can be regarded as acts of becoming in the moment of performance. Dances are elusive in the sense that they resist being fixed or stabilised as image, object or sign. The effect of presence is complicated by the fact of movement, of mobility, of sequentiality and temporality, denying the dance its authority, its "thereness" as object. As multi-dimensional mappings of the body in time and through space, dances are only ever inadequately re-presented through the two-dimensional framing of video or film, or the notation score which is required to fix upon a singular (read
definitive) version of a dance. Nor can literary descriptions which rely upon the structural analyses of preconceived categories of meaningful elements of the dance contain it as object because, as Daly explains, dances are "by definition in constant evolution over time and through space" (1992, p245). To attempt to write about dance as performance is in this sense to invoke the rules of the written document and thereby alter the significance of the event itself (Phelan 1993). Phelan describes the ontology of performance as "representation without reproduction", because "performance’s only life is in the present" (1993, p146). Dances, as embodied acts of becoming, can be said to operate at the threshold between presence and absence as their coming into being is simultaneous with their disappearance. Dancing bodies are constantly reconfigured within discourse through a fluidity of material constructions and can be described in this context as subjects-in-process (Daly 1992).

Whilst this may suggest dance as a privileged site for poststructuralist and postmodern notions of differance, from a feminist point of view, given the understanding of an androcentric heritage which has led to the marginalisation, denigration and trivialisation of dance practice within modern Western history, it is necessary to ensure the positioning of the dancing subject within discourse in her own right and not merely as an appropriation for a metaphorical linguistic turn.¹⁴

Dances, like feminisms, are not universal, but temporally, culturally and historically specific. Choreography, as literally the writing of dance through the moving body, shares with feminism a concern with the body as locus. Whereas for feminists the body is understood as the primary site for the reproduction of gender relations and
social inscriptions, for postmodern choreographers and theorists the articulate body is the polyvalent site of signification (Grosz 1987). Despite this mutual interest in the body, it would be a mistake to recognise this as a shared point of departure, indeed it would be better to substitute locus with loci, as each discourse constructs the body differently. According to Foucault the body does not exist prior to its signification as a culturally marked and constituted entity within discourses. It follows from this that there is no singular body below discourse which serves as a stable foundation for either the manoeuvres of the feminists pen nor the motilities of the choreographer/dancer, indeed it can be suggested that each discourse constructs the body according to its own discursive rules and limits.

2.6 Dance and feminism

Feminism theorises culture from women's point of view and it is women who constitute the majority of practitioners within Western Theatre Dance. The predominance of women as choreographers and dancers within specific genres and periods of dance history has led some commentators to see dance and feminism as inherent allies. Susan Manning for instance makes the claim that, "long before I had read feminist theory, it was clear to me that early modern dance comprised a feminist practice" (1993, p1). Copeland (1982) also sees particular developments in dance history as feminist in character, in particular modern dance's rejection of nineteenth century ballet in the early part of this century. Indeed the history of Western Theatre dance can be read through the ruptures in aesthetics instigated by women who sought to construct alternative representations of their bodies to those which were dominantly inscribed. In positioning their work within the context of new freedoms for women,
exponents of modern dance espoused the liberatory potential of dance, as Isadora Duncan put it, proclaiming the potential of dance to realise "the highest intelligence in the freest body" (Duncan in Brown 1979, p11). Duncan is frequently acclaimed as a 'feminist' for her times because she sought to reappropriate the dancing body for women. As she stated: "the dancer of the future...will dance not in the form of a nymph, nor fairy, nor coquette, but in the form of woman in her greatest and purest expression. She will realize the mission of woman's body and the holiness of all its parts" (Duncan 1928, pp.62-63).

In asserting the independent value of dance, choreographer/dancers such as Mary Wigman, Doris Humphrey, Martha Graham and Gertrude Bodenwieser challenged the subordination of stage dancing to music, libretto and design, and created independent careers in which they combined roles as both choreographer and dancer. In emphasising the individual powers of expression of each performer and resourcing their dance constructions through improvisation, they were responsible for the emergence of a range of personal dance styles and vocabularies reflecting a variety of attitudes to and experiences in the body, in direct contrast to the codified limits of the opera ballet dancer. Furthermore they claimed the contemporary relevance of their art form, opening it to an entirely new set of thematic parameters. The self-knowledge engendered through the training, production and reception of modern dance in the period can therefore be said to have opened spaces for challenging existing hierarchies of movement and for providing alternative constructions of the dancer and of women (Copeland 1982; Manning 1993; Adair 1992).
A later generation of women dancers turned away from the aesthetics of modern expressive dance and in their redefining of the body, released it from the "heroic, symbolically overinflated images" which had come to characterise perceptions of modern dance in North America especially of the work of Martha Graham (Banes 1994, p306). Banes (1994) describes the beginnings of postmodern dance in the early 1960s as a "prefeminist moment" in which dance performance became an arena "where the woman artist was fully empowered, carving out a zone for women's work and a status for the woman artist that foreshadowed feminist demands of the seventies" (1994, p306). Copeland (1983) describes the work of Yvonne Rainer, Lucinda Childs and Trisha Brown in relation to feminist demands and describes the title of Rainer's solo, The Mind is a Muscle (1966) as evidence of women dancers demands to be taken seriously. Goldberg and Cooper Albright in discussion with a later generation of postmodern choreographers, Wendy Perron, Johanna Boyce and Pooh Kaye, explain the possibilities postmodern dance offered women: in expanding the perceived range of movement available to choreographers; in challenging conventions about what constituted a dancerly body; and in renegotiating the audience-performer relation so as to negate the 'display' of the female body as spectacle (Goldberg and Cooper Albright 1987/88). Similarly the 'new dancer' of British postmodern dance, in challenging gender stereotypes, in displaying her body in unisex clothing, in moving in a non-gender specific way, and in asserting the intelligence of her body, repudiated the customary associations of the dancer with organic, romantic, ideals (Jordan 1992).
Members of the London-based X6 Collective specifically engaged with feminist concerns. Formed in 1976 by Emlyn Claid, Maedée Duprýs, Fergus Early, Jacky Lansley and Mary Prestidge, the X6 Collective aimed to address the 'politics of the personal' and related their artistic aims to the broader concerns of the liberation movement.\textsuperscript{20} I, Giselle (1980) co-directed by Jacky Lansley and Fergus Early, deconstructed the original narrative of the ballet by re-positioning Giselle in a triumphant role with an hysterical Albrecht dying within the first scene. In Bleeding Fairies (1977), a collaboration between Emlyn Claid, Jacky Lansley and Mary Prestidge for the Women's Festival at Action Space, the performers substituted the performance of 'roles' for personal interaction with their audience in an attempt to draw attention to the reality of being female. As Emlyn Claid wrote of this work, "we have buried the images of swans, nymphs, sylphs and earth mothers - and replaced them with strong vibrant images of women in action" (Claid quoted in Jordan 1992, p77).

Indeed within my own experience, my training as a dancer/choreographer has been coterminous with the development of a feminist consciousness. The primary influences on my dance education came from women who, if not eager to propagating their feminist politics, provided exemplary roles of female self-determination. Trained in the Gertrude Bodenwieser technique by ex-Bodenwieser dancers and their students, all of whom were women, I came to centre my practice of dance within a female lineage of creativity.\textsuperscript{21} Leaving my convent girls school to enter the dance studio for class and rehearsal I entered a space populated by non-conformist women who moved with power and passion and who took pleasure in their bodies'
articulations in space. The choreographies which emerged from the dance company attached to my school at times explicitly engaged with radical and cultural feminist issues of the time. Dance-dramas such as *Moongoddess* (1985) for example, sought to celebrate and affirm a woman-centred culture. It was within the context of this dance culture that I discovered the writings of Mary Daly, Simone de Beauvoir, Germaine Greer, Andrea Dworkin, Susan Brownmiller and Susan Griffin which urged me to attempt to make the connection between the institutional oppressions which women encounter as a group and my personal experience 'as a woman'.

Through my readings and understandings of these second wave feminist analyses I came to understand dominant culture and dominant forms of knowledge as masculine and androcentric (Wolff 1990). Feminist metanarratives of this period assumed the silencing and invisibility of women throughout history in their descriptions of patriarchy as a concrete blanketing of Western culture (Delmar 1986). Yet my own experience as a dancer within a community of women, defied this monolithic identity of patriarchy.

Through my experience of an enabling dance culture amongst women I came to consider the shortcomings of a feminist analysis which adopted the framework of a patriarchal heritage in naming the exclusions of women. For dance seemed to constitute a 'blind spot' within feminist accounts of culture. Feminists theorise culture from women's point of view positioning women as agents of knowledge and cultural production, making visible the invisible and giving voice to their hidden
experiences, but if literary representations of the female dancer within androcentric culture contributed to her mythologisation, within the feminist literature, even in collections purporting to discuss 'women in the arts', there are scant references to this significant arena of cultural production by women. For modern and postmodern dance practices, being one of the few arenas of cultural practice at which women have excelled as producers, has throughout the twentieth century provided opportunities for women to explore aspects of self-authorship, self-representation and self-reliance, which have eluded women engaged in other more male-dominated spheres. Feminist dance scholars are now beginning to address this vacuum as the recent plethora of activity involving the interaction of feminism and dance attests to (see for example Thomas (1993).

The omissions of feminist theory are being theorised by its marginalised others leading to the fracturing of its monolithic identity and creating spaces for alternative representations. This leads Wolff to conclude that the assumption that women are excluded from culture, needs to be examined more closely if it is to be more than a "polemical claim" (1990, p70).

2.7 Dancing through the 'Wild Zone'

Conceptions of dance practice as a privileged site for female agency challenge the assumptions of feminist metanarratives about the totalising effects of a patriarchy presumed monolithic. In view of this it is possible to enquire whether dance practices enable access to the privileged 'spaces of resistance' which feminists such as de Lauretis (1987) and Showalter (1986) have theorised.
Conceptions of the dance studio as a space of/for "women-among-themselves", where women struggle with and take pleasure in their bodies, where non-linguistic signification is privileged, and female cultural agency is prevalent can be seen as amenable to gynocritical models of female culture. Within gynocritics spaces of resistance to dominant constructions of culture have been variably conceived as a "wild zone" (Showalter), a "space-off" (de Lauretis) and a "semiotic chora" (Kristeva).

The idea of a 'no man's land' untainted by, or inaccessible to, the world of malestream culture, was suggested in the title of the initial performance attached to this research, Dancing Through the 'Wild Zone' (1992). As described in Chapter One, this performance comprised a collection of new and revived works, focusing on female heroines and feminine cultural spaces. The choice of title encouraged the viewer to perceive the work within a particular frame of reference as the 'Wild Zone' is the term used by Elaine Showalter (1986) to describe the specific and self-defined nature of female cultural experience.

Following Shirley and Edwin Ardener's notion of dominant and muted groups within society, Showalter proposes women's experiences in culture as being muted, overlapping but not wholly contained by the dominant group, signified as patriarchy. This model is symbolised by two overlapping circles, in which the woman's muted circle is seen to fall within but also outside of the boundaries of the dominant circle. The small crescent of experiences which falls outside the dominant region is described as the "wild zone" that is, a 'no-man's land' of woman's culture, off-limits to men.
Within this model women as cultural producers exist both inside the malestream of patriarchy and outside its parameters in the ‘wilderness’ of female culture.

The title, Dancing Through the ‘Wild Zone’ reflected my vision at that time of dance as a privileged realm for the construction of women-centred images with which a female audience could identify. Other dance-theorists have also attempted to locate dance practices within the transgressive spaces of feminist constructions. Fensham (1993) reads the choreographic processes of postmodern choreographers, Simone Forti, Eva Karczag and Deborah Hay within Irigarayan notions of a feminine sexuate culture. She suggests that women dance makers who function independently of institutional frameworks on the margins of hegemonic discourses can potentially access a space of signification unmarked by the hierarchies of the phallocentric order. The feminist dance historian, Ann Daly (1992), also privileges certain practices of dance in relation to the transgressive spaces of poststructuralist feminism. Reading Isadora Duncan’s dance constructions through Kristeva’s theory of the semiotic chora, she describes the subversiveness of Duncan’s aesthetic in transforming the performing space into a mythic space through which she enacted the chora, "tapping into a realm of meaning that was not linear, not logical, not mimetic", and which demanded a new mode of perception of its audience (Daly 1992, p253). Choreographers have also alluded to the ‘view from elsewhere’ which the perspective of a female-centred dance practice can be seen to enable. Liz Agiss and Billy Cowie’s, No Man’s Land (1993) for example, as a dance for eighteen women of varying ages, from nine years to sixty-five years, and levels of experience, weaves inventions of intimacies and fables between women, contacting female genealogies
and the maternal-feminine, constructing worlds for women and not merely for the ‘other’.

The title, Dancing Through the ‘Wild Zone’ however operates self-reflexively in acknowledging the difficulties in locating and ‘naming’ a female space beyond a phallocentric ordering of consciousness and in a ‘space beyond’. For whilst it may be tempting, in the light of experience, to propose the signifying space of dance practice in privileged relation to feminism, in the "wild zone" of women’s (sub-) culture, such a view risks re-essentialising the experiences of women and further entrenching the marginal status of the discipline. As Marks and Courtivron (1980) explain, to advocate a direct language of the body fails to be subversive because it overlooks the strength of social and symbolic mediations which oppress us in our bodies. This concurs with Derrida’s explanation of the ‘silent work’ of art as possessing the greatest logocentric power in that it is "already talkative, full of virtual discourses" (Derrida in Brunette and Wills 1994, p13). Given this Derrida proposes that liberation from the authority of logocentrism resides "on the side of discourse, a discourse that is going to relativize things, emancipate itself" (Derrida in Brunette and Wills 1994, p13).

As Janet Wolff (1990) explains, the notion that we can somehow construct feminine cultural forms outside androcentric culture is problematic. Showalter herself admits that there is no way that we can talk about the "wild zone" or the ‘no-man’s land’ outside dominant structures. Wolff adds that equally "there is no way in which those who are marginalized by the dominant culture can develop alternative cultural forms
other than from their basis in that culture, for this is where they learn to speak, where they are socialized, and where they enter culture as gendered subjects with the ability to communicate" (1990, p70). Fensham (1993) also recognises the risks of such a position, in that in choosing to work in the, "gaps, the spaces and the silences", the dancer may somewhat naively renounce the question of oppression itself and fail to recognise the symbolic and social mediations through which any performance of her work is 'read' (Fensham 1993, p30). Showalter retreats from the utopian idealism of a ‘Wild Zone’ off-limits to men, through her admission of the doubled-edged nature of women’s culture, that is its location within two traditions at once. In this sense her conception of women’s culture encompasses the social, cultural, and literary heritages of both the muted and the dominant groups. This view allows space for an enabling feminine culture whilst not assuming its existence at a level of the mythic beyond all ‘known’ reality, for as Linda William states, "not to run this risk is to remain trapped within the limits of patriarchy’s definition of what it knows: man as subject, woman as other" (William 1988, p107).

Dance practice may offer spaces for an enabling female culture, but in order to locate this as a site of transgression for a feminist politics a critical context is needed to emancipate this discourse from its marginalisation, both in relation to a Western dualist inheritance and contemporary critical debates.

Notes

1. Tong states "the more feminist thoughts we have, the better" as in refusing to fix and congeal these thoughts into a unified truth, feminists resist the stasis of patriarchal dogma (1989, p7).
2. Phallocentric is a term frequently used in feminist theory. It describes the way society privileges the phallus or penis as a symbol of power and how the attributes of masculinity are the norm in cultural definitions. Literary critics use the term to articulate the idea that artistic creativity is defined in masculine terms or as an effect of masculinity (Gilbert and Gubar 1979; Humm 1989).

3. In Phaedo Plato positions Socrates in a discussion with Cebes about the distinction between soul and body: "[The soul is] most similar to what is divine, immortal, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, unvarying and constant in relation to itself; whereas [the] body in its turn, is most similar to what is human, mortal, multiform, non-intelligible, dissoluble, and never constant in relation to itself" (Plato, Phaedo 1975, 80b)

4. The medieval philosopher, Augustine had a significant impact on religious scholarship and like the Classical philosophers, seemed equally reluctant to endorse women's capacity for reason. In The Confessions he describes, "rational action [as] subject to the rule of the intellect, as woman is subject to man" (1961, p345).

5. Descartes affirms his position as disembodied mind, as cogito 'I': "I...concluded that I was a substance, of which the whole essence or nature consists in thinking, and which, in order to exist needs no place and depends, on no material thing, so that this 'I', that is to say, the mind, by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from the body, and moreover, that even if the body were not, it would not cease to be all that it is" (Descartes 1968, pp53-54).

6. This crisis has methodological, epistemological and political implications for conceptions of knowledge and knowledge production as it involves reconceiving their sources, aims and goals (Grosz 1993).

7. Derrida's most influential work, Of Grammatology (1976) focuses on Rousseau and sets out the main elements of his discourse. He constructs the term 'logocentrism' to describe Western philosophy's elision of meaning with words (logos), 'phallocentric' is taken to mean the hierarchical supremacy of unitary male values and 'dualist' as the term to describe the organisation of elements according to binary oppositions (see Wood 1979).

8. To prevent the undecidable term difference from solidifying Derrida uses a number of different names for this including arche-writing, dissemination, supplement, parergon, hymen, trace, iterability etc. (Whitford 1991a, p127).

9. This interview concerned the issue of sexual difference in relation to the aims of the women's movement and is one of Derrida's most cogent critiques of essentialism in feminism. Derrida described his 'improvised' responses to McDonald's written questions as, a "tribute to the dance" which should "neither grow heavy nor ever plunge too deep; above all, it should not lag or trail behind its time...we will only take a glimpse" (1982, p66). He goes on
to enquire: "I ask you, what kind of a dance would there be, or would there be one at all, if the sexes were not exchanged according to rhythms that vary considerably? In a quite rigorous sense, the exchange alone could not suffice either, however, because the desire to escape the combinatorial itself, to invent incalculable choreographies, would remain" (Derrida 1982, p76).

10. For a discussion of the points of confluence and divergence in feminist and postmodern debates see Hekman (1990), Bordo (1990), Butler (1992), Flax (1990) and Hutcheon (1989).

11. The imaginary is a psychoanalytic concept developed by Lacan in his reading of Freud. He describes it as: "a moment in the formation of the Ego or 'I': the baby, whose experience of its body until then had been fragmented and incoherent, is enabled, by means of a mirror (or an image of itself mirrored from a parental figure or figures) to see a reflection of itself as a whole body or unity, with which it can then identify 'in anticipation)" (Lacan 1977, p4). Irigaray analyses the imaginary of psychoanalytic discourse in Speculum of the Other Woman (1985) and attempts to show that the conceptualisation of sexual difference in this discourse is governed by an imaginary which ignores sexual difference, that is whose logic presupposes only one sex, the male. In This Sex Which is Not One (1985b) and An Ethics of Sexual Difference (1993b) she articulates an expanded definition of the imaginary as the social imaginary which is taken to be reality. (See Whitford 1991a, pp63-70).


14. Janet Lansdale describes how the recent attraction of dance and choreography as metaphors for deconstructive manoeuvres further contributes to, "the invisibility of dance as a discipline" (1993, p33). Like feminists suspicion of postmodern trajectories of endless plurality and the loss of the Subject, Lansdale cautions against the dangers of interdisciplinarity for dance when its intellectual tradition remains tenuous: "Just as dance begins to establish itself within academia, the boundaries between disciplines are becoming eroded...I would argue that this, too, can be seen as just another takeover bid for dance: in its history it has been aligned with many other disciplines in the absence of being identified separately as a fine art, now it is the turn of predatory cultural and literary theorists" (Lansdale 1993, p33).

15. Susan Leigh Foster (1986) describes the dancing body as "a locus of intelligent and passionate human gesturings", referring specifically to the choreographers who comprised the Grand Union, Meredith Monk, and Tharp. She privileges dance as a practice or activity rather than a discrete object and
describes how through this practice, "the body, no longer the stylus, the parchment, or the trace, becomes the process itself of signing" (Foster 1986, p227). Foster's model for "reading dancing" is informed by poststructuralism and semiotics, and is specifically applied to contemporary American dance practices.

16. Chris Weedon describes discourses as, "ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and the relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects which they seek to govern. Neither the body nor thoughts and feelings have meaning outside their discursive articulation, but the ways in which discourse constitutes the minds and bodies of individuals is always part of a wider network of power relations, often with institutional bases" (Weedon 1987, p108).

17. Women predominate numerically within Western theatre dance forms as practitioners, but not in relation to hierarchies of institutionalised power (see Adair 1992).

18. According to Adair (1992) Duncan's dance ideals were clearly feminist in intent as she opposed the harmful affects of ballet training on young women's bodies and the stereotypical roles of femininity which women were forced to adopt within the classical oeuvre.

19. For a discussion of the problematics of this assumption in substantiating a feminist perspective see Brown (1994, p205).

20. Both Mackrell (1992) and Jordan (1992) note the radicalism of New Dance in particular through the organisation of X6 and the New Dance Magazine and their role in disseminating feminist ideals and promoting feminist practice.

21. Gertrude Bodenwieser (1890-1959) was a leading Viennese exponent of Ausdrucktanz. Her Tanzgruppe Bodenwieser toured extensively throughout Europe between the two world wars. Following her flight from Vienna in 1938, Bodenwieser reassembled her company in Australia where she gained a reputation through her teaching and choreographing as a founder of the modern dance movement there. Her major works were dance dramas which combined dramatic action with expressive movement and acted as allegories on the human condition, for example, The Pilgrimage of Truth (1932), The Masks of Lucifer (1936) and Cain and Abel (1940). The Bodenwieser dance technique and style is documented in Brown (1988). It elaborated on many of Laban's movement principles, investing these with Viennese nuances for example through the use of the waltz step. Christine Battersby (1989) challenges dominant conceptions of artistic genius as reliant upon masculine attributes which deny women artistic excellence. Part of the feminist revisionist project is therefore the re-drawing of chains of influence according
to a matrilineal heritage.

22. *Moongoddess* (1985) choreographed by Jan Bolwell and Terry MacTavish, explored the three ages of woman as depicted in matriarchal cultures. As a dance-drama incorporating song, text and movement, it focused upon rituals of female embodiment. Part of my research for the role of Virgin which I performed in this production, included the writings of Sappho and texts on matriarchal cultures and goddesses.

23. It was my dance teacher, Jan Bolwell, who suggested to me, at the age of fifteen, that I read Mary Daly's *Beyond God the Father* (1973), a book which sparked my initial interest in feminist theory.

24. See for example, Daly (1978).

25. For example Bonner et al's (1992) text, *Imagining Women: Cultural representations and gender* purports to present a comprehensive introduction to the ways in which women have been represented within a broad range of cultural practices - in the visual arts, literature, television and film, theatre and pornography - yet the contents and index are devoid of any references to dance.


27. Showalter (1986) asks what a woman's culture would be like and proposes 'gynocritics' as the identification of the key characteristics of women's writing. The concept of gynocritics is extended within Young's (1990) theorisation of post-humanist feminism as, a "model of liberation" which "affirms specifically female experience and resistance to its exclusion, denigration, and exploitation by male dominated society" (p14).

Part One: Bodies of Knowledge

Chapter 3 Dance, Theory and Politics

3.1 Body-writing
3.2 Constructing dancing subjectivities
3.3 Typologies of dance
3.4 Postmodern bodies
Chapter 3

Dance, theory and politics

3.1 Body-writing

Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies - for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text - as into the world and into history - by her own movement.


A primary concern of feminism is its attempt to create a space where women can occupy a ‘speaking’ position and become cultural agents, yet to enter the Symbolic order ‘as a woman’ has meant a denial of female embodiment as the Subject of Enlightenment thought is male. Part of the feminist project for dance must therefore encompass the deconstruction of this tradition and the assertion of sexually specific positions of articulation for dancing subjects, that is positions which are not reducible to ‘other of the same’. Yet the legacy of the phallogocentric order, that is thought which is organised around the logos and the phallus, positions dance, as a primarily non-linguistic mode of signification, at a disadvantage when it comes to explaining its role as a form of cultural production with political implications. It is a handicap which is compounded by ambivalent attitudes within some dance practices towards theory, politics and language.

Although feminism and dance would appear to be inherent allies there remains little research into their points of confluence and the possibilities for mutual engagement between these bodies of knowledge. The achievements of women in dance do not
figure prominently, if at all, in women's studies, and feminist critical studies in the arts have yet to address the possibilities which woman-identified practices in dance engender in relation to debates on, amongst other things, subjectivity, the structure of desire in representation and women's experiences of their bodies. Feminist dance scholars are, however, beginning to take up these debates as recent publications and conference agendas attest to, responding to the possibilities which new analyses of ideology, representation and social relations bring to the study of the dancing body.¹

Though feminist dance scholars are engaging in these debates, in particular by bringing the insights of feminist theories and critical perspectives on the arts to their 'readings' of dances, there are, as yet, few examples of what Sanchez-Colberg calls, "feminism through dance", which she describes as "both dancemaking through a feminist perspective and also arriving at a feminist framework through dance" (1993, p151,162). Unlike feminist interventions in other art forms, in particular film, visual arts, performance art and literature, there are few examples of choreographies which explicitly engage with contemporary feminist thought. As Sanchez-Colberg notes, "feminist strategies which have developed into specific methods of production in film-making, literature, criticism and theatre remain neglected in contemporary dance even within the circles of the avant-garde and women choreographers" (1993, p151).

Several dance scholars have attempted to explain dancers' apparent immunity to the extensive challenges which feminist theories provide for women working in the arts. Ann Daly (1989) acknowledges dance as a discipline's absence of critical attention
to contemporary theoretical agendas for feminism and claims that amongst choreographers and performers, "there is very little understanding ... of the vigorous and extensive feminist inquiry that has been going on in the arts for the past decade" as "the issues involved in the study of gender in dance are still generally misunderstood, if they are in circulation at all" (1989, p23). Whereas Copeland (1982) sees the dominance of women within the contemporary dance field of production as militating against the female dancer perceiving that there is any need for the consciousness raising which occurs in other fields (Copeland 1982).

Women in independent dance practice because of their numerical dominance may experience fewer instances of the institutional sexism endemic in other art forms, but in explaining the absence of a critical feminist consciousness, in particular through engagement with feminist theories, feminists need to address the sources of many dancers' ambivalence towards language and theory. As Copeland (1993) argues, dance is widely assumed to be something one does, rather than theorises about, a view confirmed by Canadian dancer Louise Latreille's claim: "Feminists are talking, not doing; I'm doing"! (Citron 1984, p17). Dancers' suspicion of language can be traced through what Copeland terms the 'primitivist' inheritance of North American modern dance (abstract and expressionist) with its attendant 'quest for wholeness'. According to this view dance is commonly regarded as a form of pre-discursive, unmediated access to sensate experience (Copeland 1983). This anti-intellectualism is evident in both dance institutions and attitudes towards dance in the wider academic context.

The British dance theorist, Janet Adshead Lansdale agrees with this, as she describes how dance as a discipline is "dogged by a common sense view of itself" (1993/94,
p22). This resistance to theory, in her view, leads both to academic scepticism from other arts disciplines towards dance and disinterest amongst practising dancers, choreographers and critics who might usefully engage in contemporary theoretical debates.

Foster also critiques the ongoing legacy of a North American concert dance practice which situates itself as a medium for the expression of "primal, emotional, and libidinal dimensions of human experience" (Foster 1986, pXiv). This characterisation of dance, as being motivated by instinctual drives and the unconscious, holds that as a practice it is outside or beyond, the possibilities for verbal, that is intellectual, forms of discussion. As Foster explains, dancers reluctance to engage with literary based regimes of knowledge places the discipline in an unfortunate position when it comes to claiming its specific role within society:

Dancers often cultivate a sanctimonious mutism, denying what is verbal, logical, and discursive in order to champion the physical and the sensate. At the same time, they are oppressed by the inferior status of their accomplishments within a society that esteems the verbal or the mathematical over all other forms of discourse.

Foster 1986, ppxiv-xv.

For many, the image of dance as a "mute" art of physical presence reduces its role to the decorative and the ornamental, through which pleasure in looking is the most that can be expected (Copeland 1993, p143). Dance criticism and history have also tended to reinforce the self-enclosure of dance as a discipline through an emphasis on its role as a socially reflective art practice in which meaning is intrinsically generated and not presumed not to have any bearing on the world (Banes 1994).
The postmodern dance historian and critic, Sally Banes, challenges the convention amongst dance historians to view dance as a reflection and product of culture rather than a site of cultural agency and production:

The presupposition assumed by the reflection-theory dance historians is that, whether on stage or in social life, dance is a mirror or a microcosm where the workings of culture, everyday life, and even government are actively registered from above on passive bodies below.

Banes 1994, p44.

Banes counters this tradition with a view of dance as a cultural practice capable of effecting change at both macropolitical and micropolitical levels. She provides a number of examples to demonstrate how dance has, in particular periods of history, had a significant role in shaping cultural attitudes and in determining the outcome of political negotiations. In situating dancing bodies as "ensembles of social meaning" through which culture if played out and produced, Banes recovers dance from its position of political powerlessness. As Adshead-Lansdale (1993-4) has stated, theory can counteract dance’s "common sense" view of itself, it can also work to challenge the view recently expressed by The Guardian’s theatre critic, Michael Billington that "dance is the enemy of political theatre" (1994, p4).

Some dancers and choreographers have also expressed a reluctance to advocate the ideological basis of their constructions, and the capacity of their dances to articulate disruptive values with political agendas. Paula Citron, in her assessment of attitudes towards feminism within dance in Canada, came to the conclusion that to many of the women interviewed on the subject "dance and politics are dichotomous" (1984, p16). This view is reinforced by the substitution of movement with speech and silence in
works by some choreographers who seek to operate a contestatory politics through their dances. For example, choreographers Santiago Sempere (Paris) and Vera Mantero (Lisbon) performing at the Theatre de la Cité Internationale in 1992 declared the historical moment too portentous for the body to dance, alternatively they evoked speech and stillness throughout their performance. Similarly in the winter of 1992 at St Mark's church a dance performance by Yoshiko Chuma was substituted by "talking" as she regarded the current problems in the world too pressing to elicit a movement response. Both of these examples call to mind dancer/choreographer Jo Lechay's comment a decade ago: "There are so many catastrophic issues in the world, I ask myself what right do we have to make our little dances" (Lechay cited in Citron 1984, p17).

But these responses to the challenge of dance and politics ignore the history of dance practices which have actively sought to engage in contemporary issues through their critiques of dominant cultural values. The Ausdruckstanz practitioner, Gertrude Bodenwieser, was one choreographer within the social realist tradition of modern dance to claim a role for dance as an art form capable of engaging with contemporary issues through expressions of a social conscience. Given this heritage it is possible to argue, as some contemporary dance critics do, that the reactivation of a dance theatre lineage, begun with the Ausdruckstanz and dance drama movement in Central Europe, is evidence that dance has rediscovered its political "body". Von Inge Baxmann describes a discernible trend in the move from dance as representation to its hybrid form when comingled with theatre as a locus of signifying systems, one capable of taking up a position on contemporary issues:

62
"Dance theatre", "movement theatre", "physical theatre" or "choreographic theatre" reflect the groping terminology of a practice which does not seek to represent, but rather serves to use movement, gesture, rhythm and space in order to come to terms with present-day forms of living - while simultaneously questioning the conventional hierarchy of the senses.

Baxmann 1990, p55.

Whilst this trend can be viewed as a result of the increasing inter-disciplinarity and hybridity of much contemporary performance it is important not to elide the issue of 'spoken text' as a guarantor of meaning. The positioning of dance as feminine and passive encourages its marrying to the 'husband' arts of music and theatre. Marianne van Kerkhoven writes of a continuing trend which regards "actors as the intellectuals of the stage, and dancers as spontaneous beings able to enter into contact with the hidden forces of the universe" (1993, p30). The politicisation of dance is frequently ciphered through the domain of theatre where the attributes of spoken text and other theatrical devices guarantee engagement with the social, the literary and the logos. In relation to feminist choreographic practices this is significant as Catherine King comments that "the images which are strongest against hegemonic reframing are objects with words on them, and performances where speech is possible" (1992, p187). But in relying on spoken text as the guarantor of political content in choreographies ignores the potential of movement and gesture to unsettle the binary logic which subtends cultural production. Such a view also elides the sexualisation of discourses and positions of enunciation within a phallogocentric order. As Irigaray (1993) has explained, speech is problematic for women because the feminine has functioned as the material substratum of the linguistic order, given this, women in the past have found it difficult to speak and be heard as women. It is precisely because the bodily realm has been down-graded in relation to the transcendent values
of reason that movement and gesture can potentially operate as a site for contestatory politics. This follows Irigaray's claim in relation to the discovery of a feminine syntax that, "the place where it could best be deciphered is in the gestural code of women's bodies" (Irigaray in Whitford 1991b, p136).

The radical potential of dance as a feminist practice is inhibited by prevailing attitudes within the discipline of dance history and criticism and in the wider sphere of feminist and theatre criticism which holds to a view of dance not as an agent of culture but as a reflection of culture and therefore as politically ineffective. These attitudes are founded in the dualistic heritage of Western Enlightenment thought, and the downgrading of value attached to the body. In order to counter claims that dance is outside theory and apolitical, as a form of prediscursive immersion in sensate experience, so that dancers may have a 'voice' within discourses a model of dance as a site of cultural agency and production and a methodology which positions the dancer as subject is necessary. In this sense dancers' 'quest for wholeness', for an object, needs to be supplanted by the recognition of their role as agents of culture capable of operating a contestatory politics. As Irigaray states:

"The silent allegiance of the one guarantees the auto-sufficiency, the auto-nomy of the other as long as no questioning of this mutism as a symptom - of historical repression is required. But what if the "object" started to speak? Which also means beginning to "see"... 
Irigaray 1985, p135.

The currency of language smoothes the way of these choreographic interventions as, following Irigaray, it is recognised that not to contribute to, "making language" is "to perpetuate the pseudo-neutrality of those laws and traditions that privilege
masculine genealogies and their codes of logic" (Irigaray 1993, p53). In light of this it seems imperative that women write about dancing and bring dancing to theory. But women who dance must put themselves into the text, to paraphrase Cixous (1992), "by our own movement", this means finding a speaking position consistent with the logic and illogic of our own motilities. Only then can the dancing body, "not disciplined to the enunciation of a singular discourse" fulfil its potential as "a multivocal and potentially disruptive force" in undermining the "unity of phallocratic discourse" (Dempster 1988, p13). To fail to do so is to allow the space of our disruptive potential to be colonised by men speaking "like" women.

The trangressive politics of dancing can be located in its ability to exceed the discourse which governs the phallocentric system. The dancing body is not only the effect of discourse but also its excess. Dancing involves the experience of and experimentation with limits as through dancing it is possible to experience the unknowingness of the bodily realm and its eruptive potential in defying our expectations, in working in the "gaps" between discourses and between the discursive and non-discursive. As a physical-material practice the 'body-writing' of the choreographer takes place somewhere other than in the territories subordinated to philosophical-theoretical domination. It is precisely through 'body-writing' therefore, that the choreographer can challenge the flaws in the Western metaphysics of presence (Minh Ha 1991). This will be an illusion however as long as the choreographic aim coincides with the system denounced. In a context of competing discourses dancers need to be border runners resisting subjugation to any authority, whilst 'speaking' the logic of her discourse with her body, for "it is in writing, from
woman and toward woman, and in accepting the challenge of the discourse controlled by the phallus, that woman will affirm woman somewhere other than in silence, the place reserved for her in and through the Symbolic" (Cixous 1986, p93).

3.2 Constructing dancing subjectivities

Dancing is part of social and cultural life and as such may be understood as a form of cultural production mediated through and impacting upon formations of power. As a site of cultural agency for the feminist subject, choreography can function as a resistant mode of representation transgressing the customary boundaries of a phallocentric order. Within this project dances are understood as cultural practices which, following the art historian Griselda Pollock’s definition, "do a job which has a major social significance in the articulation of meanings about the world, in the negotiation of social conflicts, in the production of social subjects" (Pollock 1988, p7). Dances are in this sense interdependent with other discourses and social practices for their meaning and significance.9

The material conditions of an art practice have a direct bearing on the possible modes of intervention and on the identification of the feminist problematic in that particular area. The specificity of choreography as a form of cultural production determines a field of parameters and sets of conditions within which dominant representations are more or less accessible, less or more sustainable. These differentials shape the kinds of strategic interventions which are best suited for feminist artists working in this cultural domain.
Given that choreography is a form of cultural production, it follows that it is also an arena in which sexual difference is produced. In order to engage critically with this production its specificities as a material practice need to be considered within a "double frame" (Pollock 1988, p9). Firstly, through the analysis of the conditions of dance production, its modes of training and rehearsal, its physical resources, types of consumption and its representational framing as performance; and secondly, through consideration of the social practices and discourses which these elements are interdependent upon for their meaning and significance. It is through the interrelationships between these fields that sexual difference is produced and it is through the articulation of their interpolations that the problematics of 'doing feminism through dance' can be enunciated.

Dances exist in the world as social and cultural entities interacting with prevailing orthodoxies and assumptions regarding gender and behaviour. The extent to which dance is capable of reinforcing or subverting the assumptions of a patriarchal order comes more sharply into focus when the codes and values underlying specific dance practices are understood. A feminist analysis needs to consider the way in which dancers in any one genre are framed, by whom and with what attitude to the body. In the choreographic process issues of control, autonomy and dominance need to be addressed insofar as they affect both the process of making work as well as the final product.

It has already been seen how choreography shares with feminism a concern with the body as locus but how each discourse constructs the body differently (Chapter 2.6).
Choreographers do not shape the inchoate matter of either their own bodies or others, but enter the studio with the 'already givens' of a body's training and construction as a dancer and human subject. How the body has been constructed, combined with the choreographer's delimitation of the choreographic method, largely determines the field of possibilities for the process of a work's construction.

Dancing bodies are produced within Western cultural formations as highly stylised and coded bodies. They are constructed through the discourse of classes, rehearsals and performances belonging to specific genres of dance. Each dance technique maps the body in particular ways, demarcating its topography according to the philosophy and approach of the genre to which it belongs. Dempster (1988) describes the discourses which constitute the dancing body within the three dominant genres of Western Theatre Dance, modern, ballet and postmodern dance, and notes how each produces strongly contrasting conceptions of the body through divergent modes of representation and training. It follows from this that each of these genres can be seen to have a different relation to hierarchies of gender within dominant discourses and to produce sexual difference differently.

Ballet training for instance, is organised around the learning of set, codified movements within a highly disciplined and controlled, hierarchical environment. Dancers wear uniform tights and leotards emphasising their shape, they stand in rows evenly spaced and come across the floor in lines. Mirrors reinforce the emphasis on achieving a desired shape or line in relation to an external ideal. Training is sex-specific, in that it differentiates between the desired qualities of movement and styles
of execution for boys and girls, men and women. Adair (1992) notes an emphasis on grace, ease and lightness for girls, and virtuosity and strength for boys. These differentials reinforce rigid sex roles in the learning of roles from the classical repertory which emphasise heterosexual fantasies. This leads to the irony that, although the training undertaken by female classical dancers requires both strength and stamina, it is designed to equip them for roles representing female passivity, dependency and fragility. According to the feminist dance theorist Ann Daly, the classical ballerina represents an icon of femininity. Describing the ballet form as a powerful model of patriarchal ceremony, Daly argues that women involved in the genre forgoe their own agency through initiation into a patriarchal symbolic order (Daly 1987).

Training in modern dance varies widely, but tends to fall within a range of techniques following the traditions installed by various of its progenitors, Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Jose Limon, Mary Wigman, Gertrude Bodenwieser and Erick Hawkins for example. Although in its origins the expression of interior states was privileged over codified forms, most modern dance techniques now involve the learning of set exercises and movement forms. Some techniques, in particular those which follow the Ausdruckstanz tradition continue to cultivate improvisation as a primary tool for training. The modern dancer is assembled around being "centred", and through the location of her "solar plexus". The principles of modern dance practice are couched in oppositional terms, contraction and release, suspension and fall, 'high' dancing and 'low' dancing, and often rely on the laws of oppositional movement and succession. As a result of their training, modern dancers construct a particular image of the body,
for example the use of the torso as a pliable source for the initiation of "impuls" and "welle" gave me an image of it as a fan-like structure. The choice of subject matter and imagery in the work of female modern dance pioneers like Doris Humphrey, Martha Graham, Mary Wigman and Gertrude Bodenwieser and the predominance of women dancers in their companies attests to the female-centredness of the movement's heritage (Manning 1994; Cuckson 1970; Cohen 1972). However the codification of modern dance practices has more recently lead to training methods which are frequently as prescriptive as those of ballet, and the increased participation of men has led to the construction of choreographies representing and reinforcing the normative values of heterosexual narratives (Dempster 1988). The emphasis in modern dance practices on the expression of internal states, the 'landscape of the soul' as Martha Graham (1991) described it, and the training of the body according to fundamental laws, attests to the essentialist foundations of the movement. Given this, postmodern dance with its emphasis on the body, not as an eternal essence with a central core, but as an "organism in flux" is more likely to challenge and subvert our understanding of the world and in particular women's place within it (Dempster 1988 p48).

Dempster describes postmodern dance training as a process of deconstruction, involving the unlearning of the dancer's habitual patterning of neuro-muscular responses, skeletal alignment and physiological and perceptual processes. Accordingly, "the postmodern body is not a fixed, immutable entity, but a living structure which continually adapts and transforms itself" (Dempster 1988, p48).
Through postmodernism and the impact of new techniques for the control and production of the body the power accorded the modern dance body, through its essential core, its ‘centre’, has been re-distributed. Dance training is informed by methods enhancing body awareness, alignment and the efficiency of movement articulation such as Alexander technique, structural integration (Rolfing), Todd alignment, Feldenkrais technique, body-mind centering, anatomical release and contact improvisation. As Dempster states, "these body disciplines harness neurophysiological energies in pragmatic but powerfully transforming ways" (Dempster 1993, p18). Accordingly the dancing body is no longer organised around a central core but is related to as a skeletal frame, a web of connective tissue, or a bunch of cells. Power has been decentred through the construction of the postmodern dancing body.

Contemporary dancers train in a variety of techniques over years of study. Moving fluently between genres, as linguists of body movement, their bodies become repositories of dance codes and of ‘parent knowledges’. In my own experience, twelve years of training in the Bodenweiser technique has been supplemented by other modern dance ‘techniques’, Graham, Humphrey, Cunningham, Hawkins, Limon, as well as Afro-Brazilian dance and Bharata Natyam, the codes of which have been renegotiated through training in release alignment, contact improvisation, yoga, Feldenkrias, Alexander Technique and T’ai Chi. The combination of these techniques informs my movement style through which traces of all or some of the above may or may not be in evidence.

checklist
I stand on two feet with my eyes closed. My body wavers, I allow my weight to
settle around my breathing. I imagine my head moving forward and up off my spine and sense my back widening and lengthening. My legs, like trunks, spread roots below the floor. Toes spread, like webbed feet, my full body weight goes down through the floor, through the soles of my feet. My tail bone points to the floor, and my stomach is soft, relaxed, not held. My arms reach outward from the back, like wings, tipped with fingers spreading. Scapulas slide down my back. My joints are cushioned pads of air, opening and widening with each folding and unfolding. My rib ‘basket’ floats above the pelvis which is like a deep bowl of water. Breathing easily in a constant cyclical motion connecting the ‘insides’ with the ‘outsides’, my body reproduces itself. I open my eyes and keep my gaze fluid, not fixed.

To position oneself as a dancer is to ascribe to the ongoing demands of a dancers’ body for strength, flexibility, legibility of movement and biomechanical control. Trained into a variety of bodily techniques over years of study the dancing body, being malleable and changeable, is constantly reconfigured. Through training dancers acquire ‘checklists’ against which they can measure their body’s performance self-reflexively from one day to the next, by these means the experienced body is constantly being re-negotiated through the codes of dance discourses and in this way they become ‘marked’ as dancerly bodies.¹⁴

Although there is no singular type of dancing body most Western theatre dance genres contain a dominant ideal of what constitutes a ‘proper’ body for dance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>upright (straight)</th>
<th>thin</th>
<th>compact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>youthful</td>
<td>able-bodied</td>
<td>female/feminine</td>
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Susan Foster (1992) describes how dance training produces (at least) two kinds of bodies, whereas one is perceived experientially, the other is encountered as an external ideal. Whereas the perceived body relies upon visual, aural, olfactory, and haptic information and importantly proprioception and kinesthesia, the ideal body
dictates the size, shape and proportion of its zones as well as levels of accomplishment in movement execution. Both bodies are simultaneously constructed and mutually reinforcing.

The ideal dancing body is dominantly inscribed within culture, however it is a body which constantly eludes appropriation. We experience our bodies as lacking. As Foster describes:

The dancer pursues a certain technique for reforming the body, and the body seems to conform to the instructions given. Yet suddenly, inexplicably, it diverges from expectations, reveals new dimensions and mutely declares its unwillingness or inability to execute commands.

Foster 1992, p482.

If as a dancer I can experience the pleasure and liberatory potential of my body in the freefall of a movement improvisation, I can also experience my body as alienating and inadequate. Dancing is a confrontation with limits. In trying to reproduce a movement exactly and not succeeding, or in trying to execute a difficult movement and failing to do so, I glimpse at that which cannot be fully controlled, which exceeds its culturally imposed discursive limits, and I am forced to consider the effects of aging, illness, and injury, as well as the less definable alterations in body composition from one day to the next on my body-self relation. As Bordo states in relation to the discursive limits of postmodernism, "the appreciation of difference requires the acknowledgement of some limit to the dance, beyond which the dancer cannot go" (Bordo 1990, p145).

Inspite of the unstable fluctuations experienced through the body/self relation in
dancing, the logocentrism of language instals a false security in the containment of the body as object. Language pertaining to the body has constructed a whole regime of categories through which we come to know and construct bodily experience. The violence of language in relation to the body is its power to reduce, objectify and fragment according to schemas of understanding founded on its subordination to the reasoning mind.

Left side/right side, top/bottom, front/back, inside/outside: The schemata of the dancing body is hierarchically organised and divided. The rift between mind and body, so much a dominant dualism of Western thought, is given symbolic reinforcement in the language of dance discourses. The dancer's body is a 'tool', 'instrument', 'medium', 'machine', 'vehicle', or 'raw material'\textsuperscript{15}. The choreographer is 'master', 'maker', 'creator', the dancer 'his' muse. The idea of the body in dance as something that is 'manipulated', 'shaped', 'refined', 'controlled' and made to bear meaning, assumes its essential pre-existence as natural and outside history, reinforcing a mind/body split through legitimating the power of the choreographer as 'master signifier' of its inchoate actions. The body emerges in these discourses as a landscape awaiting mastery inscriptions: "Dance - or in other words, nature" (Regitz 1994, p35).

Living as we do under the "sign of Descartes" the body of the dancer is fetishised and objectified (see Acker 1993, p27). To be a dancer in this sense is to be all-body and no(one)body. Given this inheritance dancers, not wanting to be labelled, categorised and fixed within the exclusionary regulatory schemata of the 'Dancing
Body', can be seen to privilege the rarified spaces of their signifying practices 'beyond logos' or alternatively to align their actions with rationalist discourses. Smith (1992) resists the regulatory fictions of the Dancing Body by insisting upon its alignment with literacy and science:

Don’t call me a dancer, that two-dimensional, pointy-footed thing. Don’t call me a dancer; that mute, obedient, regimented thing.

Don’t say he’s a dancer unless you say he’s a dancer-thinker, dancer-writer, dancer-artisan, dancer-scientist.

It’s not a dancer’s body, its a gone for a run body. A walking down the street body, a making love body.

Smith 1992, p32.

As Smith makes clear, whilst dancers may strongly identify with their role as dancers, they exist within webs of identifications which pluralise the meanings of their bodies. Like Smith I recognise my own resistance to reductive definitions of what it is to be a dancer, in my insistence on naming a multiplicity of roles as "researcher, teacher, choreographer".

Dualistic concepts pervade the understanding of our bodies which we bring to our practice and are strongly evident in the language used to describe this experience. But for women, the construction of dance along a control axis through which the energies of bodily materiality are controlled and refined, has particular risks in relation to their objectification within dominant representations of culture. Throughout Western history women have been more vulnerable than men to forms of cultural manipulation of the body. Indeed the social control of the female body has been central to the maintainence of power relations between the sexes over the last
hundred years (Bordo 1988). Within patriarchal society woman is frequently regarded as an object, a 'mere' body, as Iris Marion Young states:

An essential part of the situation of being a woman is that of living the ever-present possibility that one will be gazed upon as a mere body, as shape and flesh that presents itself as the potential object of another subjects intentions and manipulations, rather than as a living manifestation of action and intentions.

Iris Marion Young 1990, p155.

Indeed, many women's preoccupation with their appearance, women paint, prune, shape, pluck and delipidate their bodies with ritualised regularity, making constant checks in mirrors and asking - "How do I look?" -, can be seen to reinforce their bodies status as object. Through this objectification women develop a sense of their body, not as a whole but as divided and fragmented. The body is talked about in terms of different parts, "problem areas", which are often referred to in the third person. As Coward states:

If the ideal shape has been pared down to a lean outline, bits are bound to stick out or hang down and these become problem areas. The result is that it becomes possible, indeed likely, for women to think about their bodies in terms of parts, separate areas, as if these parts had some separate life of their own.

Coward 1984, pp43-44.

Women's sense of their body as fragmented, provides a foundation for the body abuse which is rife within communities of young women and manifests itself most extremely in forms of starvation, binging and purging, extreme exercise and self-mutilation. A fragmented sense of self in this sense is foundational to an entirely masochistic or punitive attitude towards the body. Dance practices can reinforce these tendencies in some women, as they confront the ideal dance physique imposed through dominant
representations (Vincent 1979).

3.3 Typologies of ‘dance’

Dualistic conceptions are also evident in the ordering of movement into ‘types’ and in the constitution of categories of dance movement. Throughout the history of Western dance typologies of movement have been hierarchically categorised according to their perceived ability to enhance reason, facilitating transcendence rather than reinforcing the ‘messy’ materiality of bodies. As Roy Porter (1994) claims, throughout Western history we have expressed deeply ambivalent attitudes towards the body, denigrating its presence as mutable, gross, material liable to decay, by positing it in opposition to the perceived purity of the mind. The denigration of the body in Western history as inferior, evil, weak and as a liability to higher morality has had ramifications for Western theatre dance forms as hierarchies have been enforced through the demarcation of types of movement according their capacity to edify. Dances are ‘named’ through the exclusions of certain configurations of movement. From the time of Plato, a distinction has been made between what are perceived to be undisciplined and uncontrolled ‘spontaneous’ eruptions of physicality, and ‘graceful’, harmonious movements. Whereas the latter dances are described by Plato as of value because they reinforced civic values and were performed by citizens, the former, ‘common’ dances, were characterised as ugly and grotesque and were to be performed by slaves and prisoners as a deterrent in that they reminded good citizens of how not to behave (Plato, 1960).

distinguishes between dance movements which are "in harmony" with the body and those which, being dissonant and "convulsive", are "inharmonious". Whereas the former enobles "the motions of the more beautiful bodies", the latter "parodies" through distortions, the movement of "ugly bodies" (Sachs 1937/1963, pp17, 18). Hierarchical distinctions between movements correspond, within Sach's ordering, to hierarchies of space, so that whereas frenzied and convulsive dancing indicates an immersion in bodily being and through immanence self abnegation, harmonious dances offer the opportunity for transcendence through elevation.17

Dancers have also sought to 'elevate' their art form through emphasising its transcendent powers, distancing it from what are perceived to be popular, lewd or grotesque representations of physicality. Isadora Duncan found the ideal conditions for her dance in the tide of classical revivalism at the turn of the century. As Jowitt (1988) explains, Duncan sensibly capitalised on this interest as the dignity of Greek ideals and art ensured her dancing's distance from any associations with an overt sensuality. Making of her body a temple for the expression of intellectual and spiritual ideals, and dressing it in clothing which recalled Greek statuary, Duncan distanced audiences' perceptions of her dancing from sexualised readings. As Jowitt concludes: "For her contemporaries to find her dancing beautiful, they had to find it chaste" (1988, p87). Duncan's valorisation of the body assumed its innocence and purity, its natural will to goodness whilst, in the spirit of Delsartism, she recognised that certain kinds of movement degraded the essential wholeness of the body. Here the racial subtext of her position is most apparent as the Black Bottom and the Charleston were decried for their exaggerated use of the hips. Duncan's vision of
'America dancing' is located through exclusions, in particular of movements popularly associated with the black jazz dance styles of the period. Duncan locates her dance aesthetic through the negation of a set of 'other' movement styles:

It would have nothing to do with the sensual lilt of the jazz rhythm: it would be like the vibration of the American soul striving upward, through labour to harmonious life. Nor had this dance I visioned any vestige of the Foxtrot or the Charleston - rather was it the living leap of the child springing toward the heights, towards its future accomplishment, towards a new great vision of life that would express America.


The 'chain' of women dancing which Duncan's writing evokes is lodged within narratives of ethnocentrism, and is dependent upon the exclusion of otherness. Hortense Spiller's (1984) explanation of how white Western women's art making relies upon the symbolic oppression of black female experience can be applied in this context to a reading of Duncan's dance aesthetic. As Spiller's sees it, the experience of slavery relegated black women to "the marketplace of the flesh", this overdetermination of black women and sexuality lodged them as, "the principal point of passage between the human and non-human world", the black woman thus came to signify the distinction between humanity and "other", to be black in this sense is to be "vestibular to culture" (Spillers 1984, p76). In order to assert the dignity of her dance movement, Duncan aligned herself with a phallocentric inheritance through Hellenic idealism. Her self-representation, in evoking a transcendent image of the female dancer, can thus be said to have relied on a set of cultural exclusions and suppressions within which the image of the black female dancer can be seen to figure. This view complicates feminist readings of her work as it underlines the contradictions and paradoxes of white women's assertions of their cultural agency.
within the early feminist period. Typologies of dance movement fix and reify motilities into hierarchies so that what counts as dance movement becomes narrowly defined, as is evident from the example of Duncan's dance aesthetic, this contributes not only to the construction of sexual difference, but also racial difference.

Significantly, new dance genres are often heralded with claims of expanding what counts as dance movement. Ausdruckstanz flourished in Central Europe between the two world wars and in many senses opened dance to a new permissiveness in relation to the coding of the dancer's body. Bodenwieser, like Mary Wigman, stressed the importance of not restricting dance movement to its customary associations with "grace" and "beauty", but insisted on an expanded definition of beauty to include the heavy, strong and even grotesque movements which her dancers were encouraged to represent, as she described it, "grace, which was formerly held to be the essential thing in dancing, is an absolute limitation to the conception of beauty, restricting it only to the neat and dainty" (Bodenwieser quoted in Dunlop MacTavish 1987, p20). These new possibilities for dance movement were explored in heavy, strong and 'low' movements for example in the spate of "grotesque" dances to emerge in this period. Doris Humphrey also saw the potential for a modern dance practice which validated dissonance as a legitimate movement expression. She described the modern choreographer as engaging, "models of dynamic equilibrium; units running, falling, leaping, whirling, not disintegrating but always balancing out into a logical continuity of creative line" as well as "Disharmony - staggering drunkenly through a group where freedom means anarchy, and the conflicting elements do not yield to logic and reason" (Humphrey in Brown 1979, pp62-63).
Deborah Hay is one choreographer from the Judson Dance Theater generation to have tackled this issue within a postmodern cultural context. Through her dance practice she seeks to expand the parameters of movement to encompass the exclusions through which dance is customarily defined. In the workshop brochure for The Connected Body? Conference, she wrote the following:

The premise for this workshop is that there is no one way to dance. To identify dance as flow, line, technique or beauty in motion, is to minimise it. This workshop will explore dance as chaos, meditation, madness, motion, stillness, song and storytelling.


The codes and conventions of dance discourses mark the body in specific ways. Habits of motion circumscribe our perceived physical and psychical limits and locate the body within gendered and racial categories. A feminist dance practice needs to adopt a self-critical awareness of how specific styles of motility conflate with gendered categories of movement, and how the legacies of our practices are implicated in exclusionary regimes in constituting a specific field of movement possibilities as 'dance'.

3.4 Postmodern bodies

The excessive marking of the boundaries of the dancer's body in order to make it thoroughly visible subjects it to mechanisms of internal and external surveillance, reinforcing the idea that she is her body. The visual economy of postmodern dance practices has however shifted attention from an emphasis on mirrored images of external shapes to specularised images of organs, cells and bone structures. Postmodern techniques privilege the experience of embodiment over the visual image.
(Dempster 1993). But the gaze turned inwards can be both liberating and enervating. The risk is that an emphasis on the internal sensing of weight, alignment and fascia ignores the social and cultural markings of the body. Postmodern dance techniques may give dancers the sense of a connected body, resolving the Cartesian split, but for women who continue to be read as 'Woman' within representation, this can lead to a kind of myopic vision. As Roy Porter has stated (1994), before we can get to a "connected body" we have 2,000 years of intellectual and cultural obstacles to overcome.

Part of the legacy of the Western dualist inheritance is the schism between interior and exterior. The postmodern body which is responsive to both internal and external stimuli can work to override this opposition. The image of the body as Möbius strip, in which outside is continuous with inside, and inside with outside, is helpful in this regard in locating a postmodern construction of the body which goes beyond the limitations of dualist distinctions.

Postmodernism as a cultural practice enables the dancer to have 'eyes' on the inside and outside as she can operate various interrogative techniques to think through the body, emancipating it from training in dominant techniques, such as ballet and modern dance with their hierarchical and essentialist assumptions; whilst looking outside to see how her practice as a dancer/performer and concomitant construction of self, intersects with configurations of power through social formations and cultural institutions. No longer bound to the representation of a specific technique, but capable of working across the codes of various genres and practices, the postmodern
dancer is engaged in a self-reflexive process in the construction of the stylistics of her
dancing subjectivity. However in doing so she is forced to negotiate the framing of
her dance representation within the legacies of a phallocentric inheritance. Of
particular importance in this regard is her self-representation within the dualistic
framework set up through the conventions of the apparatus of performance. Feminist
informed dance practices cannot afford to assume the givenness of the body but must
consider the ways in which dancing bodies are constructed, maintained and
engendered through training and performance and through the interrelated social
nexus of gender formation. The political in dance means rescinding a dualist heritage
which figures the dancer as an object - as tool, instrument, or muse - and locating her
subjectivity, not within the fixed categorisations of rationalist thought but within a
postmodern sensibility where it retains its mobility in a capacity to move 'otherwise'
as a subject-in-process without-a-fixed-identity.

Notes

1. Two recent conferences on women and dance addressed feminist concerns: The 'Women in Dance Symposium' (Yorkshire Dance Centre 18-20 February, 1994), Redressing the Sylph, aimed to provide, "a gathering to celebrate the energy, power and achievements of women in all areas of dance; and a forum to redefine the aesthetics of beauty in dance and the inter-related questions of power" (Symposium Brochure, Yorkshire Dance Centre and West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds 1994). Organisers for the CORD Conference, 3-6 November 1994 at Texas Women's University, Engendering Dance, Engendering Knowledge: Dance, Gender and Interdisciplinary Dialogues in the Arts, made the claim, "dance provides the medium, feminism provides the perspective and together they voice a new reality". Christy Adair's, Women and Dance: Sylphs and Sirens (1992) and Helen Thomas's edited collection, Dance, Gender and Culture (1993), have substantially opened the debates within dance discourses to the possibilities for feminist perspectives in dance analysis and criticism, appreciation and construction.
2. Though many of these suspicions were challenged by the dance practices of Judson Dance Theatre and subsequent forms of postmodern dance, as Adshead-Lansdale (1993/94) and Copeland (1993) make evident many dance practitioners continue to maintain ambivalent attitudes towards theory.


4. For example, citing Kirstein (1969), Banes states how mistakes made in the casting of roles for the ballet, *The Defense of Paradise*, were implicated in the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew and the civil war in France which followed; also how *Swan Lake* and *The Sleeping Beauty* acted as "cautionary tales" for the demise of late nineteenth century Russian imperial society. As examples of the impact of dance trends within social history Banes observes the perpetuation of racist stereotypes through the black and white minstrel floorshows; the impact of Isadora Duncan's dance practices upon the development of physical culture in the Soviet Union; the role of balletic training in installing socially sanctioned etiquette within the upper and middle classes; the introduction of the waltz as a possible source of a shift in the spaces of intimacy; and the impact of Elvis Presley in inspiring alternative configurations of deportment amongst white youth in the fifties and sixties (Banes 1994).

5. This statement was made in the context of a speech made at the Birmingham Theatre Conference and summarised for an article in *The Guardian* on the apparent decline in political theatre in Britain. Billington proposed the need to specifically address the form and content of political theatre, to re-examine the subversive potential of the small-scale play (given the economic hardship experienced by many companies), and finally the need to reassert the power and subtlety of language, rather than searching for new and what he perceived as suspect forms of synthesis. It was in relation to the final point, no doubt referencing the upsurge in physical theatre and dance theatre practices, that he made his contentious statement on the apoliticism of dance. For responses to this see Kozel (1994b) and Brinson (1994).

6. Social realism or de Neue Sachlichkeit emerged in the mid 1920s in Central Europe as a reaction against the perceived excesses of Expressionism. It sought to redefine art according to social principles. Bodenwieser related this movement to the aims of her own work: "Tired of these boundless revelations of the ego we turned our eyes again to the realities of life. Art arrived at a new form of realism, a realism that had gone through Expressionism, that gave us facts only to let us feel what lies behind those facts and what thoughts
they suggest" (Bodenwieser in Cuckson 1970, p32). The work of Kurt Jooss can also be considered within this context.

7. Nancy Stark Smith describes the 'Gap' as "this momentary suspension of a reference point" and "Where you are when you don't know where you are ....a place from which more directions are possible than anywhere else...." (in Cooper Albright 1991, p31).

8. Derrida's distinction between the silent work of art and the taciturn work of art is helpful here. He distinguishes between the two terms, "taciturnity is the silence of something that can speak, whereas we call mutism the silence of a thing that can't speak" (Derrida 1994, p12). The silent work of art has traditionally within Western culture been subordinate to the discursive or musical arts. This is because, "there exists, on the side of the mute work of art, a place, a real place from the perspective of which and in which, words find their limit" (Derrida 1994, p13). This is not to deny the power of linguistic mediation in constructing meaning but to recognise the limits of the discursive realm. Dancers and choreographers, in choosing to privilege movement over speech can be regarded as taciturn rather than silent and can themselves adopt this position in defiance of the hegemonic power of the logocentric realm.

9. Marianne Goldberg (1987/88) in an issue of Women and Performance, entitled "The Body as Discourse" edits a collection of articles which explore precisely this interface. In particular her article, "Ballerinas and Ball Passing" in mapping trajectories of her own and others inheritances of inscriptions from dance practices as well as the social, political and economic discourses through which these are mediated, explores a multiplicity of constructions of woman as dancer, threading these through with her own mobile presence. Goldberg's analysis operates within a feminist appropriation of Foucault's notion of 'discourse analysis'. As such it is concerned with the discursive formation, that is the systematic interconnections between an array of practices which delimit a field of dance knowledge, including what it enables and what it conceals.

10. Hilda Holger continues this tradition. Holger was a former member of the Bodenwieser Tanzgruppe in Vienna, and a solo recitalist during the 1920s and 1930s. She fled from Vienna in 1939 and spent the following ten years in Bombay where she established her own dance school. In the 1950s she moved to London and established the Hilda Holger School of Contemporary Dance. Her classes begin with a series of movement exercises which emphasise stength and flexibiity, often using the bar as a dynamic partner. The primary emphasis in classwork is on improvisations, frequently involving props, hoops, bars and sticks, and images for example drawn from animal behaviour.
Holger's classes continue a legacy of modern expressive dance which began in Central Europe before the second world war but which lost momentum as a result of Nazism and the diaspora and annihilation of many of its key figures. See Holger (1990).

11. Delsartism provided modern dance with three principal elements: the law of oppositional movement; the law of natural succession; and the law of harmonic positions. Bodenwieser (1970) describes these as universal laws, central to her construction of a modern dance aesthetic. Laban (1948) in his theories of modern educational dance also sought to establish fundamental principles of movement; see for example his sixteen basic movement themes.

12. Hilary Napier, a former dancer in the Bodenwieser Tanzgruppe describes "impuls" as a sudden movement initiated through the diaphragm and emanating through the shoulders and head. "Welle" or wave began through an awareness of the solar plexus swelling backwards in a continuous motion extending through the knees and back. A 'low dancer' or tief tanzerin kept her 'centre' close to the floor and possessed a grounded, weighted quality in her movement. This was contrasted to a 'high dancer', or hoh tanzerin, whose 'centre' was higher towards the sternum and whose movement qualities were expanded upwards and outwards away from the floor. (Conversation with Hilary Napier 12/11/94). These movement elements can be seen to relate to many of Laban's movement principles which had a significant impact on the development of European modern dance. See for example Preston (1963) for an account of these. Also see Manning (1994) for a description of the movement principles in Mary Wigman's dance practice.

13. The term 'parent knowledges' is borrowed from Alice Walker. In The Temple of My Familiar (1989) she emphasises the importance of listening to the ancestral voices of the past. Humm (1994) describes the multi-vocal and polyphonal writing which this emphasis gives rise to in combining "the spiritual narratives of people speaking in tongues, historical accounts, autobiography and dreams" and "a refusal to represent women's bodies, heterosexual practices, racial and sexual violence from any particular perspective" (Humm 1994, p183).

14. See Dupuy (1993) on the problematic assumptions which go with these 'markings' for instance through the stereotyping of a dancer's behaviour.

15. See for example, Claudin Guerrier (1993) who describes the choreographer-performer relation as a hierarchical relation of power; Eva van Schaik (1993) who describes the rigour and rigidity of dance training as making the dancer
susceptible to exploitation; and Jock Abra (1987-88) who sees as masochistic the pursuit of perfection within dance training regimes and modes of production.

16. This is most evident in the Church's attitudes towards the activity of dancing. Whereas in certain periods of the Church's history dances which emphasised grace and harmony were permissible as they were viewed as facilitating the divine interweaving of the ring-dances of the heavens, in other periods dancing was condemned as pagan, licentious and overtly 'feminine'. For example, the denigration of dance was described by Isidor (560-636) as directly related to the feminisation of dance rites: "These miserable creatures, and, what is worse, some of the faithful, assumed monstrous forms and transformed themselves into wild shapes; others womanized their masculine faces and made female gestures - all romping and stamping in their dances and clapping their hands, and, what is still more shameful, both sexes dance together in the ring-dance" (Isidor in Backman 1977, p35).

17. Using nineteenth century evolutionary theories, Sachs assumes a correlation between societies shift from convulsive to harmonious dance forms and the 'advance' of civilizations. For instance he describes how North American Indians have moved "beyond" the frenzied convulsive dancing which is associated with shamanism. The chronology of Sachs history reinforces this point as it moves from so-called "primitive" dances of non-Western cultures to consideration of a lineage of Western dance forms beginning with the Classical period through to the nineteenth century. Sach's global generalisations about the source and function of dance reveals a pervasive ethnocentric bias.
Part Two: Addressing the Problematics

Chapter 4 The Politics of Representation: celebrating or deconstructing 'women'

4.1 'Images of women'
4.2 Woman as *marked marker*
4.3 The politics of experience
4.4 Woman as 'unrepresentable'
4.5 The reproduction of desire through the apparatus of performance
4.6 The limits of representation
Chapter 4

The Politics of Representation: Celebrating or deconstructing 'women'

4.1 Images of 'women'

They [women] exchange scraps of games that have already been played. They rarely invent new games, their games.

Irigaray in Whitford 1991b, p152.

Women, as women, as incarnations of the myth of Woman do not produce culture.

Gallop 1988, p71.

The absence of women from dominant constructions of culture has been an enduring feminist concern. Feminists have exposed the systematic dominance of patriarchy within culture, "its institutions and ideologies of production and reception, its regimes of representation, and its formal and textual characteristics" (Wolff 1990, p68). It is an issue which has largely been addressed through women's attempts to challenge existing representations through critique, and through cultural invention which broadens the kinds of representations offered. Female-centred art criticism and practice has sought to emphasise the continuity and unity of women's creativity and responded to the silencing of women's creative voices throughout history through the retrieval and celebration of their lives and their endeavours. In doing so feminists have challenged male-defined terms and values in art practice and the perceived history of art forms. Alexandra Carter's recent PhD thesis, Winged and Shivering: Images of Women in the Alhambra and Empire Ballets 1884-1915 (1993) is a good example of work in dance history which seeks to locate the significance of the marginalised 'other', in this instance the corps de ballet of the music halls, in relation to late nineteenth century and early twentieth century constructions of femininity. As
Carter points out, overlooked by the balletomania which highlights the 'stars' of the ballet system, these women's lives provide significant insights into the activities of working class women on the fringes of the artistic establishment. Within a contemporary context, the activities of the New York based Guerilla Girls, as high profile agitators of the conscience of the artistic establishment, are also a good example of the effectiveness of interventionist strategies which declare the presence of women artists. The Guerilla Girls are a radical feminist group of art activists who dress in Guerilla disguise and make high profile acts of intervention in the male-dominated artistic establishment, highlighting evidence of racism and sexism in curators’ selections for exhibitions and in the collections of major art galleries through billboards, posters, media appearances and installations (Gablik 1994). Both of these examples of feminist interventions can be regarded as challenges to the structural sexism of the histories and traditions of artistic disciplines.

The histories of women's experiences and women's representations of those experiences have traditionally been viewed by feminists as legitimating alternative ways of knowing, moving and seeing to those dominantly inscribed within phallocentric discourses. This follows the claim made by Harding and Hintakka that:

What counts as knowledge must be grounded on experience. Human experience differs according to the kinds of activities and social relations in which humans engage. Women's experience systematically differs from the male experience upon which knowledge claims have been grounded. Thus the experience on which the prevailing claims to social and natural knowledge are founded is, first of all, only partial human experience, only partially understood: namely masculine experience as understood by men.

Harding and Hintakka 1983, px.
Within the feminist movement different kinds of vocal and visual representations, often grouped under the term, 'Images of Women' have functioned as mediations on women's experiences, reinforcing their claims of oppression and marginalisation and contributing to their self-identification within the feminist movement. The vaginal iconography of visual artists such as Judy Chicago, in which the marks of 'otherness' are celebrated, affirms the historical presence of women in history and their cultural specificity whilst encouraging women's self knowledge. In The Dinner Party (1979), Chicago set a table for great women of history using representations of the labia and vagina as place settings (Tickner 1987). In the dance theatre work Grace and Glitter (1987) co-directed by Emilyn Claid and Maggie Semple, for a company which at that time consisted solely of women, Extemporary Dance Theatre, the performers shared their experiences of gender, race and class in the making of dances which sought to challenge idealised images of women through the representation of their "real experiences" (Adair 1992, p204). Adair documented the collective process involved in the making of this work:

Throughout the creative process of Grace and Glitter the dancers read, took notes and talked about their own experiences of these issues, and from this starting point created dance phrases and theatrical scenes which were later structured. Through this way of working the dancers retained their power and had a voice. The work also had repercussions in their own lives. Ideas and theory began to make a different kind of sense and became practice.

Adair 1992, p205.

The resulting vignettes of experience explored issues such as power and pleasure, in what made women feel good about themselves - in particular in how they dressed, walked and postured - and in how they occupied space, encouraging a view of women unbounded from the customary constraints of feminine embodiment (see
Young 1990 and Barkty 1992). Other dances in this work explored intimacy between women, between sisters and between friends, in spaces of closeness such as bathrooms. These images recalled Urban Bush Women’s classic, The Girlfriends (1986). In this dance four women appear on stage dressed in their nightrobes as if ‘staying over’ for a pajama party. In silence they mime and gesture, teasing and taunting each other, laughing and slapping as they playfully interact, in slow-motion and in regular time. When I saw this piece recently at the Hackney Empire in London as part of the Dance Umbrella Festival (17 October 1994), I shared in the hilarity of their secrets and conspiratorial gleefulness. One of the more outrageous moments in the dance occurs when one of the dancers drops her robe, not to reveal the conventions of pajamas or nightie which the other women wear, but to reveal her red ‘teddy’ (a one-piece lingerie combining camisole and underpants). Shaking her body in an explosion of laughter she completely mocks her ‘set-up’ in a self-parody which de-eroticises the ‘teddy’s’ customary associations.

These representations may be viewed in the context of women artists’ search for authentic modes of expression through the experiences of their racialised and gendered bodies. The politics of the personal, that is women’s experiences of being positioned female within society, have led women to assert themselves through their art, for instance, by declaring that this is my relationship to my body, this is my relationship to my children, this is how I feel about the environment, this is my experience of being black. But as Chadwick (1989) explains, feminist representations of bodily experience often tell us more about how patriarchy has territorialised the female body as an object of exchange between men, than about essential experiences.
of being female. Women's attempts to celebrate the female body for example, can be read as pornography by some male viewers.

4.2 Woman as *marked marker*

The drive to increase women's visibility and presence within cultural texts is problematised by poststructuralist feminist critiques of the apparatus of representation which have revealed how sexual difference has been concretised and naturalised in the depiction of women, and how the category of 'woman' is constructed as 'sign' and 'object par excellence' through the subordination of the female body (Cowie 1978). For though feminists may seek to celebrate and affirm women's pleasure and power through the performance of their bodies, feminist theorising, in particular the critique of representation, problematises the assumption that increasing women's visibility as agents of culture is necessarily liberatory. This debate centres around the issue of how women can take a place within the symbolic realm - be that through literary, theatrical, visual, or choreographic modes of cultural production - given that such an intervention requires women to assume a subject position within phallocentric models of power.

Being a feminist involves 'taking up a position' within the symbolic order and 'naming' one's standpoint. Through 'naming' we enter social and gendered identities, as 'Woman', 'Dancer' and 'Pakeha' (white New Zealander) for instance, locating our subjectivity within gendered and racialised identity frameworks. What is at stake in this process however is the violence of reductive definitions as being 'named' is both enabling and paralysing. The dilemma which feminist artists encounter in relation
to this issue can be described in the context of Moi's claim that whilst "it still remains politically essential for feminists to defend women as women in order to counteract the patriarchal oppression that precisely despises women as women" - that is women need to define their identity, their specificity as women - how can this be enabled without assuming the patriarchal metaphysical framework of gender identities from which feminists seek to escape (1985, p13)? That is, the female artist, in daring to speak 'as a woman', relies upon structures of representation which are 'always already' gendered. This is the point which du Plessis makes when she states,

A woman, while always a real, if muted or compromised, or bold and unheard, or admired but forgotten (etc), speaker in her own work is most often a cultural artifact in any of the traditions of meaning on which she draws.

du Plessis 1990, p141.

Similarly, Wolff exposes the difficulties in locating a feminist art practice through the representation of women and their experiences without assuming the baggage of a masculinist inheritance:

What becomes clear is the formal and conventional impossibility of a feminist heroine, of an ideologically subversive plot, or of a female body perceived without all the connotations and meanings of a patriarchal system of representation and meaning.

Janet Wolff 1990, p69.

For women to locate themselves within the Symbolic order involves negotiating the slippage between women as historical agents and Woman as eternal Other. Teresa de Lauretis makes a clear distinction between these two understandings of the term. She describes 'Woman', as the foundational ground of dominant discourses and as:
a fictional construct, a distillate from diverse but congruent discourses dominant in Western cultures (critical and scientific, literary or juridical discourses), which works as both their vanishing point and their specific condition of existence...woman, the other-from-man (nature and Mother), site of sexuality and masculine desire, sign and object of men's social exchange, is the term that designates at once the vanishing point of our culture's fictions of itself and the condition of the discourses in which the fictions are represented. For there would be no myth without a princess to be wedded, or a sorceress to be vanquished, no cinema without the attraction of the image to be looked at, no desire without an object, no kinship without incest, no science without nature, no society without sexual difference.

de Lauretis 1984, p5.

Manifestations of Her are found in 'woman as icon', 'woman as image', 'woman as sign', 'woman as object par excellence'. De Lauretis positions this construction of 'Woman' within phallogocentrism, in relation to historically specific 'women', whom she describes as, "the real historical beings who cannot as yet be defined outside of those discursive formations, but whose material existence is nonetheless certain" [italics mine] (1984, pp5-6). De Lauretis describes how these two categories of woman are not reducible to a one-to-one relation of identity, but can be considered in the context of an arbitrary relation in flux. The relation between the notion of woman as constituted in hegemonic discourses, and women as historical subjects is culturally set up and it is part of the task of feminism to unravel the "epistemological models, the presuppositions and the implicit hierarchies of value that are at work in each discourse and each representation of woman" (de Lauretis 1984, p6).

4.3 The politics of experience

The feminist project of "making experience visible" has been to the foreground of women's knowledge claims in locating the specificity of the female subject (Scott
1992, p25). As an axiomatic concept for feminism, experience subtends discussions on subjectivity, sexuality, the body and feminist cultural practices. The politics of the personal, thus become the site of redefinitions of patriarchal values, in particular in relation to the content of cultural artifacts. Representations of ‘women’s experiences’ are revered within this context as a privileged route to disclosing the truth, the authenticity of being a woman, and for making visible the previously hidden ‘other’, contributing towards a more inclusive culture. Notions of representation, subjecthood and experience have however been extensively reconceptualised within the postmodern critical context of current feminist thought.

The workings of ideology through experience are exposed by feminist criticism, in particular the tendency towards the essentialising of identity and the reification of the subject through its usage as a term (Scott 1992). The problematic for feminist performers in working with aspects of ‘experience’ can therefore be said to revolve around the issue of how to represent ‘the personal’ without engaging a set of essentialist presuppositions through which categories of identity become naturalised. Given the legacy of associations attached to the appearance of the female body within performance, the use of personal experience as a route to undercutting patriarchal definitions of femininity becomes problematic.

The use of personal experience as a resource for dance making is a relatively common practice within the history of twentieth century theatre dance. Artists such as Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, Mary Wigman, Gertrude Bodenwieser and Doris Humphrey, used their own bodies in constructing self-representations which combined
mythic and historical themes with the felt experience of daily life (see Chapters 2.6).

The contemporary call for young choreographers to find their own 'vision' or 'choreographic voice' has its antecedents in early modern dance makers emphasis on 'making visible the interior landscape' (Martha Graham), and 'moving from the inside out' (Doris Humphrey). These views express a foundational notion of experience, one which assumes the truthfulness of the motional impulses of the body following Martha Graham's contention that, "movement never lies" (1963, p53.)

With their stress on the return of the 'real' female body to women, early modern dance practitioners saw their bodies as vectors of experience, their own and the shared experiences of women throughout history. Martha Graham's work for example reflected her interest in integrating the personal and universal experience of women through archetypal imagery. Drawing on Jungian notions of archetypes as emblematic of a universal collective unconscious, Graham's use of myth constituted a metaphorical device for speaking about female experience perceived as universal. Her attraction to archetypal images of womanhood constituted a search for, "The Woman-soul. The Immortal woman in woman" (Duncan quoted in Jowitt 1988, p206). In seeking to re-create the archetypal woman in herself through dancing, Graham sought to make sense of the world and her experience in it. It was however a double edged endeavour as in affirming the historical and mythical personages of woman and connecting them with her own historical agency as a woman, she coded her dancing body with the object-like status of 'woman as icon'. As Susan Manning explains, for both Mary Wigman and Graham "their mythologizations of the female functioned in part to work out their own conflicts as women" (1991, p15).
The work of Pina Bausch, as a contemporary choreographer who relies almost exclusively on representations of personal experience for the generation of her choreographic material, provides a good example of the contradictions inherent in representations of the 'personal' within a postmodern cultural context. Müller and Servos describe Bausch’s Tanztheater as "a theatre of experience" in which subjective fears, desires and identities are explored (1984, p13).

Bausch constructs her dances through assembling fragments of experience extracted from her dancers responses to particular questions (Servos 1984). Renate Klett (1984) describes how, in rehearsal for Kontakthof (1978), the dancers were asked to stand up and demonstrate their "complexes". To the accompaniment of loud circus music, the dancers crossed the room, stopping in the middle to, "hide double chins or wide hips, a nose too big or breasts too small. The tall ones make themselves shorter; the short ones, taller", accumulating their "complexes" until they can no longer move (Klett 1984, p13). Bausch selects and extracts fragments of these representations and manipulates and stylises them within specific contexts. Dislocated from their originating source in the performers’ subjective responses their meanings become pluralised, encouraging the audience to engage with the action on stage through identificatory processes (Müller and Servos 1984).

Bausch has a reputation as a choreographer who literally wrestles with aspects of gendered experience, both affirming and subverting sedimented gender constructs within dominant culture. But the contradictory nature of her ‘theatre of experience’ positions her work in ambivalent relation to feminism as is evident in the divergent
reponses of critics to the question of politics within her oeuvre. Whereas Servos (1984) credits Bausch with making effective social comment, Kaplan (1987) challenges this view with claims that Bausch denies women their agency by decontextualising their experiences and representing a biological determinism in the portrayal of 'woman as victim'. Adair counter-poses these arguments with her analysis of Bausch's choreographed constructions - of women's power, "for example, as mothers", of gender instability, in the confused boundaries between male and female, and in her deconstructions of the display and glamour typically associated with performance - as feminist in character (Adair 1992, pp208-209). Sanchez-Colberg (1993) similarly, through her analysis of Bausch's work, locates strategies of feminism in an emphasis on personal experience, in the representation of the body's mutability and disorder, and in exchanges of gender through cross-dressing.

The ambiguity of response to a feminist reading of Bausch's choreography exposes one of the main difficulties for women choreographers in representing the lived experience of the feminine body subject, that however real a speaking and moving subject a woman is within performance, she is always forced to negotiate the phallomorphic construction of the symbolic order within which she is represented. Representations of "my body" in this sense risk the over-determination of femininity in the imaging of "the" female body outside the positively marked, logocentric realm of 'speech-acts', and in the domain of the natural. Given this heritage, the options for feminist inscriptions of 'experience' which do not also in some way reinforce essentialist categorisations of 'woman' would appear slim, for the three contingent dimensions of corporeality - anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance
collapse around the figure of the woman dancer representing her experience 'as a woman', inadvertently sustaining and reinforcing fictional constructions of feminine gender as immutable fact.

Given this, it would appear that an uncritical reliance on 'experience' as a vehicle for resourcing choreography fails to address the legacy of Enlightenment thought in shaping the perceptions and frameworks through which the term is understood. For if gender is a cultural product, it cannot be assumed that women's representations of their experiences are 'authoritative' (Barrett 1986). Realist modes of performance in the representation of experience may in this sense have the effect of naturalising meanings attached to socially dominant positions. Such a view recognises that conceptualisations of experience bring with them certain ontological commitments such as "designation of objects in the world, allocation of subjects and objects and so on" (Whitford 1991a, p54). In this sense notions of experience are not innocent and even our most assumed understandings of concepts such as those of space and time may be masculine in construction (Hermann 1980).

A further feminist critique of the representation of experience comes from the realisation that in proclaiming the specificities of women's experience, some voices have been louder than others, so that in affirming "our" identities as 'women' the voices of 'others' are excluded. As Elizabeth Spelman (1990) argues, the tendency within the women's movement to collectivise experience under a universal entity obscures the heterogeneity of women and excludes the study of the significance of women's differences. In this sense we need to ask "whose stories are told and what
bodies are silenced in this process of inscription" (Dempster 1988, p37). For as Elspeth Probyn states, "in creating our own centers and our own locals, we tend to forget that our centers displace others into the peripheries of our making" (Probyn in Nicholson 1990, p176). The collectivising of experience under the category 'woman', has in this context been extensively challenged through the charge of universalism.

4.4 Woman as 'unrepresentable'

Arguments in favour of realist modes of representation by women are challenged by Irigaray's critique of the feminine as 'unrepresentable'. Irigaray theorises the feminine as the unspeakable condition of the Symbolic in her argument that women "cannot fully appear within the logic of phallocentric representation, a logic whose metaphors reproduce men as singular subjects" (Phelan 1993a, p24). Woman is, in this sense, the necessary negation of the male subject and as such is repressed within the dominant symbolic order. Subjectivity is denied to woman as even when she submits herself to representation she is "subjecting herself to objectivization in discourse - by being "female", in this sense "any theory of the "subject" has always been appropriated by the "masculine"" (Irigaray 1985a, p133).

Irigaray differs from other feminist philosophers who have traditionally sought to show how the feminine has been figured as matter, materiality, body, whereas men have been aligned with rationality and the mastery of the body through her argument that the feminine is what is excluded by such a binarism. She takes up de Beauvoir's idea of the 'Other' but develops it further, so that it becomes 'Other' of the 'Same'.

100
The "realm of the Same" or the "realm of Semblance" resides in the "hom(m)osexual" economy of men, in which women function as objects of exchange. As the material substratum of men's theories, languages and transactions, women is signified as ‘house’ or ‘container’, as receptacle for masculine inventions of femininity. Accordingly it is not possible to 'know' woman other than as phallic feminine, as woman perceived by man. It follows from this that when women are represented within the phallic economy this is the condition of their erasure (Tong 1989). The feminine is understood in this way as the unspeakable condition of philosophy and representation.

Following Irigaray's conceptualisation of the feminine, women are the supports of representation but cannot speak their representation, or assume their subjecthood. At issue for Irigaray therefore, is the creating of a place from which women can speak as women. In other words, women are "homeless" within the symbolic order. The task which feminists must therefore address is that of providing women with an imaginary and symbolic space through which to enact their identity without it being subsumed within the phallocratic order. Whitford describes this dilemma as:

How to give women an imaginary and symbolic home, how to introduce sexual difference into the symbolic economy, by giving women an identity so that there are two interrelating economies, without falling back into identity as sameness.

Whitford 1991a, p136.

Such a position requires moving beyond the dualist framework of subject and object positions in negotiating 'other' possibilities for the reinvention of the symbolic. An overt emphasis on personal experience, in relying on subject definitions from within...
a phallicomorphic order, may in this context inhibit feminists capacity to envisage new sites of inscription and forms appropriate to the becoming-woman of embodied subjectivity.

4.5 The reproduction of desire through the apparatus of performance

For feminist performers who work through their bodies, one response to the impossibility of the feminine taking a place within the symbolic has been an attempt to retrieve and locate a prediscursive body, that is a body which is not immured in overdeterminations as a site of sex and pleasure for 'others' (Hart 1993). But as Doane (1981) explains the "ideological complicity" of the concept of the natural denies the possibility of a "nostalgic return to the unwritten body" (Doane 1981, p24). Efforts to free the female body from its saturation with sexuality, through attempts to return the 'real' female body to women, flounder within the representational apparatus of performance. As Lynda Hart states:

The female body on stage is easily received as iconic, seemingly less arbitrary than a linguistic sign, and even more so than photographic or televsual images, exceptionally susceptible to naturalization. Indeed, the female body on stage appears to be the "thing itself," incapable of mimesis, afforded not only no distance between sign and referent but, indeed, taken for the referent.

Hart 1993, p5.

The apparatus of theatre performance is of primary importance in considering a feminist politics of dance because it is through the representational framing of the dance that the conditions for its reception are installed, thus determining the field of possibilities for the reproduction of desire and sexual difference.
The framing of the dance is what sets it apart as a performance event; defining the viewer's role, and locating the work within specific cultural parameters, such as the genre to which it belongs. Feminist performers have identified the relationship established with an audience as key to considerations of subject/object roles within representation. In particular the power structure which is set up through the apparatus of performance, where representation is dependent upon visibility, has been extensively theorised by feminist film theorists interpretations of post-Freudian analysis of the scopic drive.

Theories of the male gaze have made a significant contribution to our understanding of how sexual difference is produced through representation and how seeing and power are entwined in the positions of spectator and performer. Laura Mulvey's, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in describing how pleasure is structured through the idea of woman as signifier for the male other, was a landmark essay in this regard. Mulvey described the fetishistic scopophilia which denied woman her agency in the filmic narrative:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness.

Mulvey 1975, p11.

Mulvey's thesis, that voyeurism is masculine and exhibitionism is feminine, emerges through a feminist appropriation of post-Freudian and Lacanian ideas about the role of vision in the construction of sexually differentiated identity. According to
psychoanalytic theories within this tradition, sexual difference is dependent upon visual recognition. Within the Oedipal drama, it is the visible ‘lack’ of a penis in the female figure and the presence of the phallus in the male which gives rise to the castration anxiety. Sexuality within this analysis, is determined by the relationship between what is looked at, and the developing sexual knowledge of the child. That is, it results from the repression of the mother through accession to the law of the father, symbolised by the phallus. The attributes of the father support the phallus as the signifier of difference and construct the opposition between power or presence, and loss or absence (Pollock 1988). The boy’s body therefore provides access to representation whereas the girl’s body does not. The female body within this scenario becomes a ‘tabula rasa’, a site for inscription because she has no means to represent lack (Doane 1981). Feminist film theorists hold that in order for the representation of woman to be possible a "stake" is necessary. In light of this Doane (1981) argues that instead of losing the object of desire the woman becomes it. Her absence of lack is then concealed behind the "masquerade" of femininity (Doane 1981, pp28-29).

Feminist theories of the ‘male gaze’ since Mulvey’s watershed article have proved extremely useful for feminists seeking to deconstruct dominant images of femininity. In particular they have critiqued the reproduction of sexual difference through the cinematic apparatus of representation (Doane 1981; Mayne 1985; Penley 1985). However, Mulvey’s thesis has been extensively critiqued. Elizabeth Grosz (1992) argues that it is misleading insofar as the ‘male gaze theory’ blurs the distinction between sight as a sense and the gaze as a scopic drive. Vision itself cannot be masculine rather, certain ways of looking, for example through objectifying, may
guarantee and produce patriarchal power positions. A further limiting aspect of the male gaze scenario is its reliance on a binary logic. According to this view the 'male gaze' scenario becomes trapped within its own phallocentric assumptions foreclosing the possibilities for a non-male identified female gaze (Daly 1992). In spite of these difficulties the politics of the gaze remain an important site of contestation for feminist critics. Peggy Phelan (1993b) for instance, in Unmarked: The Politics of Performance, is concerned to mark the limits of the visible for identity politics.

Cooper Albright (1991) sees a parallel thesis operating for the performance of dance within proscenium arch spaces to that which applies within a feminist critique to the cinematic frame. In the proscenium theatre context the dance audience parallels a film audience in that the choreography is situated on stage to the advantage of the audience's point of view. The traditional framing of the dance within the proscenium context can be seen to 'fix' the dancer as object through maximising her visibility for the viewer's gaze. If this is the case, then choreographers who work in such venues have a difficult task subverting the relations of power installed through the theatrical apparatus. However there are a number of difficulties with applying a feminist analysis of the male gaze as theorised within feminist film theory to the conditions of dance performance.

Parallels between the display of the female body within the proscenium theatre and the 'bachelor machine' (Penley 1985) of the cinematic apparatus have a limited valency. Dance, as an art form involving the live presence of the performer, provides conditions which do not entirely promote the necessary illusion which
conditions heterosexual fantasies. For voyeurism to be successful, the conventions of narrative must be used so as to guarantee safety in looking. This 'safe distance' is to some degree avoided within live performance where the spectator and performer share the same temporal and physical space.

In spite of these differences, dancers share with performers in other art forms the risks of appropriation by dominant constructions of meaning. The slippage between autobiography and mythologisation is a constant risk for the female performer for whom the body's silent articulations in space constitute the principal significatory mode. As soon as women become visible as performers their bodies invoke the highly charged history of Woman as spectacle, as display, and as object for consumption. In the realm of performance, the radical rejection of theatricality and illusion in the 1980s, in particular through techniques involving confessional and diaristic modes of self-representation, emerged as an attempt to dislodge the mythologisation and iconicity of the female performer (see Chapter 2.6 for examples of this). But these techniques also risked appropriation, in particular in relation to debates about pornography and essentialism (Croft and McDonald 1994). This double-bind for the female performer was powerfully evoked in a section from *Virginia Minx at Play* (1993), 'Naked Truth' in which Claid/Minx, positions herself onstage with the accoutrements and hyperbolic overacting of an operatic diva installing this image only to convert it into one of erotic taunting in the posturing of a stripper. This play across high art/low life boundaries confounds the image of the female performer, simultaneously over-writing her body with narratives which blur distinctions in the virgin/whore dichotomy. A similar choreographic device in *Grace*
and Glitter (1987) involved the entrance onstage of a woman dressed in a tutu as if to begin her ballet solo, but the music which accompanies her is more suggestive of 'bump and grind' than 'pirouette and arabesque'. In parodying stereotypical roles of femininity in performance Claid exposes the investment of a phallic economy of signification in the display of the female body, dramatically highlighting the difficulties women encounter in performance through their vulnerability to objectification (Adair 1992).

4.6 The limits of representation

The feminist critique, that representation operates within a specular economy transforming "female subjects into gendered, fetishized objects whose referent is ideologically bound to dominant (heterosexual) models of masculinity and femininity" demands careful consideration before a feminist body politics can be located (Diamond 1993, p371). For whilst there is a need for women to assert their specificity through the experience of the female body, we need to hold this practice in tension with the knowledge that the 'speaking' of this experience is complicit with a phallologocentric inheritance. While artistic practices which seek to affirm the experiences of women are an important avenue for consciousness raising and for making visible the previous marginalised 'other', such approaches, in insisting on a more inclusive culture do not directly challenge hegemonic discourses themselves. In this sense 'images of women' may serve only to confirm ideologically sanctioned perceptions of the world.18

Feminist art practice can be read within this theoretical context as something of a
paradox. In attempting to ‘speak’ as subjects within artistic discourses, women are simultaneously negated through their objectification in the process of representation itself. This leads Teresa de Lauretis to conclude that the problematic for feminist art is not so much a matter of determining a feminine aesthetic, but of initiating a "feminist deaesthetic":

So, once again, the contradiction of women in language and culture is manifested in a paradox: most of the terms by which we speak of the construction of the female social subject in cinematic representation bear in their visual form the prefix de- to signal the deconstruction or destructuring, if not destruction, of the very thing to be represented. We speak of the deaestheticisation of the female body, the desexualisation of violence, the deoedipalisation of narrative, and so forth.

de Lauretis 1987, p146.

To avoid the limitations of an affirmative practice of feminist art, de Lauretis advocates a process of redefining aesthetic knowledge. This requires a shift in focus from an ‘images of woman’ approach concerned with the content of feminist art, to a concern with the apparatus of representation itself. This development matches shifts in theories of art away from an emphasis on representation towards the notion of signification and its interrogation through semiotic and discourse analyses, psychoanalytical perspectives and deconstructive strategies. The potential of this formulation for feminism is that it gets away from the presumption of a pre-given meaning to the term ‘woman’ and installs a critical procedure for its formal analysis (Cowie 1978). It also offers the facility for the construction of new meanings and new positions of enunciation.
Notes

1. Catherine Stimpson has argued that issues of representation have been a common denominator within feminisms. For example the history of feminist thought has exposed dominant representations of women as misrepresentations, it has insisted on the creation of women's self-representations, and the retrieval of these within history, it has also sought to acknowledge the need to represent the differences among women (Stimpson 1988).

2. Underlying these strategies is the idea of representation as a form of cultural production which produces meanings about the world and subject positions. Griselda Pollock (1988) describes how images, rather than offering a mirror on the world, reflect back their sources, as they carry sets of values and attributes embedded in particular ideologies. In this sense representation is not innocent. This view serves to reinforce the need to examine cultural practices, not as isolated works grouped into purely stylistic and iconographical categories, but in terms of their social significance as articulators of meanings about the world, and as apparati for the production of social subjects.

3. See Nochlin (1973) for an account of the structural sexism of art history, also Parker and Pollock (1981), and Parker and Pollock (1987) on women artists attempts to address this legacy.

4. According to Linda Nochlin (1973) women are inadequately represented within the artistic establishment because they are disadvantaged as a group within gender hierarchies when it comes to the conceptualisation of a model of artistic greatness. Her response to the question, 'Why have there been no great women artists?' is a critique of the discipline of art history itself, one which reveals its internal biases and inconsistencies, questioning the very foundations through which we come to know and value art. Such a project involves a "paradigm shift" in the study of art, one which could adequately account for both the presence and absence of women artists throughout its history and as such which goes beyond adding women to the existing categories of art by reconceiving what we study and how we look at it. See also Battersby (1989) on notions of artistic genius in relation to feminist revisions of art history.

5. Feminists recognise how 'experience' is entwined with subjecthood and identity, experience being that process through which individuals come to realise their subjectivity. De Lauretis describes experience as "the process by which, for all social beings, subjectivity is constructed. Through this process one places oneself or is placed in social reality and so perceives and comprehends as subjective (referring to, originating in oneself) those relations - material, economic, and interpersonal - which are in fact social, and, in a larger perspective historical" (1984, p159).
6. For a critique of the racialised subtext of this work in its failure to represent black women’s sexuality see Spillers (1984); and for a Marxist critique of its process of production as hierarchical and dictatorial and for the risks of biological essentialism involved in representing women through images of their genitals see Barrett (1986).

7. Urban Bush Women are a black dance company based in New York, their work incorporates dance, drumming, singing, theatre and mime and is directed by Jawole Willa Jo Zollar.

8. Graham (1991) and Cohen (1972) provide accounts of attitudes towards the expression of states of interiority within Graham and Humphrey’s dance practices respectively.

9. See for example, Night Journey (1947), in which Graham depicted herself as Jocasta and Cave of the Heart (1946) in which she performed the role of Medea. In both of these dances the narrative is centred around the female heroine’s point of view. Wilshire (1989) describes the positive benefits of women’s myth making as a device for constructing feminist ways of knowing.

10. For example, Bausch describes how she "always asks about Christmas...this time everybody in the Company described Christmas dinner....Yesterday I asked if anyone had been so frightened they’d messed their pants, and when was the first time they felt they were a man or a woman" (Bausch in Servos 1984, p235).

11. Scott (1992) explains feminism’s indispensable need for "experience" and the contested grounds for this claim.

12. The ‘other of the same’ can therefore be said to stand for the role of women within patriarchy (see Whitford 1991, p104; and Irigaray 1985a, 1985b).

13. Irigaray writes, "we can assume that any theory of the subject has always been appropriated by the "masculine". When she submits to (such a) theory, woman fails to realize that she is renouncing the specificity of her own relationship to the imaginary. Subjecting herself to objectivization in discourse - by being "female". Re-objectivizing her own self whenever she claims to identify herself "as" a masculine subject. As "subject" that would re-search itself as lost (maternal-feminine) "object"?" (Irigaray 1985a, p133).

14. Adshead describes the "visual environment" of the dance as including the performance area, costumes or clothes, properties of any kind and lighting, and discusses how different genres of dance are related to specific kinds of performing spaces (1988, pp30-31). Foster (1986, pp.59-65) delimits the framing conventions of performance as including the publicity for the event; its location, title and placement, if within a programme; its beginning and ending; the contact which is established with the audience, in particular through the focus of the dancer and the organisation of the performance.
environment in relation to audience and performer roles.

15. Lorraine Gamman and Margaret Marshment in *The Female Gaze* (1988) discuss this problematic and through a range of essays drawing on popular culture explore the possibilities for situating active female spectatorship.

16. However economies of scale mean that most independent dance performance occurs in smaller scale to middle scale venues where there is less of a distance between audience and performer than in the large scale proscenium arch theatres such as the Royal Opera House. The possibilities for subverting the hierarchy of vision are not however just a question of scale. Pina Bausch for instance constructs her dances for large-scale theatres of the proscenium arch variety but employs a range of tactics to decentralise this space, for example by getting her performers to serve cups of tea to the audience or by having them move through the auditorium in a procession or by placing performers strategically in the auditorium to address the performers onstage (see Servos 1984).

17. *Virginia Minx at Play* was performed and "made" by Emilyn Claid, with music, composed by Sylvia Hallett, sung and played by Heather Joyce, also with designs by Jacqueline Gunn and additional direction by Nigel Charnock. As seen at *The Place Theatre, London*, 8 March 1993.

Part Two: Addressing the Problematics

Chapter 5 Feminism, Deconstruction and "the body"

5.1 Woman as ‘sign’: psychoanalytic and semiotic perspectives
5.2 Body ‘matters’: challenging deconstruction
5.3 Essentialism versus constructionism
5.4 The case against ‘dereliction’ in women’s art
5.4 Identifying the problematics for feminist choreographies
Chapter 5

Feminism, Deconstruction and "The Body"

5.1 Woman as 'sign': psychoanalytic and semiotic perspectives

Both feminists and postmodernists view art as a social sign, one that is inevitably
enmeshed in other signs of meaning and value, but whereas the postmodernist
attempts to "de-doxify" these conventions, the feminist engaged in postmodern
practices demands their transformation (Hutcheon 1989, p153). Through their
critique of representation, feminists have remodelled art practices, creating new forms
and evolving a self-conscious awareness of the process of representation based on the
particularities of gendered experience. Central to feminist postmodern interventions
in the arts has been the redefinition of the term the 'personal is political'. Feminist
postmodernists recognise that notions of experience cannot be used as a means to
validate the personal expression of women without being critically contextualised.
In particular, feminists have explored how ideas about the female body have been
historically and culturally constructed through representation. In view of these
debates many feminist critics argue that it is important to de-naturalise traditional
views of the body in art, to reveal both its semiotic crossings through gender
positioning and the production of sexual desire through its representation (Hutcheon
1989).

Awareness of the vulnerability of the female body to appropriation and colonisation
by the dominant male order, and of what Fuss (1989) terms "the risks of
essentialism", has led feminist artists to adopt postmodern deconstructive strategies
in its signification. Such techniques as fragmentation, parody, exaggeration, masquerade, pastiche, irony and disguise, have been employed as devices to disturb and unsettle the customary associations of the female body with eroticism, 'nature', immaculateness and immanence. Women engaged in postmodern cultural practices play on the codes of femininity through these techniques, and by these means work effectively within, whilst destabilising, dominant patriarchal discourses. The work of Barbara Kruger, Cindy Sherman and Mary Kelly in the visual arts, Annie Sprinkle, Holly Hughes and Linda Montano in live art, the films of Chantal Akerman and Yvonne Rainer and the choreographies of Meg Stuart, Emelyn Claid and Lea Anderson demonstrate the effectiveness of these strategies for feminist art.

Postmodern theories and postmodern cultural practices emerge within this context as the privileged domain for the enunciation of a subversive body politics. As Wolff states:

The inherently critical and destabilising effects of postmodern theory make possible the direct engagement with androcentric systems of thought, without necessarily attempting to replace these with new, women-centred theories. The parallel with work in cultural studies and the arts is clear, for here too feminists have been arguing that deconstructive strategies are the most profitable.

Wolff 1990, p88.

Deconstruction is a major tool for feminist artists working within Western Europe, North America and Australasia. It has however come under attack recently by feminist artists in the visual arts who view it as installing a limiting and hegemonic orthodoxy, denying 'other', more traditional practices as valid modes for feminist representations. Rosa Lee (1987) objects to the hegemony of deconstructive practices
within feminist art circles. For Lee, the predominance of representational art, in particular through photography, as a feminist postmodern device squeezes out other more traditional practices, such as painting, and eliminates opportunities for the radical reconstruction of artistic language. Feminist artist Teresa Oulton like Lee, takes issue with deconstructive artists who claim that they are ‘cleansing’ artistic language suggesting that they merely debase it because they fail to get beyond male defined terms of expression. She calls into question the claims to renewal through deconstruction which feminist artists make, by questioning the processes by which recognition occurs and through which images remain trapped within their embedded associations. Her focus on the method and material procedures of artistic production calls for a renewal of painterly language as a potentially subversive form for feminist artists (Lee 1987). Katy Deepwell in an article in Feminist Arts News also strongly rejects the hegemony of deconstructive strategies for feminist artists in particular in the theoretical defences of scripto-visual art made by feminist critics.\(^2\)

Despite these criticisms, the deployment of postmodern strategies towards deconstructive ends has the advantage over feminist celebratory art based on woman-centred experience, because these strategies engage directly with dominant cultural significations in order to subvert them. Janet Wolff cites the positive advantages for feminists of these representational strategies:
Postmodern interventions, apart from anything else, achieve what a more separatist alternative, woman-centred culture could not: namely engagement with the dominant culture itself. By employing the much-cited postmodern tactics of pastiche, irony, quotation, and juxtaposition, this kind of cultural politics engages directly with current images, forms and ideas, subverting their intent and (re)appropriating their meanings, rather than abandoning them for alternative forms, which would leave them untouched and still dominant.

Wolff 1990, p88.

Feminist postmodernists accept that one cannot simply alter symbolic meanings by decree nor step outside phallogocentrism by merely reversing the symbolism or repeatedly insisting on women’s rationality. Many feminist artists therefore find in the ‘promise of postmodernism’ deconstructive strategies which provide the opportunity to undermine closed and hegemonic structures of representation from within those structures as they recognise that there is no ‘outside’. The work of Lea Anderson for her group, the Cholmondoleys can be viewed in this way.3 Gendered experience is signified in Anderson’s choreographies through gestural codings, use of costuming and location and the relationships between dancers and between dancers and their constructed environments as well as through the same-sex affiliations of her company. In Baby, Baby, Baby (1986) for example, three women, Lea Anderson, Teresa Barker and Gaynor Coward, stand in a line and perform a series of small detailed and elaborate gestures in unison to the music of Nina Simone, ‘My Baby Don’t Care for Me’. The gestural minutiae which accrue from typically feminine acts of adornment, personal hygiene and social interaction are here coded into systems, through phrasing, repetition and timing. The dancers’ wipe, stroke and smooth their skin, their hands turn and prod as they fix and manipulate limbs, their heads swivelling as they cast a surveillancing gaze over their bodies changing appearances. Their precise and accurate attention to the detailed
figuration of each gesture combine with the use of repetition and unison to heighten the sense of a habitual and compulsive attachment to social and behavioural conventions. At the same time the dancers cool and perfunctory mode of performance serves to detach them from a reading of these rituals of femininity as 'natural' as they are clearly acted out and upon their bodies. Their performance is in this sense doubly coded, operating an ironical critique on the conventions of the feminine body subject through the re-enactment of a socially prescribed range of motility.

Feminist uses of postmodern strategies do not fall into that ambivalent 'no-man's land' of a postmodern free-play of signifiers because they operate from a position which challenges cultural production within the terms of a thorough analysis of gender inequalities. A particular locus for concern and productive debate within feminist postmodern cultural production is the signification of the body. The body, located at the threshold between presence and absence, place and loss, and as the "vanishing point" of all systems of signification becomes the privileged domain for postmodern deconstructions of the unitary subject. Feminist deconstruction is anti-essentialist in its refusal to reduce women to ahistorical views of female body as unchanging immanence. This mode of cultural intervention would therefore appear to have much to offer the feminist choreographer intent on subverting the binaristic baggage which underwrites her entry-points in the symbolic exchange of performance. However an uncritical acceptance of such a position carries its own dangers. In scrutinising the theoretical underpinnings of postmodern deconstruction from a
dancer/choreographer’s standpoint, the limitations of this mode of resistant representation become apparent.

Semiotic and psychoanalytical theories have proved particularly useful critical tools for feminists operating deconstructive strategies. Through semiotic theory, feminists re-examine the notion of ‘woman’, not as ‘essence’, but as ‘sign’ within signifying systems. Theories of signification hold that meanings are produced by the relations between signifiers which are coded into systems. Feminist artists in their studios, engage in postmodern theories through their analyses of systems of signification which construct gender. But the formal analysis of sign systems on their own, can become divorced from the sociality and materiality of an art practice. Psychoanalytic theories, in particular feminist appropriations of Freud and Lacan, can usefully complement semiotic analysis, generating an understanding of how sexual difference is psychically inscribed and reproduced through familial social relations (Pollock 1988).

The installations of Mary Kelly and the films by Laura Mulvey are exemplary of work which critically deconstructs sexual difference through semiotic and psychoanalytical analyses within the field of cultural production. Their work however is also revealing of how seriously the presence of the female body can be endangered by such a position because the issue of the politics of its representation is resolved through its erasure (Croft and McDonald 1994).
In Mary Kelly’s *Interim* for instance, the overidentification of the female image with essentialist notions is resisted through the substitution of the spectacle of the woman’s ‘dumb’ (silenced) body with the expressive presence of posed objects. Griselda Pollock (1988) explains how Kelly’s use of photographs of feminine objects - a black leather jacket, a handbag, boots, black negligee, white dress - combined with feminist appropriations of psychoanalysis - handwritten texts tracing children’s stories alongside accounts of women’s complex relation to the body, desire and representation - distances her work from a traditional rendering of femininity based on "Woman" as image. Alternatively *Interim* installs a more complex and multidiscursive layering of feminine identity one in which the expressive poses of the objects stand in for the absented woman and 'speak'. Such disruptions to the confluence of language, meaning and sexuality as they are constructed within dominant discourse, provide alternative constructions of femininity, ones which do not assume the natural or the essential in the conflation of woman with her bodily presence.

This position recalls attempts by poststructuralist filmmakers in the past, who, when confronted with the enormous legacy of women’s representation as "object par excellence" sought to erase the image of the female body from view altogether. Peter Gidal had this to say on the issue of representations of the female body in film:

> I do not see how ...there is any possibility of using the image of a naked woman ...other than in an absolutely sexist and politically repressive patriarchal way in this conjuncture.

A similar stance was also taken by some dance performers in the early 1990s who opted for speaking rather than moving given the gravity of the historical moment, and the risks of trivialisation which they presumed the image of their dancing bodies to evoke (see Chapter 3.1). The negation of the female body in these contexts, whilst operating in response to recognition of the problematics of its insertion within the symbolic order, also serve to re-circulate a view of the body as the material substratum of Culture through its absence.

A second set of deconstructive operations are found in the work of feminist artists who complicate the image of the female body through strategies of fragmentation, disfiguration and deformation, denying it the fixity of any internal coherence or the appearance of a stable form.

The North American choreographer Meg Stuart in works such as the solo, Thought Object (1992) and the trio, Disfigure Study (1993), constructs representations of the dancing body as a site of disintegration and alienation through strategies of distortion and dislocation. Thought Object (1992) begins with Stuart, an inert and solitary figure only partially visible, reaching a hand across her back, grabbing and caressing, searching and tracing, skin enfolding skin. A hand, seemingly disconnected from a body, searches for an object to define its function. The low focused light makes visibility difficult and highlights segments, bits of her body rather than its whole form. Arms and legs serve as props for the torso but these are unreliable and insecure, breaks in the joints compress and collapse the body structure into a divided entanglement of limbs and organs. The violence of these compressions cause her to
stagger, fall and reel through the space. As a constant site of disintegration her
to body, embedded in the axes of the world, resists the hegemonic hold of the schemata
of the competent, ordered and bound body. It becomes a body subject to pleasure
and pain, to disorder, rupture and the unexpected.

Feminist photography has also been a particularly fertile field for explorations of
deconstructive techniques of distortion and fragmentation in representations of the
female form. Women are used to seeing themselves as photographed objects;
consequently for many women photographers, the risks of objectification are
circumvented by positioning their bodies at the other end of the camera, through self-
representations. By actively producing her image, the female photographer takes
control of the way she presents herself to the viewer, deconstructing the subject/object
divide. The New Zealand photographer Rhondda Bosworth, avoids the closure of
the image of the body around naturalised unitary readings by cropping her images to
exclude parts of her body and through the use of collage to fragment its signification
as Body (Pitts 1989). In Insignia (1987) Bosworth constructs a collage of scraps,
remnants of cloth - sequinned, in lurex bands and red silk -, and cropped and tattered
photographed images - a black and grey void, a woman's semi-naked torso, and a
prone and naked female body, these fragmented images which signify woman
'seduced and abandoned' as lack and void, evoke associations of violation and
exploitation. The paintings of Elspeth Rodger similarly attempt to de-romanticise the
female body through its representation as the site of loss in images of near-death and
death-like states. Arthur and Marilouise Kroker describe Rodger's paintings, in
which women are cloistered by the pictorial frame and without motion, as intimating
"a terrible equivalency between being framed and being dead" as "both negate identity" (Kroker and Kroker 1993, p1). The representation of the female body, through its vulnerability to subordination and control, in these contexts becomes the site of cancellation and loss, Kroker and Kroker term this "forensic feminism" (1993, p1).

In feminist performance, deconstructive strategies are also in evidence in the enactment of a surface politics of the body. Feminist performers have been concerned to highlight the ways in which the body is 'marked', incised and written over by a phallomorphic culture. Playing into the idea of the female body as passive receptivity, "a womb waiting to be fecundated by words (his words), a void ready to be filled with meanings, or elsewhere a blank page awaiting insemination by the writer's pen" feminist performers have activated their bodies as sites of crisis (de Lauretis 1987, p75). For example, by perforating, incising and puncturing skin, surgically altering their features, parodying and miming the 'dressage' of the female body and staining and erasing their appearance as 'body' women artists subject their bodies' codings as feminine to a deconstructive critique. Transgressing the customary boundaries of representation, artists such as Annie Sprinkle, Karen Finley, Valie Export, Gina Pane and Carolee Schneeman enact a surface politics, deconstructing sedimented constructs of gender and sexuality and de-romanticising the idea of the female body in art.

The Austrian performance artist Valie Export for example, uses her live body as a material part of the structure of representation, deploying it as a screen for visual
projections and as a zone for ritualised acts of self-mutilation. By these means, her "feminist actionism" deconstructs the symbolic placement of the female body within dominant fields of vision. As Grosz (1993) explains, cuts on the body's surface organise the interior of the lived body. This, she states, can be seen to account for the continued popularity of torture as a form of institutionally sanctioned interrogation, not for the extraction of information, but as an "unmaking of the subject's lived experience and agency" (Grosz 1993, p198). Women performance artists who choose to work with forms of self-mutiliation strategically deploy their bodies to unhinge the normalisation of the female form, in puncturing their skin they loosen the hold of regulatory fictions on the body, opening wounds as spaces of re-signification.

A third course for feminist deconstructionists significations of the female body is one which seeks to install the image of woman in order to subvert its coding as 'feminine' through dissonant disguise and masquerade. Such a position can be considered in relation to Irigaray's encouragement to women to mimic their placement within the symbolic masculinist order:

One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus begin to thwart it....To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to locate the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself - inasmuch as she is on the side of the 'perceptible', of 'matter' - to 'ideas', in particular to ideas about herself that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but so as to make 'visible' by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible: recovering a possible operation of the feminine in language.

Feminist artists who operate systems of disguise, masquerade and imitation confound the naturalisation of the female body and play across its construction as object. Cindy Sherman’s early self-posed self-portraits modelled on Hollywood film stills enact a "complicitous critique" of dominant readings of the female body by foregrounding femininity as construction and masquerade (Hutcheon 1989, p14). In appearing in many different guises as many different "others", Sherman repossesses the signifier of "woman" making a spectacle of her in a deliberate displacement of the phallic economy as ‘other of the Same’. Emilyn Claid’s multiple performing personas' in Virginia Minx At Play (1993), previously discussed in Chapter 4.5, similarly forces consideration of the performativity of femininity. Through inhabiting a multiplicity of roles as dyke, diva, ballerina, witch and whore Claid can be seen to underline the fictive construction of these female stereotypes both through costume and disguise and the use of stylised movement associated with particular feminine spaces.8

These examples of feminist art are themselves fragmentary and partial representations drawn from the multiplicity of practices comprising postmodern cultural production informed by feminist debates. However, in enunciating three different responses to the ‘crises of representation’ for women - in the erasure, fragmentation and disguise - of the female body, these examples reveal how the need to deconstruct unitary and essentialist readings of its presence can lead to the signification of the body in ‘bits and pieces’.9
5.2 Body ‘matters’: challenging deconstruction

Deconstructive feminist strategies would appear tactically appropriate for feminist dance practices given the difficulties involved in representing the performer’s body without its overdetermination as object and a thing in itself for ‘others’, as they offer the possibility of working through phallocentric logic in radically de-stabilising the false universality of the subject. However there are critical, material and ethical difficulties for dancer-choreographers in adopting such a position, in particular in relation to the implications of poststructuralist, postmodern theories of the body and their impact on signifying systems in cultural production. At issue are the implications for such a feminism of the ‘linguistic turn’ of contemporary theories and the presumption within the discourse of deconstruction of the body as ‘text’, ‘site’ and ‘surface’ of inscription.

Undoubtedly the risks of re-appropriation and essentialism are significant for the feminist artist, in particular for the feminist performer working through her body, but it is important, at least in this dancer-theorist’s opinion, not to reinforce the existing somatophobia of the dominant male hierarchies by either banishing the body altogether or by refusing its representation other than as fragmented, wounded and fake.

It has already been seen how ‘Matter’, the ‘Body’ and the ‘Feminine’ have existed as the unacknowledged foundations of the Western philosophic tradition of knowledge, and how feminists have challenged the privilege afforded the disembodied ‘man of reason’ and moved from humanist feminism which assumed the essential
give-ness of women to an anti-essentialist constructionist position which considers the category of women as provisional, partial and a contingent foundation for feminist politics (Chapter 2). Of crucial importance for feminists whose body politics is a working through the body is the issue of materiality. Current feminist research recognises the need to re-define notions of materiality to allow for feminist figurations which enable the redefining of subjectivity through the embodied, and therefore sexually differentiated, structure of the speaking subject (Braidotti 1994).

In relation to the previous survey of different modes of feminist deconstructive techniques which address the problematic of signifying the female body within a masculinist symbolic order, I perceive three specific difficulties in adopting these strategies for feminist choreographies. Firstly, the reliance of a constructionist model on semiotics and psychoanalysis leads to a form of "linguistic determinism" installing a hierarchy between modes of discourse through the primacy of the linguistic sign. Language and the gaze thus determine the fundamental symbolic rules governing desire overriding the significance of other senses, other drives and modes of signification. Within this theoretical context, "visibility is a trap" as it is seen to provoke, "voyeurism, fetishism" and the "colonialist/imperial appetite for possession" (Phelan 1993b, p6). In relation to Mary Kelly's work, this discursive position can be seen to lead to the erasure of the female body and her substitution with inanimate objects. Given the primacy of the dancer's actual bodily presence in choreographic performance such a position is untenable in relation to feminist practice. Secondly, the material difficulties and psychic implications of installing a fragmented sense of the body/self relation on actual dancing subjects needs to be taken seriously given that
our bodies are both source and site of signification. The implications of Kroker and Kroker's characterisation of "forensic feminism" offer an extreme example of how postmodern theories which focus on fragmentation and dismemberment, in equating being "framed" within the Symbolic order with being "dead", cancel out opportunities for the reconfiguration of subjectivity through positively inscribing sexual difference (Kroker and Kroker 1993, p1). The annihilistic implications of such a position, whilst a corrective to utopianism, do not allow space for the construction of conditions which enable feminist futures, since they can be seen to deny women their right to re-colonise and reclaim their bodies as sites of meaning and value (Hutcheon 1989). Finally, the implications for dance as a practice with a strong female/feminist lineage of cultural agency, in adopting a position which involves a critical deconstruction of tradition needs to be considered (Foster 1985). Feminist photographers for example, in confronting the male-dominance of the artistic tradition they belong to, critically engage with and subvert the 'great masters' (Sherrie Levine) and the stereotypes of femininity which proliferate in the history of photography and film (Cindy Sherman). This is a necessary strategy enabling feminist artists to open up "in-between spaces" where new forms of political subjectivity can be explored (Braidotti 1994). Dancer-choreographers also need to deconstruct traditions, especially those that figure the female performer as an object of display, but given that genealogical frameworks of female creativity have been a feature of the tradition of modern and postmodern dance in the twentieth century, it is necessary to be clear about which traditions need to be challenged and deconstructed and which traditions positively inscribed.
These problematics are addressed through a reading of Butler's (1993) interrogation of the materialism/idealism opposition in essentialist/constructivist debates, (Chapter 5.3) and through Irigaray's (1993) critique of "dereliction" in women's art, (Chapter 5.4).

5.3 Essentialism versus constructionism

The "linguistic determinism" of poststructuralist feminism, through its emphasis on semiotics and psychoanalysis, has had a significant impact on postmodern cultural practices shift from an essentialist tradition of celebratory woman-centred art practices to deconstructive feminist art. We need to ask however what the impact of the shift from an essentialist position of unchanging immanance, to a constructionist position of the body as 'text' to be decoded, has meant for the body of the performer.

The polarised differences between essentialist and constructionist positions on the body are described by Fuss:

For the essentialist, the body occupies a pure, pre-social, pre-discursive space. The body is "real", accessible, and transparent; it is always there and directly interpretable through the senses. For the constructionist, the body is never simply there, rather it is composed of a network of effects continually subject to sociopolitical determination. The body is "always already" culturally mapped; it never exists in a pure or uncoded state.

Fuss 1989, pp5-6.

Stanley and Wise (1993) note that it has become an orthodox position within feminist theorisation to eschew any invocation of 'the body' other than as discursively, textually and linguistically constructed and therefore as having no physical or material
significance beyond this. They take seriously the conceptual challenge of deconstructive and postmodern feminist criticism but insist on the need to "speak, think and write of the body as not merely a linguistic creation but as also having a physical, material and consequential reality" (Stanley and Wise 1993, p197) This coincides with Denise Riley's postulation that "'being a woman" is an "inconstant" and "can't provide an ontological foundation", yet is the "sine qua non of feminism, which would otherwise be lost for an object" (Riley 1988, p2). Given this, it is important to remember that not everything is reducible to language, as Teresa de Lauretis explains we are "concurrently and often contradictorily engaged in a plurality of heterogeneous experiences, practices and discourses, where subjectivity and gender are constructed, anchored, or reproduced" (de Lauretis 1984, pp171-172). Linguistic representation in this sense cannot be regarded as totalising.

Dances can be said to exist beyond the realm of 'speech acts' because as a cultural practice, 'language games' are checked at the studio door. Indeed as pointed out in Chapter 3.1, dancers frequently privilege their motional fields of articulation through invocations of the primacy of motility over verbalisation. Whilst this has been shown to be a dangerous position to adopt, risking the positing of the dance as a site of pre-discursive materiality, outside ideology and history, there is a need to acknowledge the discursive limits of the body's construction as "site" through the challenge of its materiality. For as Phelan states,

Our "own" body...is the one we have and the history of the ones we've lost. Our body is both internal and external; invisible and visible; sick and well; living and dead. Noncontinuous, full of jerks and rears.

Phelan 1993b, p172.
Through the practice of dancing the dancer experiences her body as a confrontation with limits. The comments of Kathy Acker, in relating her experiences of 'working out' are insightful in glimpsing this perspectival space of bodily experience:

Every day in the gym, I repeat the same controlled gestures with the same weights the same reps...The same breath patterns. But now and then, wandering within the labyrinths of my body, I come upon something. Something I can know because knowledge depends upon difference. An unexpected event. For though I am only repeating certain gestures during certain time spans, my body, being material, is never the same; my body is controlled by change and by chance...By trying to control, to shape my body...and time and again, in following these methods, failing to do so, I am able to meet that which cannot be finally controlled and known: the body.


The 'blind spot' of the constructionist position can be considered as the 'matter' of this unknown, as the unconstructed and unthematisable limits of the discursive realm.

Judith Butler in *Bodies that Matter* (1993) interrogates the erasures and exclusions which constitute these limits. She argues that, at its most extreme "radical linguistic constructivism", leads to linguistic determinism and the conundrum of the body as site, blank page and surface for inscription. Within this formulation the constructionist holds that there is no body outside language and discourse, a view which leads to a discursive monism and linguisticism:
It seems that when the constructivist is construed as a linguistic idealist, the constructivist refutes the reality of bodies, the relevance of science, the alleged facts of birth, aging, illness, and death. The critic might also suspect the constructivist of a certain somatophobia and seek assurances that this abstracted theorist will admit that there are, minimally, sexually differentiated parts, activities, capacities, hormonal and chromosomal differences that can be conceded without reference to "construction".


The polarisation of the debate between essentialism and constructivism sets up an opposition between materialism and idealism. Butler challenges the limits of this debate through naming the constitutive exclusions through which the boundaries of the subject are demarcated. According to her argument, it is not enough to claim that human subjects are constructed, for they are constructed through boundaries which demarcate the subject's constitutive outside. This "outside" is not some guarantee of an ontological givenness, but what exceeds and challenges the boundaries of discourse, that is as "the constitutive force of exclusion, erasure, violent foreclosure, abjection and its disruptive return within the very terms of discursive legitimacy" (Butler 1993, p8). Yet this constitutive outside can only be considered and rethought in relation to that discourse:

For there is an "outside" to what is constructed by discourse, but this is not an absolute "outside", an ontological thereness that exceeds or counters the boundaries of discourse, as a constitutive "outside", it is that which can only be thought - when it can - in relation to that discourse, at and as its most tenuous borders.


Butler asks if 'matter' then becomes the outside, the dispossessed 'other' on which poststructuralist and deconstructionists erect their postmodern bodies.
The constructionist position also presents other hazards in relation to the conceptualisation of 'Nature'. Fuss argues that "there is no compelling reason to assume that the natural is, in essence, essentialist and that the social is, in essence, constructionist" and suggests that the assumption that "nature and fixity go together (naturally)" and "sociality and change go together (naturally)" should be questioned (Fuss 1989, p6). Indeed as Butler states, "nature has a history", "the figuring of nature as the blank and lifeless page, as that which is, as it were, always already dead, is decidedly modern, linked perhaps to the emergence of technological means of domination" (Butler 1993, p4-5). This has lead some feminists to ask,

whether the discourse which figures the action of construction as a kind of imprinting or imposition is not tacitly masculinist, whereas the figure of the passive surface, awaiting the penetrating act whereby meaning is endowed, is not tacitly or - perhaps - quite obviously feminine. Is sex to gender as feminine is to masculine?  

The question of agency emerges from these challenges to the constructionist position. For if the subject is constructed, who or what is doing the constructing? Does the concept of construction take the place of a "godlike agency which, not only causes but composes everything which is?" (Butler 1993, p6). The much cited "always already" of the post-structuralist may in this sense function as a "phenomenological carry-over, a point of refuge for essentialism", within the discourse of deconstruction itself (Fuss 1989, p15). The reduction of social relations and formations to the "always already" of discourse in this sense risks foreclosing agency. Yet feminism is about change, change which is enacted through feminist subjects assertions of critically informed agency.
Given the debate between essentialist and constructionist positions feminists are confronted by two polarised positions, on the one hand the conceptualisation of the body as ontologically given, pre-discursive essence, and on the other hand the body as constructed through social codes and significatory practices. This leads to the question "can ‘the body’ and its biology be invoked and analysed in ways which are not essentialist" (Stanley and Wise 1993, p197-198), and on the other hand, in ways which do not re-entrench the somatophobia of logocentrism, in particular through linguistic determinism.

It has been seen how feminist artists who work through semiotic and psychoanalytic theories, such as Laura Mulvey and Mary Kelly, have responded to the problematic of women’s representation by refasing visibility to the female form (Chapter 5.1). However, the double-bind of women in representation means that the erasure of the body does not necessarily avert the risks of appropriation by the hegemonic order. This is explained by Berg who argues that if woman is represented as image, "this representation must necessarily take place within the context of a phallocentric system of representation in which the woman is reduced to mirroring the man; on the other hand, the presence of the woman as blank space - as refusal of representation - only serves to provide a backdrop or support for masculine projections" (Berg 1982, p17). The problem remains of locating a non-essentialist, non-reductive and non-linguistically bound, understanding of women’s corporeal reality as a locus for cultural agency.
5.4 The case against 'dereliction' in women's art

The dominance of deconstructive strategies within postmodern feminist cultural practices has been seen to have led to a proliferation of representations of the female body as fundamentally split, fractured, fragmented, even wounded, but not (w)hole. Luce Irigaray (1993) has recently challenged representations by women artists of the female body as "derelict", through her claims that these deny women the opportunity to find alternative significations for a renewal of feminine identity. That is, women artists' preoccupation with images of the female body as damaged, derelict, distressed and in pain, fail adequately to support a culture of difference and fulfil the promise of the female imaginary. In her paper, 'How can we Create our Beauty?', Irigaray reconceptualises the notion of "beauty", not as the 'beautiful object of contemplation', but as the route through which the ideality of woman's identity-for-herself can be realised. She positions this notion of "beauty" in opposition to women artists representations of "ugliness" which she locates in images of damaged, distressed and derelict bodies.

Irigaray sees the representation of pain and anger in women's art works as necessary, even cathartic, but claims these images leave women bare, denuded and without adequate resources for the renewal of feminine identity. In this sense she associates "beauty" with identity and "ugliness" with dereliction. Women, she states, have been enclosed in an order of forms inappropriate to them, but in trying to liberate themselves from these norms they are forced into negotiation with their regulatory power and this leads to the risk of self-annihilation in both a physical and spiritual sense. As Whitford writes, "the fundamental danger is that of irreparable
fragmentation, paralysis and the loss of identity" (1994, p16). Women's identity within the masculinist symbolic order is already fragmented, in 'bits and pieces', and this leaves women with too few resources to deal with life threatening drives, in particular the death drive. Given this, the best that images of an entirely fragmented body can offer women, is the adoption of a male identity and a male imaginary.

Women artists caught up in the representation of dereliction therefore ignore what Irigaray perceives as the need for symbolic representations of women which emphasise the 'beauty' of women's morphology. This is the ethical responsibility of women artists, to protect women against the destructiveness of a masculine economy which suffocates their identity. She defines this through the loss of the divine: "The loss of divine representation has brought women to a state of dereliction which is felt all the more because sensible representation is our primary method of figuration and communication" (Irigaray 1993, p111). Forced into negotiating the symbolic languages of a masculinist economy, women also neglect their genealogies as women, and are left, "without a means of designating ourselves, of expressing ourselves, between ourselves" (Irigaray 1993, p111). The loss of "divine representation" has "separated mothers from daughters, depriving them of mutually respectful mediums of exchange" subjecting them to a "reproductive order - natural and spiritual - that is governed symbolically by men" (Irigaray 1993, p111). Irigaray (1993) stresses women's need to hold to 'mother-daughter genealogies' within a patrilinear culture which deems these subordinate to the relations between men. She also stresses the need for women to construct representations and to work within discourses that are
enabling for them, in the sense that they allow women to have an identity-for-herself, for valid representations of daughter's genealogy are an essential precondition for the constitution of her identity (Irigaray 1993).

Irigaray theorises the violence of the symbolic through the failure of words - speech and writing and the "talking cure" - to liberate or construct a new subjective identity for women. She looks to the nonverbal, in particular painting and movement, for a renewal of feminine identity through an ethics of sexual difference (Whitford 1994, p16):

Language [langage] seems to have paralysed our gestures, including our verbal gestures. As adults, we no longer have any mobility. Once childhood is over, our moving trajectories are limited to poetry, art, prayer. Does not the still silent understanding of the feminine signify movements to be generated? This is not a matter of women outbidding technology...but of their discovering forgotten, misrecognized gestures,...shedding a different light on coporeal generation in the strict sense.

Irigaray in Whitford 1991b, p152.

In view of this, feminist choreographers are in a good position to locate a renewal of feminine identity through their cultural processes and productions.

Deconstructive cultural practices deconstruct tradition, this is particularly significant for women who come up against the 'maleness' of the dominant tradition within their field of cultural endeavour. Feminists in the visual arts, photography, literature and film have been outspoken in critiquing the male bias of their critical inheritance. Sherrie Levine for example, challenges romantic/modernist conceptions of orginality and authenticity by re-photographing famous art photos by male artists (Hutcheon

135
Some dance practices, in particular, the classical ballet inheritance, share with other art forms a male dominated tradition in terms of its choreographic direction and might also benefit from a postmodern critique of its traditions. However, within the tradition of modern and postmodern dance a different kind of trajectory is in evidence, one which women 'as' women have had a significant role in shaping (see Chapter 2.4). Female contemporary dance practitioners are perhaps unique within Western traditions of art in having a genealogy of 'mother knowledges' to draw upon in locating the feminist lineage of their artistic practice. It is arguable therefore that for some women, dance offers a genealogical and social framework which, in being female centred, enables her to be a subject within her own discourse. If, following Irigaray, women need to hold onto their female genealogies as a way of supporting their incursions into the symbolic, then it must be considered that there is an ongoing need for the feminist dancer-choreographer to affirm her female lineage in a self-reflexive way, because this is part of her construction, it is her tradition, her point of departure and her site of regeneration. Dance genealogies can also be the source of a feminist identity so long as they are not taken up in a naive celebratory and uncritical way, that is they need to stem from recognition of how the female-feminist is caught up in conflicting and often contradictory webs of identifications within a phallocentric order. In this sense Irigaray's stress on the importance of women's genealogical frameworks for a culture of difference is helpful in discerning the desired limits of a practice which begins from a critical deconstruction of its traditions.
5.5 Identifying the problematics for feminist choreographies

The poststructuralist postmodern critique of identity and the deconstruction of a unitary model of the body are helpful in challenging essentialism. In consequence spaces for the resignification of the body within discourses are created. However the 'view from nowhere' and the dream of being "everywhere", which is the extreme formulation of this position, whilst theoretically seductive, is an untenable position when considered in relation to the politics of experience (Bordo in Nicholson 1990, p143). In Chapter 3.2 it was explained how many women live with an entirely punitive attitude towards their bodies, experiencing their corporeal identity as fragmented and divided. To work on deconstructive techniques of fragmentation, distortion and deformation, can be to heighten the experience of the body as fragmented and split without allowing the opportunity for its re-constitution and re-construction as meaningful and valuable for women. As a choreographer and teacher I have a responsibility for my own body and those other embodied subjects with whom I work. As a feminist I recognise the importance of imparting an ethics of care through my dance practice and by these means resisting the somatophobia which exists within dominant dualist (mis)conceptions. Given this legacy of dualist assumptions however, the question of how to engage critically with phallomorphic posturings of femininity in order to deconstruct these, without ourselves becoming the victims, rather than the subjects, of our own discourse remains. This is a real risk for dancer/choreographers for if the predominance of the phallic symbolic has lead to women taking up attitudes towards their bodies which are inappropriate to their morphology, constructing them as 'phallic feminine', to heighten the experience of this through postmodern measures of excess, irony and exaggeration is to construct...
and entrench an entirely punitive attitude towards the body. This risk exposes dancer/choreographers on a physical level to injury, arthritis and chronic pain and on a psychological level to a divided and fragmentary sense of self.

In relation to these debates the problematics for feminist choreographic practices can be posited this way: dancers, whose principal significatory mode is their bodies' often silent articulations in space, function within the history of a representational apparatus in the West organised in such a way as to concretise sexual difference and to construct the category of Woman as object through the subordination of the female body. At the same time phallomorphic constructions of culture deny woman the possibility to occupy a position as an identity-for-herself. Dancing bodies in performance contend with these legacies through the designation of their space of signification as "feminine" and outside politics and history. This legacy of essentialism hinders dancer's ability to be viewed as agents of cultural production and resistance. Thus, the issue facing feminist choreographers is that of demystifying while politicising the artistic experience of dancing. In order to move beyond the harmful assumptions of dualistic (mis)conceptions a theory of dance as a form of cultural production capable of producing meanings in the world and embodied subject positions is needed. Within this context postmodern deconstructive strategies can be critically engaged to work through the legacies of an essentialist tradition in dance and the understandings brought to its reception as performance. However, the risks of these methods of resistant representation need to be addressed, in particular the "linguistic determinism" which theoretically underwrites semiotic and psychoanalytic analyses; the erasure of the body as matter and its substitution as a set of codes and
signs; and the dangers of deconstructing a tradition in which women have had a degree of control over their bodies and the determination of their agency as cultural producers. It emerges from this that understandings of 'materiality' need to be redefined so as to accommodate new representations of the female-feminist so that we can move towards inscribing alternative figurations of subjectivity beyond the subject/object, mind/matter divide. It is necessary to negotiate these difficulties in finding a theory of interventions appropriate to the experience of choreographic practice within a postmodern cultural context.

Notes

1. Hutcheon (1989) adapts Barthes (1977) concept of 'doxa' as public opinion, or what is taken for granted as 'natural'. To de-doxify is understood in the context of the postmodern cultural critique as a de-naturalising of cultural norms.

2. Scripto-visual work combines photography, text and mixed media. The work of North American artist, Barbara Kruger is exemplary of such an approach in its direct mode of address and its foregrounding of representation as ideology.

3. Lea Anderson (b.1959) is a British choreographer based in London. She founded her all-female dance company, The Cholmondeleys in 1984 and their brother company, the all-male dance company, The Featherstonehaughs in 1988.

4. The trio takes place on the spot with the dancers' movements operating within the range of their static kinespheres. This image complies with Young's (1990) analysis of women's restrained use of space in their tendency towards movement close to the body rather than reaching outwards expansively into the space beyond.

5. Meg Stuart studied with Mark Morris and performed with the Randy Warshaw Company before starting her own company. She is based in Europe.

6. Though Object was performed as part of Skite at The Place Theatre, 7 October 1992.
7. "Feminist actionism" is the term Austrian artist Valie Export used to describe her performance and body art. Her work combines film, video and photography in its questioning of the concept of representation itself (Eiblmayr 1994).

8. For further discussion of this work see Chapter 8.4.

9. This follows Irigaray's explanation of the limitations placed on women's choice of body-image within a society in which the male imaginary predominates. Either women can become 'like men', that is become male-identified, or be 'for-men', a "kind of living doll", or forge a tenuous identity on the margins of the symbolic and risk being isolated as lesbian, feminist, witch or virago (Whitford 1991a, p153).

10. Semiotics and psychoanalysis are linguistically bound modes of discourse. As hegemonic discourses they propound a view of the linguistic signifier as the dominant organising concept of all sign systems. Whereas semiotics proposes a metonymic relation, in that all sign systems are organised like language, psychoanalytic discourse proposes a metaphoric relation with language in the imaginary-symbolic production of subjectivity. This dependency means that, as de Lauretis explains, a hierarchical relation is installed between discourses, in which cultural forms such as cinema are made subservient to language (de Lauretis 1984).

11. The 'promise of the female imaginary' is set out in This Sex Which is Not One (1985b). It is locatable through 'speaking (as) woman', 'parler femme', through 'sexuate discourse', 'le discours sexué'.

12. The death drive is understood to be both destructive and creative. Women's death drives are particularly dangerous however in that they can be turned against themselves in the absence of sufficient symbolic resources in a 'between-men' culture to counter this. See Whitford (1991a).
Part Two: Addressing the Problematics

Chapter 6  Re-Figuring the Subject: critical and creative 'tools'

6.1 The embodied subject

6.2 Irigaray and the feminine imaginary

6.3 Foucauldian 'practices of self'

6.4 Feminist inscriptions
Chapter 6

Re-Figuring the Subject: critical/creative tools

6.1 The embodied subject

The dancer’s experience of her body may open critical spaces for moving beyond the arrested boundaries between essentialism and constructionism and between celebratory and deconstructive strategies. By virtue of moving in the margins of dominant discourses the multi-sensorial figurations of dancer-choreographers touch upon intervals, gaps and interstices, that are neither rational nor irrational. The dancer’s body is coded and rendered meaningful through training, but as a layer of corporeal materiality, as flows of energy, capable of multiple variations, it can be argued that it cannot be fully apprehended or represented, that is, it exceeds representation. To recompose subjectivity through this praxis is to deterritorialise subjectivities as the dancer cannot be fixed and stabilised in one place, with one centre and one morphology, her every movement interweaves several motions, she is a subject-in-process, a body in flux, constantly re-departing. A sense of self, as an identity endowed with meaning, can be said to be harboured in this living matter.¹ This is not to deny the importance of a politics of location for the feminist embodied subject. For me, this sense of location comes from alternative genealogies, from figuring my motilities within a lineage of female-feminist creativity which occupies a marginal space within dominant representations of culture.

Janet Wolff (1990) suggests that the marginal status of dance within Western culture, when compared to music, opera, film, and literature, may deem it a subversive activity but cautions, "we must beware of making the easy assumption that use of the
body is itself transgressive, in a culture which allows only the 'classical body' (Wolff 1990, p135). It follows from this that dance will only be subversive "when it questions and exposes the construction of the body in culture" (Wolff 1990, p137). In her discussion of 'Reinstating Corporeality' she elucidates the possibilities for this:

The female body, as discursively and socially constructed, and as currently experienced by women, may form the basis of a political and cultural critique - so long as it is one which eschews a naive essentialism and incorporates the self-reflexivity of a recognition of the body as an effect of practices, ideologies, and discourses.

Wolff 1990, p135

What becomes apparent is the necessity of conceptualising the body not as a fixed, stable, unchanging entity, but as undercut and de-stabilised through the effects of corporeal reality as well as social, cultural and linguistic formations. As Stanley and Wise claim:

The 'body' is thus both signified - the product of language and a set of institutions that define, classify, assign, order and control; and also one of the key signifiers in Western culture - 'the body' is actually different bodies around which different readings, significations and judgements can be made.

Stanley and Wise 1993, p197.

Feminist figurations of the subject break with phallocratic schemes in proposing new forms of materialism through the development of a notion of corporeal materiality which emphasises the embodied, and therefore sexually differentiated, structure of the speaking and moving subject. Accordingly the body, or embodiment, of the subject is neither biological essence nor sociological category, but rather understood as a point of overlapping or enfolding, between the physical-sensate, the symbolic and the sociological (Braidotti 1994). To explore and legitimate the political agency of this
speaking/moving embodied subject through the opening of alternative forms of agency, that is through freeing thought from the hold of phallocratic dogmatism, requires acting simultaneously on the discursive and the material registers of subjectivity.

No longer entombed by her subordination to dualistic hierarchical thinking, the "embodied subject", through her "intelligent materiality", exposes the metaphysical foundations on which classical notions of subjectivity relied (Braidotti 1994). In the discursive spaces opened through this rearrangement of knowledge and power over the body, an alternative female subjectivity emerges, but the problem remains of finding adequate representations for her. That is, representations which neither essentialise, nor disfigure the embodied subject, but positively inscribe difference. Feminist inscriptions in the symbolic realm of cultural production, require a dual approach: Firstly they are required to critically analyse and deconstruct dominant forms of discourse and sexuality; and secondly, they need to affirm the positivity of difference through the reconstitution and the reconstruction of embodied knowledge.

Through choreography the feminist can work to inscribe both identity and difference through critique and construction. For if, following Cooper Albright (1993, p45), as a feminist I am acutely aware of how deeply bodies are enculturated and encoded through gendered formations, as a dancer I am also highly conscious of the possibilities for re-modelling the body through the acquisition of other styles of motility. As discussed earlier (Part One, Chapter 3.2), dancers who daily work through their knowing bodies are accomplished movement linguists capable of acquiring new movement codes and adapting these through their own materially
specific construction as performers. By re-fashioning embodiment the dancer can subvert the norms through which the feminine body is constructed, at the same time re-valuing the significance of the body for the feminist subject. Feminism in this sense is both a critical practice and a creative drive, it follows from this that both critical and creative tools are needed in addressing the problematics of this project.

Foucault and Irigaray 'move' in very different directions though both refer to the same epistemological inheritance. Whereas the latter deals with the discourse of the crisis of the logos, the former deals with the project of feminism in terms of sexual difference. The combined insights of Foucault and Irigaray enable the feminist both to disinter the "man of reason" which underwrites representations of women and reconfigure representation through the assertion of feminine subjectivity. This is not to override the "profound dissonance" between these two philosopher-thinkers perspectives (Braidotti 1994, p125). Foucault's critique of the logos, through his inattentions to sexual difference, remains caught up in the narrative of sexual sameness, Irigaray, in contrast, argues for sexual otherness as the central strategy for the feminist project in post-modernity. But the eclecticism of this approach, in drawing from both Irigaray and Foucault, enables the feminist subject to remain mobile in inscribing politically informed choreographies that intersect and interact with complex levels of subjectivity.

6.2 Irigaray and the feminine imaginary

The value of Irigaray's work for feminist artists is its emphasis on both critique and creation. What is at stake in Irigaray's project is the double drive to represent a
feminine corporeal reality that has never been adequately represented and also to enter into dialogue with the masters of Western philosophy, mimicking and subverting their authority through her insistence on the ontological basis of sexual difference. In relation to the latter, Irigaray holds that within Western discourse, there is no space for the representation of femininity which corresponds to the feminine imaginary. That is, within a symbolic order within which the phallus maintains its centrality, the female imaginary cannot yet be said to exist, it is still to be created (Whitford 1991a): "So woman has not yet taken (a) place" (Irigaray 1985a, p227). Given this, the task of the feminist can be said to construct the conditions through which the female subject is made possible. Irigaray privileges certain kinds of relations, sensations, forms and spaces which allow for the conditions of 'her' emergence: in horizontal relations between women (the prototypical relationship being vertical relations as between mothers in daughters); in symbolic forms isomorphic with the female imaginary ('mucosity' and 'two lips'); in the divine (as a spiritual 'home' for women); through touch (self-affection), laughter and jouissance; and in particular kinds of spaces, for example envelopes, volume-fluidity and volumes without contours). In relation to the latter Irigaray states:

Everything, then, should be rethought in terms of volute(s), helix(es), diagonal(s), spiral(s), curl(s), turn(s), revolution(s), pirouette(s)....An increasingly dizzying speculation which pierces, drills, bores a volume still assumed to be solid.

Irigaray in Whitford 1991b, p64

The critical task for feminists in deconstructing apparent truths in negotiating the minefield of the 'always already' of masculinist narratives can lead to a kind of paralysis, in frozen gestures stuck in the confines of discourse. Irigaray's poetic
language, through her symbolisations and energies, help feminists to invent the next step(s).

Irigaray attempts to construct a representation of femininity in discourse which is isomorphic with feminine desire (her metaphors of 'mucosity' and the 'two lips' emerge in this context), yet this is not to presume an essentialist foundation for her vision of sexuate culture. The radicalism of Irigaray's project is its refusal of masculinist notions of essence. Irigaray's 'woman-for-herself' is a strategic intervention in phallocentric discourse which defines the logic of normative definitions of identity as it cannot be reduced to a unitary understanding. Her representation of femininity does not presume a determinist explanation of anatomy as destiny, but sees the representation of masculinity and femininity as being constructed through the meanings the male and the female body come to have within dominant modes of signification, in disrupting the symbolic and imaginary frameworks for these lived meanings a different mode of be-coming is enabled. Morphology in this sense is not concerned with a given body, but with the body as made meaningful for the subject. Irigaray's writings dislodge the universality of phallic morphology by suggesting a different figuration, a morphology that could take shape through different signifying practices and discourses (Munster 1986).

In this regard Irigaray's emphasis on the importance of women's genealogical frameworks for women's identity in the symbolic is significant for in order for women speak (as) women, they "must be allowed access to an other identity", that is, women need to find value in being women and "not simply mothers" (Irigaray in
Whitford 1991, p31). This relates to Irigaray’s claims that the patriarchal symbolic order is dominated by a destructive imaginary which privileges relations ‘between-men’. A renewal of the female identity means recognising this and cutting through the umbilical cord to dislodge the masculine imaginary’s attachments to the unconscious, whilst allowing the female imaginary to find a voice.

In relation to the problematics identified in the previous chapter for inscribing feminist choreographies, Irigaray’s conceptualisations of the feminine imaginary, along with her recognition of the need to establish a space for its entry into the symbolic - through feminine-identified structures and genealogies - without reducing women’s role to ‘other of the same’, offers theoretical resources and creative energies for this project. Through Irigaray, feminists recognise the importance for women in finding symbolic forms which are isomorphic with their morphology, opening up spaces for different figurations of desire. The images of ‘two lips’ and ‘mucosity’ powerfully counteract that of the ‘phallus’, but women also need to be imaginative in designating their own symbols, symbols which are meaningful for them in relation to their cultural inheritances. This applies also to women’s genealogical frameworks. As black feminist philosophers have pointed out the shaping of gender roles can be determined as much by matriarchal lineages as by patriarchy (Humm 1994). Black feminist criticism in this sense provides alternative models of women’s genealogical frameworks. Alice Walker for example in her role as both storyteller and philosopher-critic sees herself as a ‘mediator’ between contemporary culture and ancient belief systems. She describes as ‘Womanist’ her links with the Yoruba deity Osun and through her texts allows these ancient voices to speak (Walker 1984).
Feminine-identified symbols and genealogies provide women with the resources for a renewal of feminine identity without reducing their movements to the ‘other of the same’, but these need to be responsive to women’s location within specific racial and ethnic alliances.

The affirmative feminist futures of Irigaray’s feminine imaginary need to be countered by the critical function of feminist theory in unpicking the warp and woof of phallocentric alignments. This involves dealing with the concrete effects of discourse and therefore requires critical tools which enable the feminist to take hold of social practices and locate the specificities of their oppression.

6.3 Foucauldian ‘practices of self’

Foucault’s concept of discourse, as a structuring principle within society (applied to institutions, modes of thought and action, and individual subjectivity), combined with his theory of the ‘technologies of self’, is helpful in this regard as it explains how power functions through the body and the possible sites and strategies of resistance to it. In particular the anti-essentialism of Foucault’s critique, suggests a view of the workings of power without the baggage of binaristic thought, while at the same time, it proposes a model of construction which can be appropriated by feminists to locate the material specificities of embodied subjectivities through their location within social and historical formations.

Discourse theory proposes a system of knowledge which is fluid and multiple and through which the individual subject is defined as an entity capable of resistance and
reconstitution. As Hekman states, "the constitutive powers of discourse can continue to remind feminists that women are made, and not born" (1990, p89). Discourses and social practices construct male and female bodies in ways that constitute and validate the power relations between men and women. Foucault has demonstrated how power, as a productive and positive force, acts on and through the body, and how the construction of the body is coterminous with the construction of subjectivity. It follows from this that the feminine body-subject is partially constituted through the specific configurations of power which inhere in the normative values of gender categories.

Barkty (1988) adopts and adapts a Foucauldian approach in her analysis of the various practices and discourses through which femininity as a category is constituted. Examining three specific forms of practice through which femininity is installed - appropriate size and figuration; gestural range, styles of motility and postural alignment; ornamentation and display - Barkty characterises women's experience of bodily 'being' in negative terms as women's bodies are overwritten by the "total", "exhaustive", and "perpetual" demands of male-defined disciplinary regimes. Iris Young (1990) also attempts to 'name' the specific characteristics of women's experience of embodiments and locates for instance, women's reluctance to reach, stretch and extend the body and to meet resistances of matter in motion, as evidence of how spatially confined women are within a patriarchal order. Although both these feminist critics are right to challenge the 'gender blindness' of Foucault's critique there are problems with attempting to 'name' the specificities of women's experiences of their bodies. The problem with both of these analyses is that they attempt to
construct a category of female embodied experience as if all women experienced their bodies in the same way, ignoring the role of differing identities across race, age, class, sexuality and levels of mobility. A thirty year old dancer for example can be said to have a very different experience of her body from a sixty eight year old grandmother. Underlying Barkty’s representation of women’s oppression in their bodies, is an assumption of a ‘true’ female body, untainted by patriarchy. An alternative view to this is the more avowedly Foucauldian stance in which, "just like the category of ‘woman’ in which it is caught up, the female body is socially and discursively constructed, and therefore, an historically variable construct" (McNay 1992, p36). As McNay states:

This is not to deny the differences in the way in which the male and female bodies are constructed, but rather to accept that female bodies are worked upon in socially specific ways, rather than in terms of an eternal, undifferentiated opposition between the sexes.


In appropriating Foucauldian theory for feminist deconstructive purposes, McNay locates Foucault’s theory of ‘practices of self’ as key to theorisations of gender insubordination and transformation.

Although much of Foucault’s work emphasises ‘techniques of domination’, that is, how the body is made ‘docile’ through the inscription of social practices and norms, in his later works, *The Use of Pleasure* (1985), and *The Care of the Self* (1986), he takes up a different position, one which, following McNay’s (1992) analysis of this for feminism, may be of use here in identifying critical strategies for feminist choreographic interventions. Accordingly, Foucault analyses what he terms
'technologies of the self' as those practices and techniques through which individual subjects actively fashion their own identities. That is, individuals may resist the homogenising, normative forces of power within modern society through assertions of autonomy. Such a view resists an essentialising view of the self as reliant upon a prediscursive formation by its stress on the way in which these practices and technologies are always determined by the social and historical context. This position also escapes the annihilation of agency which an extreme constructionist position leads to through its formulation of the body as a 'tabula rasa' without any significance outside language. Foucault likens this understanding of the subject's active engagement in the fashioning of her/his identity to a creative act: "from the idea that the self is not given to us, I think that there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art" (Foucault in Rabinow 1984b, p351).

It is through Foucault's understanding of an individual self fashioning her or his existence in dynamic relation to social structures and institutions, that a sense of gender as an active and never-completed process of engendering and enculturation capable of transformation can be located. Unlike his earlier theorisations of the body as a static, one-dimensional surface of inscription the body is understood in Foucault's later works as a more dynamic unity and as "a variable surface or boundary which shapes the individual's stylistics of existence" (McNay 1992, p73).

Feminist reconceptualisations of the subject have been significantly influenced by Foucault in their definition of the subject as a site of multiple and heterogeneous differences, thus moving beyond the self/other, "I"/"not-I" binarisms (Fuss 1989,
For feminist conceptions of dance, Foucault’s analysis is extremely useful in providing anti-essentialist understandings of the body/self relation, enabling us to move from a ‘what is my relation with my body’ perspective to ‘how do I construct my sense of self through stylisations of the corporeal?’

A feminist appropriation of Foucauldian analysis follows Grosz’s delimitation of an "inscriptive" model for understanding contemporary bodies. According to her characterisation of this, bodies "speak" through the encoding of signs, they become "intextuated" and "narrativized", and social codes, laws, norms and ideals become "incarnated" (Grosz 1993, p199). This is not to infer a passive, docile, surface of inscription, remembering that:

If bodies are traversed and infiltrated by knowledges, meanings, and power, they can also, under certain circumstances, become sites of struggle and resistance, actively inscribing themselves on social practices. The activity of desiring, inscribing bodies that though marked by law, make their own inscriptions on the bodies of others, themselves, and the law in turn, must be counterposed against the passivity of the inscribed body.

Grosz 1993, p199.

An "inscriptive" model of understanding is useful for feminist analyses because it provides a framework through which we can decipher the ways in which power acts on and through the body without reliance upon an originary presence, but also without denying the corporeal reality of bodies and the potential this offers for re-inscribing subjectivity. As Foucault writes:
Deployments of power are directly connected to the body - to bodies, functions, physiological processes, sensations and pleasures; far from the body having to be effaced, what is needed is to make it visible through an analysis in which the biological and the historical are not consecutive to one another...but are bound together in an increasingly complex fashion in accordance with the development of the modern technologies of power that take life as their objective.

Foucault 1977a, pp151-152.

A Foucauldian conception of "inscription" can therefore be seen to avoid the pitfalls of a postmodern surface politics which risks reinforcing the polarity of surface/depth, interior/exterior binarisms, through its insistence on a writing on a surface, but a surface that includes the body's depths. For Foucault the workings of history are inscribed, in the nervous system, in the temperament and in the digestive apparatus (Foucault 1977b). The usefulness of an inscriptive model for feminist art practices centred on the body, is found in its stress on corporeality as a site for the reinscription of signs within the framework of social, historical and psychic processes.

Tools for the analysis of gender coding through the body and its critical decoding can be found in appropriations of a Foucauldian analysis. Foucault's critique of the disciplinary regimes through which the individual is subjected and subjugated assist the choreographer in understanding how her practices, and the stylisations of embodiment which these engender, intersect with the cult of gender. By employing a Foucauldian notion of the 'practices of the self', it is possible to envisage moving beyond the constraining fictions of gender by remodelling embodied subjectivity through micropolitical practices and cultural constructions. Reinscribing the body in this way, the choreographer can expose the normative fictions which condition the
discursive limits of bodily constructions and posit other figurations of dancing subjectivities.

6.4 Feminist inscriptions

A postmodern understanding of feminist embodied subjectivity needs to encompass the multiplicity of ways in which women experience their bodies, for there are as many styles of embodiment as there are modes of subjectivity. In re-figuring the subject the 'toolbox' of Foucauldian analysis and Irigarayan philosophy enables the feminist choreographer to envisage transformations of movement and meaning in her practice. These transformations can occur on multiple levels as the issue of re-modelling the subject, as a de-centering, striates consciousness.

Given the heterogeneous and decentralised character of power, multiple strategies of resistance to it are deemed necessary in the inscribing of feminist choreographic practices. Judith Butler's theory of 'performativity' is a helpful tool in this process as it enables the feminist choreographer to conceive possibilities for re-styling embodiment through enactments of the unfamiliar.

Butler's understanding of how gender is constituted supplements and extends Foucauldian notions of the body as a historically and culturally specific construct. Accordingly gender is not a stable identity, nor a locus of agency, but rather a social positionality, tenuously constituted in time through a stylised repetition of "acts":
The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self.

Butler 1990b, p 139.

Gender can be regarded in this sense, not as an essential attribute, but as a "corporeal style" contingently constructed through codings and inscriptions. It follows from this that the performance of gender ‘acts’ is constitutive rather than expressive and therefore that the feminist subject can conceive of being constituted differently.

If the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts, through time, and not a seemingly seamless identity, then the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style.

Butler 1990c, p271.

Whilst Butler's analysis of the discursive performative draws upon a specific body of contemporary theory and epistemology, in particular speech act theory, and therefore has particular bearing on the signifying systems of language and codes of textuality, Phelan (1993) suggests that feminists engaged in performance, as actual theatre "events" can usefully engage with this body of knowledge as a strategy for moving beyond bifurcated gender constructs within the theatrical frame. This is not to deny the limits of the discursive, but to recognise the potential for deconstructing dominant registers of gender by installing a different set of codes through the body as a partial and provisional strategy.

As Judith Butler (1993) suggests, discourses gain their normative authority, through citing their conventions. An understanding of the constitutive powers of the
performative can inform an understanding of dance as a cultural practice, regulated through disciplinary regimes through which dancing bodies are subjected and subjugated. Taking this model into the studio and allowing it to inform choreographic practice enables me to engage with the codes, conventions, behaviours, gestures and configurations of movement which condition our location as 'women' and to reassemble these through consideration of the possibilities for moving 'otherwise'.

Notes

1. This follows Rosi Braidotti (1994) who claims that the "self"...is anchored in this living matter" (p165), only I have substituted "anchored" with "harboured", as the former risks the danger of drowning as opposed to the latter term which suggests protection and a point of re-departing.

2. Bodily materiality, or embodiment, following Foucault, can be regarded as the materialism of the flesh. It follows from this that the embodied subject is the material, concrete effect, of a process in which knowledge and power are the main poles (Braidotti 1994, p57).

3. Chris Weedon describes discourses as "ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and the relations between them" (1987, p108).

4. Elizabeth Grosz (in Alcoff and Potter 1993) distinguishes between two broad categories of twentieth century thinking on the body. One approach is characterised as "inscriptive" and the other concerns the experiences of the "lived body". Whereas the former is derived from the thought of Nietzsche, Kafka, Foucault, and Deleuze, the latter is influenced by the fields of psychology and phenomenology. Whereas the first conceives the body as a surface on which social law, morality and values are inscribed, within the second category, the lived experience of the body, its internal or psychic inscription is highlighted. It is unclear whether these two approaches are compatible or even capable of synthesis, but as Grosz (1993) points out they provide useful theoretical categories for problematising the dichotomous pairing of terms which have come to contain the body in Western thought.

5. Theories of performativity relate to speech act theory. A performative is defined as a discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names (Austin 1975), an example is the biblical statement, "let there be Light!" according to which the phenomena of light is 'named' into existence.
However, as Derrida makes clear the power of naming is not originary but derivative: "Could a performative utterance succeed if its formulation did not repeat a "coded" or iterable utterance, or in other words, if the formula I pronounce in order to open a meeting, launch a ship or a marriage were not identifiable as conforming with an iterable model, if it were not then identifiable in some way as a "citation"?" (Derrida 1988, p18).
Part Three: Strategies for Inscribing Difference

Introduction

Chapter 7  Deconstructing gender through reinscribing the body, or learning to move ‘otherwise’

7.1 Encode and decode

7.2 My Body/Your Body: the politics of location

7.3 Moving beyond gender

7.4 Double Dance: An economy of exchanges between women
Part Three

Strategies for Inscribing Difference

Introduction

Any work is a strategy to resolve, transpose, reweight, dilute, arrange, substitute contradictory material from culture, from society, from personal life. And (the) female aesthetic? Various and possibly contradictory strategies of response and invention shared by women in response to gender experiences.


The following strategies for feminist informed choreographies are neither complete nor exhaustive. They arose from what I perceived to be the at least dual task for the feminist choreographer to both critique dominant constructions of femininity and to create new figurations of feminist embodied subjectivity. As responses to my personal experience, the experiences of other women whose voices are co-present in this making, and the philosophical and critical resources of feminist theories, they speak of pleasures, conflicts, resolves and desires. To affirm the pleasures of being in our bodies and at the same time challenge the appropriation of this for the 'other' is to walk a particular tightrope, holding the tension between these poles is to experience contradiction and paradox. But as points of entry, as beginnings, again and again, movement in these spaces - interstices, gaps and intervals - is an oscillation between one thing and another: encoding and decoding; speaking and moving; forming and de-forming; activity and passivity; the familiar and unfamiliar. It is more than this too as through alternation meanings proliferate rhizomatically spreading through the heterogeneous differences constructed through choreographies whose tracings are both whole and divided, their presence at any one moment being
also the site of their loss. As fragments cobbled together in the discursive ordering of cultural production they embody something of the processes, critical, analytical, discursive, material, linguistic and social underpinning and overlocking this research. The image of the "cobbler" as a person who makes or mends, who puts together clumsily or who paves (cobblestones) provides a useful metaphor for this role.

Chapter 7

Deconstructing Gender through Reinscribing the Body, or Learning to Move 'Otherwise'

7.1 Encode and Decode

When we can look back at ourselves through our own cultural creations, our actions, our ideas, our pamphlets, our organization, our history, our theory, we begin to integrate a new reality. As we begin to know ourselves in a new relation to one another we can start to understand our movement in relation to the world outside. We can begin to use our self-consciousness strategically.


Sheila Rowbotham's key text for second wave feminism, Woman's Consciousness, Man's World continues to have relevance in defining a modality of consciousness which is of strategic importance for women. Acquired habits of movement mask other possibilities, but by looking "back at ourselves" and our "cultural creations", through consciousness of gendered formations of power, it is possible to start to envisage a "habit change" at the level of movement invention and inscription (de Lauretis 1987, p9; Rowbotham 1973).
The codes and conventions of dance discourses mark the body in specific ways. Habits of motion circumscribe our perceived physical and psychical limits and locate the dancer within gendered categories. Dancer/choreographers, in particular those trained in postmodern dance techniques, engage in interrogative processes, negotiating, refining and analysing their bodily materiality through an awareness of the spatial, temporal and anatomical parameters of their movement. In combining this knowledge with a critical understanding of how the body is interpolated by ideologies and worked upon by configurations of power, the dancer/choreographer can also develop a consciousness of the gendered identity of her movements. This requires a two-way vision as dancers look inside their bodies in working to enhance bodily intelligence, and outside to critically examine what is constructed in this process. Advances in video technology have greatly enhanced our capability as dancer/choreographers in being able to analyse our constructions and can therefore be brought to play in enacting a "habit change" in movement styles (Rowbotham 1973, pp.27-28; de Lauretis 1987, p9).

Over years of training I have invested many resources in the microphysics of my construction as a dancer. A mainstay of this ongoing process has been the desire for improved fluidity and ease of movement. This has lead me to practice a variety of 'New Dance' techniques - in particular release alignment and contact improvisation - and to supplement these with the experience of Alexander Technique, yoga and T'ai Chi. But watching videos of myself I am enormously dissatisfied, critical opinion confirms my fears: "a fine-boned, reedy dancer with a cool, cerebral lyricism" (Burke 1990); "her waif-like appearance in a lithesome performance" (Benson 1991).
I am caught in age-old webs of identifications as dancer, daughter, female/feminine/feminist. A proliferation of representations, images, reflections, myths, identifications inhabit my Imaginary. So when I create I flounder on my own historicocultural limits caught up in the scene of History and the reproduction of femininity (ideology). The possibility of radical transformation of behaviour, role and understanding must necessarily implicate structures of training, education, performance and the transformation of my relationship to my body and to other bodies too.

No longer content with what my body has to offer me, I seek out other stylisations of corporeality and, being mobile, changeable, open, graft their gestures, habits, motions onto my body. Changing syntax, impulse and effort/shape I attempt to re-model my "corporeography" through a process of re-signification (Kirby 1989, p103).

*Improvisational Strategies for Locating the 'Other' Within*

*navigating the unexpected (Mary Fulkerson)*

*allowing movements which are uncomfortable, awkward, clumsy to enter my movement syntax*

*stopping short, resisting flow - FLOW IS SHOW (Deborah Hay)*

*holding tension in my body and not riding it through - refusing momentum*

*denying the solace of an extended line, a graceful curve*

*staccato vibrate convulse*

*m/f: To fix in space-time and then to undo by decodings, spasms.*
Breaking with deeply entrenched patterns of motion is difficult. Working against the grain in learning to move otherwise through the negation of what comes "naturally", is accompanied by frustration, discomfort and physical pain. Discourses compete for supremacy within my embodied subjectivity and by these measures I come to experience my body as a site of struggle - The Body as Battleground - as Banes (1994, p45) conceives it.

*But how can she move in unthought of, unfamiliar ways. She has him on her mind, blocking her vision is his position, his centrality, his strength, his power, his forcefulness, his directness, his forgetfulness. He blocks her vision of other possibilities, is there no way out, no way to escape these inappropriate gestures? I work my way through them, collecting and collating in my image repertoire postures of masculine power. If men territorialise women, can women territorialise men, what monsters then? Thinking "man-size". Emptying Herself into the other. But exhaustion grabs hold of me. Wobble-fall and I seek to end this complicity with binaries, to refuse his ‘otherness’. But something of this battle is retained in the dance production which this process gives rise to. A critic for Bloodsongs, had this to say about the qualitative dimensions of the work: "Brown has a fierce energy that is exciting to watch. Yet, that energy is always contained and directed, like a boxer thrusting out a quick jab, rather than let loose and spilling out" (Jones 1994).*
Now when I ‘look back at myself’ through past videos I see change engendered in the spatio-temporal and effort/shape dimensions of the way I move and recognise how, in shifting the paradigms of my motility I have enabled the inclusion of previously unknown or unrecognised movements to arise. This is not to deny the co-presence of earlier markings and styles of motility but, in experiencing ‘other’ modes of embodiment, to question the hold certain configurations of movement have on certain kinds of dancers.

These calculated shifts of gestural motilities, through grafting the unfamiliar, the coded masculine through my movement syntax congealed and dissolved, clearing space for Imposture a solo dance which evolved into a set of trios in Bloodsongs. Traces of its processual politics are found in the imposition of ‘man-size’ jackets and in its use of a convulsive and tensile movement language.

Imposture means to assume a false identity, a deliberate fakeness. This fakery evolved from a form of self-denial, denying what moved me ‘naturally’ through the conscious acquisition of unfamiliar movements. But if this is a personal struggle what does it mean to transpose it onto other bodies? I arrived in the studio with a set of movement phrases and attempted to teach these to the dancers. These movement phrases were modified and reconfigured, adapted to the movement syntax of ‘other’ embodied subjects, the rhythmic phrasing of the music, and the spatial parameters of a trio. By these means rough is made smooth as the demand to know where the other is in space delimits the motional range to the prescribed. In attempting to construct difference through the body the awkwardness of imitation
gives way to familiarity, so that in encoding new registers of motility the body is re-territorialised.

Imposing Narratives (video extract one)

Three women hoist their torsos in an extended arc, abruptly, forcefully like fairground horses gone wild, moving in a line across the back of the stage. Jumping straight up they click the insides of their feet together and then twist, elbow to hip, in lateral torsions, like go-go dancers on speed. Unison does not mean Sameness. The trio dissolves into an environment of gaps.

go-go dancing
with my sisters on a bed
rapid motion of hips, head and hair
a kind of ordered hysteria

STOP THAT

Jacqui searches the inside lining of her jacket, for the lost object, but loses herself in a flurry of hair and cloth. Whipped and frenzied.

Jacqui and Carol dance a samba rhythm moving upstage on parallel tracks, they touch foreheads and enclose one in the other (jacket). Their arms loop in a sensual knot and they spin, remembering the Wiesenthal sisters. Carol slides to the floor and plops on her side walking horizontally she turns stiffly around herself. Verticality upturned - arteries swill. Meanwhile Josephine goes it alone upstage as baton waving coded mannequin moving in fits and starts, rears and haltings.

Lying on the ground, I am reminded that space has a history.

Vertical - Ballet; heaven; freedom; upward-aspiring; roots; transcendence; culture.

Horizontal - Prone and naked; earth; support; prop; rhizomes; immanence; nature.

How to resist the history of the horizontal? Not with more uprightness but with re-territorialisations of space and the body.

But (im)posture, its a (non)sense. A radical transformation of behaviour is not yet possible so long as we continue to flounder in the Old Order. Women ‘into the light’ but nothing grows fully in the dark.

7.2 MY BODY/YOUR BODY: the politics of location

In Part two Chapter 4.5, it became evident that an uncritical reliance on the use of
personal experience' within choreographies fails to address the legacy of the
attachments Enlightenment thought immures the female body in, as naturally given
essence. Such an approach can also lead to a false oculism in assuming the collective
validity of experience for all women, erasing and effacing the heterogeneity of
women's lived experiences through their bodies. In relation to these issues, the task
confronting the female choreographer is the strategic use of experience, not as
originary, but as discursively constructed and culturally specific.

Choreography is a social, relational activity. We learn to dance through other
embodied subjectivities and it is the re-fashioning of this acquired movement
knowledge, together with the inter-relationships between dancing subjects, their
movements, gestures and often personal experiences, and the social and cultural
frameworks which impinge on these processes, which comprise the basis of much
choreographic invention. Dances, in the sense that they operate at the crossings of
subjectivities and motilities within specific contexts, come into being through
intersubjective processes.¹ The politics of the personal in feminist dance constructions
is relational.

In making Bloodsongs we danced for each other, exchanged stories and movements,
exposed parts of ourselves, supported and confronted one another. Over time the
resulting disparate fragments of experiences were woven together in the construction
of choreographies, which although marked by the authorial presence of one person,
were inhabited by 'other' subjectivities whose own motilities were also significant
agents of its construction. This fluidity of authorship is a particular feature of
contemporary choreographic methods which rely on improvisation as a tool for construction, but it can also be said to apply within other methods of choreography where the choreographer relies on the interpretation of her dancers to set movement tasks and the translation of movement from one body to another.

In providing improvised responses to choreographic tasks and questions, dancers inevitably rely on the resources of their inscribed bodies and subjectivities. In constructing Bloodsongs, traces of dreams, memories, images, reflections on the past and present, and ‘what the body remembers’ were used as resources for, and triggered through, movement improvisations. The resulting fragments were discussed, made into scores, animated, elaborated, discarded and worked upon.

```
close your eyes and tell me what you see
how do you represent your desire
why is dancing for you
what do you like about your body
what don't you like about your body
what are you afraid of
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```
find a place to settle within the curves of an-other body
map the topography of your body through gesture
move across the room in a line keeping the other dancer within your peripheral vision
wanting to go somewhere but holding back
grabbing attention
running in a circle find points of confluence with others
overlap - intercept - collide
keeping your gaze mobile
```

The improvisations arising from instructions, questions and tasks became the materials of the dance constructions as they were negotiated, refined and collectivised. Following Cixous’s invocation for woman to "write herself...put herself into the text...by her own movement" (Cixous in Humm 1992, p196), choreographic
processes which privilege the personal contributions of dancers through improvisation, in emphasising their movements and their styles of motility, may be regarded as practices which operate, in Adrienne Rich's term, through a "politics of location" (Rich 1986, p215). In considering how the body is imprinted by experience, we make the acquired knowledge of the body visible and move from a position of 'the' body to 'my' body through the particularities of experience and the specificities of bodily immersion in constructs of race, class, gender and sexual identity. Through working upon my own bodily constructions, I recover the centrality of embodiment to subjecthood and eschew the abstraction invoked in the term, 'the body'. Such a position recognises that in naming 'my body' the role of social practices in organising and imaging "the body" cannot be ignored, but that through a "politics of location" a space is opened through which to mediate the difference within and between the two terms, that is a play between the body as "object" and my body as "subject".²

"This is not a body of spontaneity and delight it's a highly trained and disciplined body those

Three women sit on chairs facing the audience. Their eyes scan individuals whom they face observing their reactions to the voice-over listening, assenting and contesting to the disembodied voices.

This is not a body of spontaneity and delight it's a trashed, harassed and fearful body and

This is not a body of spontaneity and delight it's a body to whom things have been done as a female body."

The "politics of location" for the dancing feminist means recognising the body as the primary site of subjectivity. Accordingly, the body is not a natural essence, but a socialised and culturally coded entity, at the threshold and intersection of the biological, the social and the linguistic (Braidotti 1994). But how can I, in naming
"my body", resist refiguring the other in my image? That is, in locating "my body" I am plunged into consideration of my lived experience, my particularity, but this risks drowning out the voices of other women whose experiences differ from my own. The "politics of location" can be elaborated into an understanding of the body as a site for the "co-location of differences" (Kirby 1989, p118). Such a position avoids reductive definitions and the risks of universalising 'my experience as a woman'. Representations of "my body" need to be based on by an understanding that there is an interaction between the lived experience of the body and the imaginary, the discursive and social registers of its construction (Whitford 1991). To fail to recognise this is to continue to reproduce the morphology of the male body, for the subject which subtends rationalist discourse is male and is constructed through the suppression of the feminine.

As a woman dancing, the space of my constructions through movement is jammed with prior constructs, dances, choreographies, spectacles, performances, displays, which implicate woman as ideal/sign/object. I cannot simply discount this past, by installing the primacy of my experience 'as a woman', but need to address the social and cultural embeddedness of gendered markings on my body and explore how these are implicated in the apparatus of representation.

In the section of Bloodsongs entitled 'I'd Rather Eat Myself than be Consumed' (video extract two) Josephine stands in a rectangle of light downstage left. Facing the audience, she peels off sections of clothing to reveal parts of her body; her shank, her sternum, the back of her ribs, her collarbone, her hip. She continues to repeat
these gestures as she addresses the audience with a number of rhetorical statements: "I hate men who rape"; "I am afraid of disappointing you"; "I’d rather eat myself than be consumed"; I’d rather have an abortion than a child"; "I’m afraid of dying"; "I’m afraid of the dark"; "I’d rather be a witch than a whore". Juxtaposed against Josephine’s montage of transections of the body and personal revelations, Jacqui and I are involved in an obsessional series of calisthenics, running from one exercise "station" to another across the stage. But Jacqui, distracted by Josephine, runs to join her in a triangulated block of light. She begins uncovering the same small segments of ‘unmarked’ flesh - unmarked, in the sense of being uneroticised zones of the body - at the same time she names in anatomical terminology that which is exposed and gives it a function which relates to her experience of her body: "this is my sternum, it protects my heart"; "this is my shank, it helps me go places faster"; "this is my latissimus dorsi, it helps me push and pull heavy things"; "this is my illium it helps to keep me together". Jacqui’s use of the possessive pronoun can be interpreted as a claiming of her body for herself, resisting its territorialisation as object. In highlighting the lived experience of each revealed section of her body she reinforces an active subjectivity refuting, to use Foucault’s term, invocations of the "docile body".

The interposing of biological, experiential, bio-mechanical, confessional, and psychosocial ‘texts’ with the ambiguous exposing of parts of the body - spectacle, strip-tease, medical examination, display, exhibitionism? - confounds a singular reading of "my body". Rather the interaction of texts and gestures plays across the multi-discursive constructedness of the/my body/ies, reinforcing the co-locatedness
of difference within and between women and situating the body as a site of many centres. This section of the dance ended with my own rendering of the same transections of the body, exposed while standing silently in a spotlight upstage left. Breathless, I bare the same sections of skin, as if to say that from these multifarious experiences of, and discourses on, the body, "you" reduce me to this, mute flesh of immanence.

The use of a collage structure for combining these fragmented narratives of the body denies a sense of internal coherence and what Lyotard calls "the solace of good forms" (Lyotard 1984). Collage techniques are favoured within postmodern strategies for their ability to destabilise the closure of the artifact and linear structures. Within dance compositions the use of collage can be usefully employed to layer narratives of the body but, given the live presence of the dancer's body, without denying its material specificity. Through collage, the body is constructed as a palimpsest through which multi-layered differences are co-located.

Dancer-choreographers need to keep questioning 'what counts as experience', to prise open fractured identities, unravelling unitary selves to reveal the differences within and between women. This requires critical examination of the framing of experience, in particular its 'set-up' within the performance, so as to avoid the fixing of 'types' of 'femininity' and their crystallisation into monadic categories of 'Woman', it also means questioning whose experiences are validated through representation and whose are concealed. At the same time, dancing in the spaces of mobile identities means being responsive to and responsible for, the transmission of 'parent knowledges' and
the intersubjective relations embodied in the collective exchange of dancing. This practice of identity and difference enables the dancer/choreographer to situate herself, through the shifting and multiple sites of co-present subjectivities, within a genealogy of dance culture.

Within *Bloodsongs*, personal experiences of the lived body gave rise to material constructs, phrases of motion, texts and images. Being three women, of diverse backgrounds, the resulting material encompassed a range of positions, styles of subjectivity and modes of corporeality. Relationships were set up within the structuring of the dance through solos, duets and trios and the positioning of dancers within the performance space. The differences between and within us were emphasised through the manipulation of our subjective responses to questions, conditions and material effects in the framing of the dance. Personal experiences were therefore worked through the critical frame of feminism in an attempt to keep fluid the interchange between the personal and the political and resist the freezing of identities into fixed, monadic categories which would reinforce the objectlike status of the female performer. Within this context the audience was invited to identify with a mobility of points of view, to resist the stasis of any one perspective by considering the organisation of experience from varying and multiple sites of signification.
7.3 Moving Beyond Gender

*Continue, don’t run out of breath. Your body is not the same today as yesterday. Your body remembers. You don’t need to remember, to store up yesterday like capital in your head.... Be what you are becoming, without clinging to what you could have been, might be. Never settle. Let’s leave definitiveness to the undecided; we don’t need it. Right here and now, our body give us a very different certainty. Truth is necessary for those who are so distanced from their body that they have forgotten it. But their ‘truth’ makes us immobile, like statues, if we can’t divest ourselves of it. If we don’t annul its power by trying to say, here, now, right away, how we are moved.*


Feminist attempts to deconstruct existing discourses have lead to women negotiating dominant codes, often appropriating these themselves and undermining their authority through postmodern techniques. However this can lead feminists into a no-win situation; as re-casting their inscriptions within phallocratic mouldings misses opportunities for activating alternative modes for reconstructing discourses. Realist modes of representation re-circulate the logic of masculinist narratives, a logic through which, according to Irigaray, women cannot fully appear. That is, if woman is denied subjectivity within discourse, in re-submitting herself to its codes she subjects herself to objectification and dereliction. The ‘always already’ masculinist nature of narratives of gender and the heterosexual contract are reproduced within discourses unless there is a sustained effort to deconstruct them and to reconstruct and reinscribe discourses from ‘other’ positions or perspectives. For Irigaray this means creating a place of enunciation where women can speak as women.

De Lauretis’ characterisation of the "view from elsewhere" is helpful in locating the spaces through which non-hegemonic significations of embodiment may appear
without reliance on the existing narratives of gender. She describes this ‘space’ as, "not some mythic distant past or some utopian future history" but as "the blind spots, or the space-off" found "in the margins of hegemonic discourses" and in the "interstices of institutions and in the chinks and cracks of the power-knowledge apparati" (de Lauretis 1987, p26). Movement in these "spaces" is characterised by its doubledness:

The movement in and out of gender as ideological representation...is a movement back and forth between the representation of gender (in its male-centered frame of reference) and what that representation leaves out or, more pointedly, makes unrepresentable. It is a movement between the (represented) discursive space of the positions made available by hegemonic discourses and the space-off, the elsewhere, of those discourses: those other spaces both discursive and social that exist, since feminist practices have (re)constructed them, in the margins (or "between the lines" or "against the grain") of hegemonic discourses and in the interstices of institutions, in counter-practices and new forms of community.


Although the choreographer/performer, Deborah Hay does not advocate an avowedly feminist stance, her approach to performance can be ‘read’ through de Lauretis’s characterisation of feminist cultural constructions and in relation to her characterisation of the "space off".

In leading her workshops Hay stresses the importance of accessing the unnameable and the undecipherable, that is, that which cannot be contained through image, character, referent, rhythm and flow. Loosening the hold on dominant narratives of meaning, Hay’s movement constructions can be viewed within the theoretical context of feminism as endeavours to articulate motions in the spaces between ideologies.
before they harden into chains - the chains on our bodies and on our brains. Hay talks of the "paradox" of the practice of challenging consciousness and asks: "can consciousness be manifest in ways which challenge - singularity of focus; rhythm; flow; perspectival space; the relation with the audience?" (Hay 1994b). Her "performance meditations" aim to touch upon, through sensate experience, a simultaneity of perception - seeing and being seen; and living and dying within fifty trillion cells at any one moment. Hay describes this as a process of "unlearning" habitual patterns of movement through the "tripping up of perception" (Hay 1994b). She describes how her process of self-learning led her to unpick the acquired habits of extensive training as a dancer:

I spent twenty-two years learning how to dance, eager for training and inspired by my association with other dancers, choreographers, artists, and composers. Nagged by vague, persistent feelings of inadequacy, I spend the next twenty-two years unlearning how to dance. 
Hay 1994a, p64.

Hay's construction of the body attempts to re-order consciousness through the incorporation of undecidables. To participate in one of Hay's workshops, in my experience, is to have a sense of the body in flux as it means relinquishing the prescribed range of movement which years of training in dance has inculcated whilst allowing uncertainty, incoherence and playfulness to enter my movement syntax; it is to accept paradox, contradiction and ambiguity and to refuse the known, the nameable, the recognisable and representable. To experience what she describes as "aha/nada" is to exercise multiple levels of consciousness within one moment.
Wonderment: to delight in these detours. Wandering in the cavities of consciousness. Navigations made possible by a feeling mind. Allowing other movements to enter the spaces of motility, movements which do not repeat past narrations of he/she fantasies. Gestures which refuse re-incorporation into existing syntactical displays. Discovering a state of wonder through material plenitude. These small wondrous dramas - fleeting and impermanent - are intimacies with intangibles. Boundaries made porous. Random occurrences which break logical meaning(fulness).

The embedded chaos of cells whose articulations - random, partial - cannot be named, they exceed the logic of their cultural and scientific coding. Liberating small zones of usually inarticulate flesh. ‘What do they know?’ How much memory is lodged in cells and how much is still to be known?

(Brown, Notes from Hay Workshop Amsterdam, 1994)

If, as some feminists claim, all cells are cultural cells, then the reinscribing of subjectivity requires change at a molecular, as well as a social, cultural and linguistic level. In relation to this, choreographers can explore the issue of molecular consciousness as a way of changing the way we perceive and experience our embodied subjectivity. Such an approach however, undertaken in isolation from other registers of subjectivity, may not be as radical as is supposed given that there can be no direct access to the body unmediated by the social, the discursive, and the linguistic. As Deleuze acknowledges: "It is of course, indispensable for women to
conduct a molecular politics, with a view to winning back their own organism, their own history, their own subjectivity....But it is dangerous to confine oneself to such a subject, which does not function without drying up a spring or stopping a flow" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p276). Nonetheless as a creative tool, the notion of molecular consciousness is helpful as it encourages a perspectival space which dislodges the hierarchical organisation of the mind/body dualism, allowing the "whole body as teacher" to emerge as a site of renewal for embodied subjectivity (Hay 1994).

As a means of thinking through the body, molecular consciousness may assist the feminist in dislodging deep-rooted patterns of movement opening up spaces for non-hegemonic transmutations of embodiment and for the retrieval of the body within a postmodern cultural context which threatens its annihilation through the 'triumph of the image'.

**Improvisation 17 July 1993, PATS Dance Studio, University of Surrey**

Starting from nowhere - no props, no costume, no script, no music, no 'other' outside.
The need to start - again and again - with the known and the unknown resources of my body.
Trying to still the language in my head.

Without direction or instruction, only the ceaseless echo of past teachings and commands, I try to find my "interior compass". The infinite possibilities of this no-where-ness.

The reflexes which give rise to words / the words which give rise to reflexes - alternation and oscillation.

There is no such thing as repetition only insistence. There is no ONE WAY. Slips through webs of identifications in the 'dark' space, the 'becoming' space.

To rest is to fix in time and space, it is to identify a referent. Pose - for the fixed stare, for the camera, for the mirror, for the glassy glare of unknowingness.

Recognition is possession. A constancy of motion, giddying, vertiginous spells and
pulsings, leaps and slicings.

Mary Daly says that we must keep going, because "they" want us to stop. But who are "they"?

My interior compass gives off confused readings. The problems of navigation.

Keeping going to the point of collapse - tired body, screaming with the desire to release the self downwards, to fall, asleep. Testing the physical limits of the body, or is it psychical limits [endurance, the possibility of going beyond the knowable].

It is the middle of the day, I have already been stumbling around in the studio for two hours, trying to cobble together a phrase, a movement idea, some collection of action-gestures which might constitute my idea of progress. But my body seeps, collapses before it has even begun.

[Tired body] How can I say this without drowning?

An impulse, a thought, word, image, reflex, and I follow it through, it leads to something else and something else again, hey presto, I am moving. This is dancing, not thinking, not writing, but thinking, writing and moving at once.

Words and images dissolve and I am moving without premeditation only flinging, turning, twisting, spilling myself through space and beyond. An unexpected occurrence, its like leaving the old languages behind. I find my internal compass and it enables me to navigate these ruptures, these schisms, these gaps and intervals.

And then its gone. Self-doubt and censorship come creeping in, re-installing authority and I am back to the known, the safe, the 'Realisable'.

Never to be repeated again, these 'dances' happen in moments of 'becoming'. They signify for me dance as the embodiment of the 'subject-in-process'.

Not either/or
active/passive
male/female
armoured/wounded
solid/vulnerable
repulsive/attractive
present/absent
hard/soft

neither masculine nor feminine but both, and...
7.4 Double Dance: an economy of exchange between women

In a symbolic order which denies woman an identity other than as "mothers", it is difficult to open a space in which women can speak (as) women ("parler femme") and speak to each other("parler-entre-elles") -, remembering Irigaray's claim that "With your milk, Mother, I swallowed ice" (Irigaray 1981, p60). Irigaray privileges certain sensations, pulsions and types of communion within and between women in her endeavour to locate women's-identity-for-herself.

The sense which could invert things is basically touch, our body as tactile tool for apprehending and manipulating the world, ourselves, the other.

Irigaray in Whitford 1991b, p141.

In Exchanging Selves (video extract three) relationships between women are explored through the medium of touch. This duet for Josephine and Jacqui emerged through improvisations which explored the shifting and variable ways in which women touch each other: instructive, caring, imposing, loving and forceful for instance. Active and passive, soft and hard, the dancers merge and separate. Their roles are ambiguous and fluid as mother, daughter, teacher, student, lover, friend and sister. Keeping their positions mobile in this way avoids the temptation to romanticise and idealise relations between women, remembering Irigaray's claim that women are unable to differentiate from the maternal and so mobilise their own identities.

*I would like us to play together at being the same and different. You/I exchanging selves endlessly and each staying herself. Living mirrors.*

In pairs

The second person approaches the first and, using her hands makes an impression

using touch, pressure, a pull or a push
one place and then another
leaving space between
bring the focus to another zone
directing a part of the body

alternating roles active/passive, receptive/responsive
to lift, place, prise open, compress, re-direct
hands mouth tongue head lips eyes back of the knees
alter the quantity and quality of touch
experiment with force speed direction
allow images to emerge without allowing them to fix
the person being acted upon can comply ignore resist
allowing the response to be spontaneous

use hands knees elbows to direct the focus of attention
alternate between being active and passive

[Improvisation for Exchanging Selves]

Two women touch and re-touch each other themselves
in a circuitous exchange inseparable inexhaustible
bodies enriched by mutual contact

endless change
desire
mutuality

speaking everywhere at once
a simultaneity of sensation
not song but songs (singing in the veins)

Two lips kiss two lips, and openness is ours again. Our ‘world’. Between us, the movement from inside to outside, from outside to inside, knows no limits. It is without end.

Luce Irigaray in Humm, 1992, p207.

The privilege afforded the visual realm within Western culture has meant the suppression of other senses, according to Irigaray, in particular those senses which
are closely associated with the maternal and infant realm like the sense of touch. Irigaray challenges the ocularcentrism of Western culture through privileging touch, in auto-affection and in an economy of exchanges between women.

According to Dempster (1993), a significant element within the modern dance and postmodern dance legacy has been the revaluing and reordering of the hierarchy of the senses. Contact Improvisation in particular, with its emphasis on the tactile, kinaesthetic perception of movement and suppression of the visual is a particularly good example of this. Through moving, mostly in duet form, and maintaining contact between bodies, contact improvisers are engaged in shifting and dissolving boundaries between self and other, and between states of activity and passivity. The yielding, sharing and giving of weight which are the central components of contact privilege the experience of touch and sensation; so that points of contact become points of leverage between one body and another (Cooper Albright 1993). As embodied experience contact serves as a tool for empowering individuals in their physical selves and for expanding the repertoire of forms of communion beyond the dominant associations of physical contact with sex and war. In choreographies contact provides a tool for the exploration of exchanges between women but needs to be worked through a critical context which acknowledges the role of the spectator in constructing meaning. In relation to performance this means negotiating the visual bias installed through the theatrical framing of a dance and the power structures which this implies.
the one enfolds the other with an embrace
two lips kiss two lips
openness is theirs
and sit there beside her
a world between them
moving from inside to outside/outside to inside
she looks at her and her at them - the silent majority
a circularity of exchanges
in the fading light
the enlivening of differences through touch and vision

The cultivation of a multi-sensory mode of performance, through uses of touch and kinaesthesia, as well as visual and aural senses, may work to destabilise conditioned structures of perception. Reclaiming the sensorium of felt experience through textured vision, encouraging audiences to see/perceive more fully. In Bloodsongs relations between ‘women-amongst-themselves’ were explored through dialogues of touch, voice and vision. In exploring feeling, speaking, seeing, as sites of exchange between and among women alternative symbolisations to those of phallomorphic logic were attempted inviting the audience to perceive difference differently.

Competing Desires (video extract four)
two women
marking the space
running, walking, looking (at each other)
in circles, concentric and overlapping
building speed
sliding into the floor and bounding out
circling heads
building momentum
race or ritual?
lifting and supporting each other
catching and caught
testing limits through trust
holding balances and sliding, falling, skimming on the floor

breathless bounding
a velocity of exchanges conjuring fusion
not possession but continuity
no master-slave relation here
nothing by halves

Hydra (video extract five)

1. a monster with nine heads each of which when struck off was replaced by two new ones.
2. a fresh water coelenterate in which the body is a slender polyp with tentacles around the mouth.
3. a persistent trouble or evil.

A duet for two women

lean, terse, strong, linear, focused and soft, moist, blurred, irregular and circular.

The female quest?
Bifocal and multifocal, bodies held in an elastic embrace.
Competition, trust and intimacy.

Not unison but simultaneity.
Intervals.
Intertwining, interlocking, interstitial.

Arms cross and cut - signalling.

Stamping insistence and defiance.
Double dance.
Shunting one foot in front of another.
Arms held in ovals with fisted hands above heads.

Divided consciousness.

My body is both constituted by and constitutive of experience. Dance needs to make
this bodily knowledge visible so as to refute 'the' body's dematerialisation, through its status as external object. Yet the exclusive practices of dance discourses refuse admission to the 'unbound' body. That is the body which exceeds our expectations of a dancerly body: a fleshy body, an aging body, a chaotic, undisciplined body, an abject body, a body of ambiguous sex. The issue of visibility and perception can also be challenged by **who** is seen, and **whose** experiences are rendered. Feminists have demonstrated how dominant constructions of meaning deny visibility to certain kinds of bodies and certain modes of experience. As Elizabeth Grosz (1987) explains, reconstituting the body in feminist terms entails refuting the bifurcatedness of the male/female dichotomy by insisting on the multiplicity of many different kinds of bodies. As she claims, we need to overcome the dominance of certain kinds of bodies by enacting a defiant affirmation of the existence and autonomy of other kinds of bodies and hence subjectivities. Why not the ageing body, the fleshy body, the sweating, helpless body, the body which is out of control, the unstable body (Richard 1993, p11)?

In Liz Agiss and Billy Cowie's, *No Man's Land* (1993) 18 women performers in ages ranging from nine to sixty five dance 12 dances - vignettes of experience enacted through diverse physicalities and social identities. Mostly untrained, these women's movements inscribe a multiplicity of feminine subject positions. Crossing race, class, age and sexualities, their representations opened the dancing space to often unrecognised and denied facets of experience "as women", whilst negotiating dominant images of our sex through assertions of women's agency. The presence of live music and voice, four women cellists and a female singer performing in Polish,
reinforced the sense of a diverse community of women articulating the fullness of bodily experience. In one dance Egg Dance, the two older women of the group slowly step forward from the main body of dancers arranged in a semicircle on chairs facing the audience. A red cushion lies on the floor and they arrange themselves around this, one kneels and the other stands behind her holding an egg in each hand. A slow, dignified dance involving the passing of these eggs between the women, and their touching, of looks and hands, emerges in the shared space. Affirming the presence of older women's sexualities and physicalities, this dance spoke of loss, and presence. In the Kissing Dance two young women engage in a kiss, touching lips but not bodies', for a long continuous time their bodies continue to angle into the kiss but do not merge so that there is a sense of connection but autonomy within the immersion. The sustained kiss in its discreteness exceeds our expectations. In a society within which reminders of the dominance of the paternal signifier are endemic, the sight/site of this kiss instals an alternative symbol of feminine specificity, Irigaray's symbolisation of the 'two lips' and the mucosity of feminine exchanges.

Subjectivity cannot be merely reduced to an expression of the self. To insist on art as self-expression, as the articulation of the 'inner' vision of the woman artist is to encode the natural, substituting the political with the personal, and reducing the power of the artifact to the particularities of the individual. What seems necessary is for the woman choreographer to incorporate the heterogeneity of embodied experience and to challenge her own boundaried existence through the incorporation of 'other' sites of differences, by leaving gaps, by dancing beyond endings, by privileging process
and by incorporating the embodied presence of other women. Working in these in-between spaces, feminist consciousness is understood as a process through which the self is always in the making.

Notes

1. Jessica Benjamin (1986) reconsiders the ‘problem’ of women’s desire within the Western phallocratic system by creating an alternative model of subjectivity, one which is not reliant upon the phallic symbolic. She discusses "intersubjectivity" as a spatial, rather than symbolic, mode of representation, through which individual subjects, through their experience of the ‘other’ come to know themselves: "The intersubjective mode assumes the possibility of a context with others in which desire is constituted for the self. It thus assumes the paradox that in being with the other, I may experience the most profound sense of self" (Benjamin 1986, p92).

2. As Rich writes: "When I write 'the body', I see nothing in particular. To write 'my body' plunges me into lived experience, particularity: I see scars, disfigurements, discolorations, damages, losses, as well as what pleases me...To say 'the body' lifts me away from what has given me a primary perspective. To say 'my body' reduces the temptation to grandiose assertions" (Rich 1986, p215).

3. For a discussion of "cellular consciousness" in relation to Deborah Hay’s working processes see Foster (1986 pp11-12) and for a discussion of "molecular politics" in relation to the work of Deleuze, see Braidotti (1994).

4. Mary Fulkerson (1993) uses the term, "interior compass" in her improvisation workshops.

5. Mary Daly, spoke of this at a lecture given to launch her recent book, Outercourse, Conway Hall, London, 2 June 1993.

6. This improvisation was adapted from Tufnell and Crickmay (1990, p63).

Part Three: Strategies for Inscribing Difference

Chapter 8 Performing feminisms

8.1 Framing desire
8.2 Exteriorising the gaze
8.3 Transgressive border crossings
8.4 Feminine impersonations
Chapter 8
Performing Feminisms

8.1 Framing Desire

The experience of improvisation may be liberatory insofar as it offers glimpses of a space beyond rigid categorisations of thought in a fluidity of corporeality which is constantly in process. However, in using improvisation as a tool for choreography the choreographer is forced to recognise the role of the audience in constructing the meanings which these motilities engender. It has been shown how the apparatus of theatre performance is implicated in the reproduction of desire, in particular in relation to theories of the politics of visibility (Part Two, Chapter 4.5), and how the perspectival space of the theatre, through the historical privilege afforded the viewer, has traditionally positioned the female body as subject to objectification. Feminist choreographers working in their studios need to keep an awareness of the external conditions of performance which mediate the reception of their work, and actively negotiate the performer-audience relationship in their choreographic process.

Different kinds of performance settings can be said to encourage different kinds of performer-audience relationships. Dances are performed in a range of environments, from formal spaces, such as proscenium arch theatres, theatres in the round or semi-round, small scale theatres with movable seating and Churches, to informal spaces, such as gymnasiums, galleries, lofts, car parks, nightclubs, rooftops, streets, shopping malls, lakes and swimming pools. Despite a shift to working in non-traditional venues by postmodern and new dance artists in the 1960s and 1970s, the most common venue for Western theatre dance remains the proscenium theatre and
its variants.¹

In proscenium styled theatres theatrical illusion is encouraged through the separation of the audience, seated in the dark recesses of the auditorium, and performer, displayed on a boxlike stage to which attention is directed through the orientation of seating and stage lighting. This separation is often heightened by the presence of an orchestra pit further exaggerating the gap between performer and spectator, emphasising an imagined schism between art and life. From the audience’s point of view, the organisation of the auditorium implies a hierarchy of viewing positions, as some seats are more preferable than others as they offer better visibility of the whole stage area, and this is reflected in the scaling of seat prices particularly in large-scale theatres. The spectator, in being allocated a seat has a fixed reference point for viewing the performance. For the performer, this traditional framing of the dance, often dictates a linear perspective in the dance’s spatial organisation - upstage, downstage, stage left, stage right - in which the centre stage position is privileged as offering maximum visibility. The performer may look out to the audience, but beyond perhaps the first few rows of seating, is unlikely to register the presence of individual spectators as they recede into the darkness of the house. Nonetheless performers are often encouraged to perform for someone in the audience. Valda Setterfield, the English born dancer renowned for her work with David Gordon in North America, had this to say about the different kinds of performance projections she was encouraged to adopt according to the demands of different choreographers:
Mimi [Madame Rambert] made the students very aware of the need to project to the audience - "the man in the box with the flowers" - was who we were dancing for...I was never comfortable with that; I was always more interested in the steps. Merce Cunningham addressed the question of focus in a different way: He talked of amplification of energy.

Vaughan 1993, p52.

Although communication of any kind within a phallocentric order cannot entirely escape from binaristic oppositions, in order to enact a feminist challenge to representation, as Phelan claims (1993), the "gaze", needs to be provoked out of its fixity. That is, the static positions in the binary - active looking/passive to-be-looked-at-ness -, must be mobilized and made to disappear. In this way the hierarchy of gendered power relations installed within the apparatus of representation is disrupted. Feminist performance art may have a significant role in this regard in operating a politics capable of articulating women's desires as speaking subjects whilst simultaneously deconstructing the authority of the look (Elwes 1985; Forte 1988).

In unmasking the system of representation and its ideological allegiances, women performance artists enact a politics of subversion in speaking and moving from a position which conflates subject/object positions. For example, by employing direct modes of address: making statements, questioning and engaging the audience through speech, by inviting the audience's participation in the action, and by making direct eye contact with them, women performance artists refuse their objectification as Other, problematising woman as the 'ruin of representation' (Montrelay 1978). Women performance artists encourage not necessarily identification, but dialogue through explorations of the boundaries of femininity (see Elwes 1985).
Within this postmodern cultural context, distinctions between art forms have become blurred and interdisciplinarity and hybridity has come to characterise much performance. Female performers like Emlyn Claid and Liz Agiss, both of whom identify with a dance lineage, perform in a style which blurs the distinction between dance and performance or live art, by combining spoken texts, singing and moving and through the use of a direct mode of address with their audiences. For Emlyn Claid, her direct performance manner in *Virginia Minx* brought her downstage to address the audience with her eyes, playfully flirting with a gaze which empowered her as subject of the look, inviting reciprocity. Liz Agiss in *Absurditties* (1994), talks, sings and moves around the bare stage, dressed in a silver frock with a baguette as prop. Her word plays dismantle the syntactical organisation of patriarchal language and operate self-reflexively. Agiss begins her performance by addressing the audience directly, not in a confrontational way but by looking and acknowledging their presence, their there-ness in speech and in movement. In returning the gaze these women performers assert their active subjectivity in producing meaning, destroying the implicit privilege of the 'invisible male guest' within the binary logic of traditional theatre.

A different example of the use of a non-dominant gaze in performance can be found in the work of Deborah Hay. Foster (1986) describes how Hay's dancers make direct visual contact with the audience, sometimes even exchanging a smile, and by these means saying, "we are simply people like yourselves, dancing, aware that this is a dance concert, but one that does not transform us into extraordinary beings" (Foster 1986, p64). Hay, in her workshops and performance, emphasises a mode of
performance which is described as "inviting being seen" (Hay 1994). Through this state of awareness, the audience is "invited" into the performance frame, not with the conventions of projection and display, but through the performer’s consciousness of her "body as teacher" (Hay 1994). This mode of engagement denies the singularity of bifocal vision by encouraging the performers to experience seeing throughout the entire body, rather than from a fixed location.

The framing of the dance through the kind of relationship established with the audience, both in terms of its spatial organisation and the focus of the performer, contribute significantly to the possibilities for unsettling the binaristic logic of representation. Violation of the implicit contract between performer and audience, that is through ignoring, overstepping or dissolving the designation of boundaried spaces for viewing and for dancing, is one choreographic option, another is the mode of address and eye/body focus which dancers establish with their audiences. Importantly in both regards is a view of the audience, not as a monolithic totality - a block of seats and eyes -, but as a differentiated collectivity of individually embodied subjectivities.

In Bloodsongs different kinds of exchanges of looks were encouraged and worked through the organisation of the performance. These included visual pleasure in the use of a reciprocal gaze between performers; the glazing over of the gaze as a form of self-erasure; the inward focus of the dancer; the exteriorising of the gaze through dramatic measures - inspection, surveillance, interrogation; the fixed gaze and stare-glare; and the fluid, mobile gaze. In particular the looks and exchanges of glances
between performers became a locus of interaction and a source of power and pleasure in the performance process.

Choice of venue is also an important consideration in conditioning the possibilities for the performer-audience relationship. Although Bloodsongs took place within the conventions of a small scale venue which determined certain parameters for the performance, such as the spatial organisation of seating and lighting, an alternative space would have created other possibilities in delimiting performer-spectator roles. How an audience is organised can dramatically affect the conditions for the work's reception. Non-traditional spaces may in this regard provide alternative conditions for the unsettling of fixed positions. For example, a theatre-in-the-round space, in which the audience themselves constitute the framing of the performance, allows audience members to see each other, encouraging their awareness of the involvement of others in the construction of the performance. Similarly for the performer, being in close proximity to her audience brings an awareness of their presence and the multiple viewing points the circular seating encourages. Furthermore in moving in a full space, rather than one which is divided by the conventions of a linear perspective, the dancer has a different experience of performance. For the audience too, being in close proximity to the performer brings a different perception of the work as other senses, besides the visual, are brought to the foreground through the proximity of the dancer's bodily materiality.
Guarded Conditions (video extract 6)

She throws her body into the space and fixes us with her stare-glare. We are scrutinised and quantified. She demands our attention and then she moves. Keeping vision engaged.

Locomotion is swift, sumptuous and insistent. A body which is tight, taught with tension and guarded(?). She looks over her shoulder. Obscuring her face from view with hair.

Scar tissue fosters memory. Wordless extensions are tossed and dissolved. Hands clutch, shifting gear to steer through space a body in flight. Leg swings/arc/catch torso/off-centre/dive.

Falling from grace? Closing the gap between shoulder and jaw. Making hemmed and nervous spaces.

One part moves independently of another. The body in bits and pieces. Automaton or autonomy.

Her body Reels.

She fixes her gaze beyond and spins sending her weight off-balance. ‘Losing it’ to the "space-off". In control and out of control. Catapults the past before her and rebounds. Stable and unstable.

Swing/side. Hip/elbow. Rock. Shift weight/displace centre. Speaking at first with a whisper and then with a shout: “keep going, don’t stop, you have everything to lose!!”

Jacqui’s solo emerged through reflections on personal experience and the setting of movement tasks which corresponded to particular physical states, in particular in relation to ambivalent attitudes towards performance. The following text was initially included in the performance but later abandoned:

I am standing here
noticing you noticing me
I feel cold, it’s like being naked.
My heartbeat increases, I eye notice it because it seems louder than my own breathing.
I fidget
but I don’t say anything.
But this is me, this is what "I" am.

In the ‘Presentation Dance’ (video extract 7), three performers move on three parallel lines downstage and upstage with varying gestural registers - inviting, refusing, confusing - the viewer. By what gestural means do we encourage Others into our space, or indicate our ambivalence about this? A barrage of possibilities emerge with
the audience having to negotiate the fluctuating signals, at once coy and bold, seductive and retiring, wanting and not-wanting. The three performers build the force of their manoeuvres rhythmically and through repetition, until they are throwing their full body weight forward, tossing their limbs downstage and breaching the performance divide by stepping in front of the footlights to face the audience unmediated by the illusionary potential of stage lighting. At once apologetic and defiant these women play across codes of address confusing signals in a cacophony of parodoxical invocations, inviting and refusing, the 'other' in.

8.2 Exteriorising 'the Gaze'

The exercise of control and discipline presupposes visibility. Eyes which see without being seen, visibility maximised through the geometric organisation of spatial pathways, observatories, binoculars and light beams: multiple techniques of observation exist through which the subject is subjugated. The panoptic gaze, an institutionalised gaze through which certain modalities of subjectivity are constructed, is described by Foucault (1977) as a means of regulation and discipline. Systems of examination, surveillance, inspection and interrogation are described as mechanisms through which the subject’s visibility manifests their objectification within configurations of power. Through exposing the apparatus of the examination, the interrogation or the inspection, the sphere of force relations on which such disciplinary techniques rely becomes codified, strategically demarcating points of resistance which make transformations possible. In Bloodsongs a recurring theme concerned notions of visiblity within particular staged scenarios in which power is invested in 'the look'. Forms of inspection, audition and interrogation acted as
metaphors for the performer-audience relation in which the performer is presented onstage to maximum visibility, contrasted with the often invisibility of her audience.

In *Navigating the Body Part IV: The Examination* (video extract 8) the performers enter from both sides of the stage and walk directly in a horizontal line. They stop along this trajectory and turn successively stage front, stage right, upstage, and stage left, demarcating a rigidly square zone. The impression is one of an 'identity parade' in which the subject positions herself in four different directions so as to maximise opportunities for surveillance. After repeating this trajectory several times, the three performers assemble stage right and with rhythmic precision perform a series of gestures derived from forms of inspection and examination. How the body is constituted within various institutional domains - gynaecological, beauty and health, medical, gustatory and optical - is referenced through the operation of various forms of self-examination gesturally registered. Enacting and moving through all of these routinised and practiced manoeuvres, the dancing subject compounds the medley of physical traces of a multitude of inspectorial techniques. She opens her mouth and pokes out her tongue; her fingers span the width of her waist as if to measure its density; opening her legs wide she awaits the cold discomfort of the speculum; checking her pulse in three places she checks her fitness. Turning the examining gaze in on themselves and then in turn on each other, the practiced and routinised way in which we operate systems of self surveillance is enacted with routinised efficiency.

A multiplicity of discourses which act on and through the body are referenced within
this dance. By signalling the constuctedness of the body, outside the self-referentiality of dance discourses and within biological, sexual and gendered constructs, essentialist assumptions are challenged. The unprompted re-enactment of gestures associated with forms of physical inspection indicates how skilfully systems of surveillance become internalised, as Foucault would have it, emphasising the degree to which we become the fiercest inspectors of ourselves.

To be ‘named’ is to take up a position within the symbolic order, but relying on ‘naming’ as an entry point to subjectivity, risks misrecognition and refusal. To hesitate is to acknowledge the violence of reductionism, for identity can never be fully constituted in the symbolic. What resists? What are the possibilities of overcoming our, "passionate commitment to subjection"? (Butler lecture 1993).

‘Show and Tell’ (video extract 9) was staged in the format of an audition or interrogation. One dancer, Josephine, positions herself in the audience as interrogator and another, myself, is located onstage - in the spotlight - as subject of inquiry and object of inspection. Whilst my position onstage is highly visible, I am barely able to discern the audience, let alone the author of the instructing voice. Like the panoptic procedures which Foucault theorised, the non-reciprocity of the gaze heightens its coercive potential. A barrage of questions and instructions ensue:

Come SHOW yourself, stand in the light.  
Can you tell us your name?  
That’s a nice name, but do you mind if I call you Carrie? Observable but taciturn.  
Show us your profile.  
Show us your back. That’s right.  
Silent, I turn again, and again.

Both sides now of this one-dimensionality.
Okay, now I want you to get into 'the Bridge'. Flexibility stiffens through neglect. Do you wear fur? Do you wear make-up? And what if? I should refuse. Are you a fashion victim? To be the support for (an)others projections. Show me the lotus position. Wavering hieroglyphs. What is your object of desire? Object-speak. Do you like men? Vague vagaries. Can you stand on one leg and touch your head with the knee of the other leg? Splitting voice from body. What motivates you? The one animates the other. So what do you think of lesbian separatism? Making meaning through division. Always the same question. Can you do the splits?

Twentieth Century Feminism has sought to bring ‘women into the light’, to give them visibility and confer on them the status of subject. But this ‘becoming subject’ is at the same time radically subjected. "She", the dancer being produced and regulated, is both subject and object.

The spatial organisation of the theatrical frame emphasises in a straightforward way the investment of power in the ‘look’. In exposing the ‘act’ of looking, the gaze is exteriorised and itself made the subject of interrogation. In ‘rigging up’ a structure of dominance - subject/object; interrogator/respondent; public/private - strategies of resistance and transgression can be ‘tested’ through the unprompted repetition, the retort, refusal and manipulation of reply. Yet modern technologies of power are complex systems of overlapping contradictions and are not monolithic. "She” answers back - "can you stand where I can see you" - so power is not univocal. The audience is invited to identify with both positions at once and consider the roles of passivity and agency within structures of dominance. To ‘act out’ these positions, at a distance.
and through the uncertain, improvised flux of question and response, is to create cleavage for exposing the investments of power in the regulations to which we are 'passionately attached'.

8.3 Transgressive border crossings

Within postmodern and poststructuralist thought the emphasis on borders and boundaries is part of the shift in recognition of the body, not as an essential being, but as a permeable surface politically regulated (Butler 1990). An understanding of skin, as a semi-permeable membrane, is a useful analogy here, reinforcing an understanding of the body as mutable and irreducible. It follows from this, that in addressing the possibility for a transgressive body politics we need to look at how bodies become marked as male and female, in particular how specific domains of movement construct particular kinds of bodies for specific tasks, and in relation to this, how these markings construct a sense of interiority (Gatens 1992). An emphasis on the material processes of bodies and the constitutive exclusions through which the body-subject takes its place within the symbolic, can be activated to subvert the inner/outer distinction displacing and demystifying the idea of the body as essence.

The structuration of the female subject can be said to begin with the organisation of her body according to a set of external relationships and codes. Her body is charted, zoned and made to bear meanings, meanings which accrue through external relationships but which are subsequently apprehended as an internal condition or essence. The social regulation and control of the female body depends on the maintainance of these boundaries and the reiteration of their codes. Mary Douglas
in *Purity and Danger* (1966) revealed how appropriate limits, postures and modes of interaction are regulated through the installing and naturalizing of certain taboos which define what it is that constitutes bodies and through which the body-subject is made coherent. Fixed and stabilised through binary distinctions - inner/outer, subject/object, self/other - the coherent subject is constituted through the delimitation of its boundaries. Julia Kristeva has adapted this analysis to her psychoanalytical reading of the role of abjection in securing the boundaries of the Symbolic. According to Kristeva, in order to secure the boundaries of the body, as a delimitable 'clean and proper' body, and hence the contours of the subject, the abject must be expunged. Abjection is necessary in delimiting the social, civilised body over the chaotic, disorganised body. In *Powers of Horror* (1982), Kristeva describes the abject as that which has been expelled from the body and rendered "other".4

The presence of abjection, on the borders of the symbolic attests to the subject’s tenuous hold on identity. The body’s parts become the borders or perimeter of the body’s limits. In this sense the abject, in hovering on the border of the body’s boundaries, constantly threatens to rupture the Symbolic. It is this threat which characterises the power of abjection, as culture can be said to function through the expunging of the social and personal horror experienced with our own materiality and finitude. Given this, an emphasis on the materiality of the body through its leakages, disfigurations, scars and secretions, can within certain contexts be read as subversive. That is, if "inner" and "outer" constitute binary distinctions that stabilise and consolidate the coherent subject, the subject is challenged through the displacement of these terms. Such a displacement opens the meanings of identity and subjectivity to revision and calls into question how that identity became internalised.
in the first instance.

The dancing body risks disturbing the symbolic limits of the performance frame, disrupting the ideophilia of ‘body as text’ through its secretions, lack of control, permeability and mutability and through its nonreproducibility. Though dancing bodies are produced and regulated there is always, hovering in the recesses of the symbolic ordering of the body, the risk that they will break the code, rupture the aesthetic and trip up perception, dislocating the will to completeness of the dance’s symbolic framing. The kinetic movement of a dance through the real presence of the dancers makes palpable the materiality of the body: we can hear them breathe, see their shifting masses through bodily contours and the residue of sweat which these exertions induce. Dancing in this full space, the non-reproducibility of their movements leaves spaces for unmarked motions, slips, suprises and variations through which the dance is reinvented in each performance. To work in these in-between spaces, as spontaneous eruptions, momentary losses of control, stumbles and stutterings, or lapses of concentration and breaks in repetition, is to animate boundaries, loosening their hold on the subject. A continuity of surfaces, between outside and inside, inside and outside, is emphasised in Bloodsongs through the ‘leakages’, as well as through exaggerated measures of excess - the body as an overfilled container - which displace the privilege afforded a sense of interiority.
Three Solos: border tensions, border crossings, border writings (video extract 9).

*marked marker*

I start to mark the skin of my torso with lipsticks and eyeliner pencils, drawing the insides on the outsides.

or

I stand upstage right in a spotlight dressed in black and facing the audience. With a piece of chalk I draw a line down the centre of my torso, then a series of 'ribs' fanning outwards from this, circles for breasts and a triangle for pubic hair.

de-accessorise

'ROE' appears in satin brazer suit, wig, glasses, shoulder and breast padding, bejewelled and beguiling. Slowly she dismantles her dressage, removing one artifice to reveal another she disassembles her self-construction, allowing the debris to fall like a discarded skin.


dancer

What gives you pleasure?
Jacqui dances downstage right. Wildly oblivious to the spectacle of women beyond her, a dance of pleasurable immersion, her "bedroom dance". In moving she goes completely into her body. She lets herself go...

***

Posing juxtas or, three juxtaposed solos. The simultaneity of action through three diverse performances of the body - as marked marker, as fetishised excess, as "pure energy" -, encourages a simultaneity of perception highlighting interconnections:

inside/outside
public/private
subject/object
active/passive

The hole in the belly, the join in the fontanel, the hollow in the pits, the fold in the joint. Sounding crevices. Arterial tide lines. Carving mucous membranes. Containers which refuse closure. Boundaries
touch and re-touch. Remaining open, fluid, porous. Dissolving the solidity of boundaries dividing body from matter, the social from the biological. Her body is not lacking but re-mark-able.

Acting out narratives of the female body as a conduit for Nature in a consciously parodic way deliberately unsettles the boundary between internal essence and external social code. In Mary, Mary (video extract 10), Jacqui’s prone and semi-naked body is covered in peat and lilies by myself in a deliberate reference to a masculinist heritage which views the male genius as giving form to the raw material of women’s bodies. Woman as container to be filled by the ‘other’, woman as the place of place:

Mary, Mary
She lies there, enshrined in peat and lilies - Ophelia-like, mad and dead - she is the garden to be planted the body to be fecundated. Moving from prone to standing she upsets and unsettles the floral arrangement which is her body and stuffing her face with lilies, woman as devourer, she bursts the code, spitting out earth and flowers she ruptures boundaries expelling that which suffocates her.

Luce Irigaray has argued that women are contained in symbolic forms that are appropriate to them, and that suffocate their capacity to perceive other modalities of consciousness. But as Irigaray states, "women insofar as she is a container, is never a closed one" (1993, p51).

The Water-Bearers
Three women stand in a tiered line facing the audience. One of them holds a vessel in her hands. The music begins, passages of notes curved into phrases by articulate fingers. The women step toward and away from each other contracting and expanding the spaces between their bodies, stopping short of the heel by placing one foot on the ball. Looking away from the direction they move in, they locate the vessel by touch. It passes between their hands. By choice or by chance the bearer is chosen. She lowers herself and makes vulnerable her neck, her mouth opens. With adept precision the water is poured into this opening. Woman as water-bearer. Woman as vessel. Woman as void to be filled. She gags, chokes, but refuses to swallow (their projections, their
narrations). She spurts out the contents of her mouth and water floods the floor.

In another section of Bloodsongs the overwritten and damaged body is evoked through an energetic dance of dissonant gestures to loud and abrasive music. But the performance is self-reflexive, casting a glance over my shoulder I keep an eye on the flowers pinned to the curtain and at the end of the dance shrug off its excesses (video extract 11).

**DISTORTED**

The disfigurements of the socialised body in extremis. The hunched shoulder, the protruding hip, the flexed knee, the crossed arms, the grimace and the craning neck. Machine, model or cyborg, her body twists and contorts, but keeps in time.

Re-marking female myths through stumbling graceless dancing. Spiral, poke, pulse. Torsions swivelling to suspend. Holding breath, holding form dissolve to formlessness. Transmute gestus. How to be? How to be-have?

Taking gestures which reference the damaged body, the stressed and decaying body and the insignia of Her body - the crossed leg, the pointy foot, the pouting hip - and using these defiantly decodes the controlled and ordered body, refusing its grace, its verticality, its smoothness.

To lose control, to lose your grip, or hold implies a loss of boundaries. To step beyond the culturally sanctioned norms of feminine behaviour is to risk exposure and ridicule. Through constant 'checks' we maintain our hold on the boundaries which circumscribe the norms of femininity?

In Navigating the Body Part I, three performers stand in a horizontal line. They are wearing "man-size" dinner jackets. The music starts and they stare out at the audience. Simultaneously they shift their focus to the minutiae of their dressage and,
with quick and furious actions, "fix" themselves up. Their movements are repeated a number of times, each dancer assemblig her own variation of the actions until they simultaneously look up and run out of view.

checklist for dressage:  
* shoes small  
and fastened  
* shoulder padding in place  
* buttons secure  
* eyelashes curled  
* breasts arranged in bra cups  
* underpants pulled over buttocks

These dances operate self-reflexively as ironic appropriations of the gestures, motilities and postures which circumscribe dominant cultural representations. As such they can be considered to operate within a recognition of power, as Foucault has demonstrated, not as monolithic and external to the subject but as a diffuse heterogeneous phenomenon which produces a network of effects through the body.

8.4 Feminine impersonations

The issue is not one of elaborating a new theory of which woman would be the subject or the object, but of jamming the theoretical machinery itself, of suspending its pretension to the production of a truth and of a meaning that are excessively univocal....They should not put it then, in the form 'What is woman?' but rather, repeating/interpreting the way in which, within discourse, the feminine finds itself defined as lack, deficiency, or as imitation and negative image of the subject, they should signify that with respect to this logic a disruptive excess is possible on the feminine side.

Irigaray 1985b, p78

Dancers, as we have seen, are particularly vulnerable to being read as Body and therefore objectified within the apparatus of representation. Postmodern deconstructive strategies which emphasise the fiction of constructions of femininity
may therefore be useful in playing into the narrative of dancer as Woman in order to
subvert its essentialist implications. Imposing narratives of femininity on the body,
through measures of parody, imitation and mimesis, plays across distinctions between
woman as Object and women as subject, displacing the terms and destabilising
dominant constructions of femininity. The female artist who addresses issues of
representation within culture is in a good position to interrogate these two constituting
interrelated frameworks of women by bringing the subjective experience of ‘being a
woman’ into dialectical exchange with the iconicity of ‘Woman’ within dominant
representation, disrupting the normative status of both terms.

Through the movement of a dance a body can undergo multiple transformative
possibilities - articulations, isolations, vibrations, shapings - which radically alter the
perceived univocity of its form. The proliferation of representations and
reconfigurations of the body jams the morphology of the dancer with ‘other’
stylisations of corporeality, opening spaces for the recomposition of identity and
desire. As Irigaray (1990) reminds us, our bodies are constantly changing, mobile,
complex, fluid. To recognise the instability of the body and to refuse to reiterate its
habitual coding is to break with deep-rooted patterns of behaviour. Through the
gestural language of the body, combined with its coding through costume and
clothing, dancers can inhabit multifarious identities, taking up different positions,
remodelling and transforming their bodies to inhabit ‘other’ styles of embodiment.
This is not to suggest that there are endless possibilities for transmutations. The
material parameters of a dance are to a large degree determined by the physical
possibilities of the dancing body and this varies widely according to age, experience,
training, physiology and psycho-social factors. Inspite of these limits dancers, through gesture, posture, motility, speaking and costume, are capable of registering differences through "the springing up of selves one didn’t know" (Cixous 1986, p84). Emilyn Claid in Virginia Minx at Play (1993) embarks on a transherstorical journey through diverse manifestations of ‘woman’ amongst other roles, as diva, dyke, stripper and ballerina. Drawing on subjects from myth, fantasy and popular culture, Claid’s various personifications as Minx, engaged elaborate, ritualised re-enactments of the feminine body’s dominant inscriptive processes. The image of a fleet footed ballerina is imbued with oppressive connotations in ‘Lycra Sensations’. Obsequiously posturing towards a vacant chair, to which she is chained, Minx/Claid beats her pointed feet, like a trapped bird, whilst smiling with the desperation of a woman ‘born’ to please. In ‘Naked Truth’, the image of the female heroine within the operatic genre is deconstructed through the doubling up of image and voice. The constructedness of her performative presence is foregrounded as Claid/Minx impersonates a diva in the throes of her death scene. She is convincingly imploring in her longing gestures for an imaginary hero, but the music keeps getting stuck, disrupting the scenes will to completeness through a mismatch between sound and image. Claid/Minx marks the differing identities inhabited through a woman’s lifetime in a section of the work called ‘The Portrait’. Traversing a diagonally lit strip of the stage Claid’s transformations through movement allude to lived experiences bound by discrete phases in a lifetime. Claid’s gradual metamorphoses kinetically registered in this spectator significant moments of crises, resolve and elation through early development, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, motherhood and old age. I witnessed in Claid’s portraits of women’s experiences, a mother’s
excitement with her child's first walk, the rapture of an intimate relationship, the self-loathing of the bulimic, the horror of being raped, the 'woman who loves too much' and the ravages of alcohol abuse and an arthritic old age. Accompanied by the singing of Heather Joyce, whose role onstage appears to be one of both witness and collaborator, the overall effect was a crystallisation of multifarious life experiences and "ultrasubjectivities". As a series of narratives of lived experience through the body, Claid's re-presentations intersected with many other women's stories, and the stories of women who cannot be said to exist, stressing as they did the interlocking narratives of the public and the private, the mythical and the real, the inner and the outer, from a specifically female/feminine/feminist position of enunciation.

Minx/Claid addresses the female spectator through points of reference which concur with aspects of women's experiences, enabling them to 'look back at themselves'. Through kinaesthetic apperception, how in moving she moves me, Claid encourages women to consider their role within the framing of her movement. The diaristic, confessional model of 'The Portrait' foregrounds women's experiences as historical agents. However in relation to the other sections of Virginia Minx at Play within which Claid self-consciously plays in and out of sustaining fictions of "Woman", and in which she dons a range of costume effects to heighten the sense of impersonation, this section of the work, in which she appears in a slip without the accoutrements of wig, make-up, nor the vestements of feminine disguise, appears the most vulnerable, the least 'acted-out', the most private and personal. As if to say stripped of all these impersonations of "Woman", this is me, this is what "I" am. In laying bare these life stories, Claid exposes a sense of self which is fragile but also continuous across time.
(the sense of progression-regression in moving from one age to another). As a section in itself it could appear to position a unitary singular self modulated through permutations of age and experience, however in the context of the overall performance, I am left wondering whether this is yet another impersonation of the feminine and the ontological foundations of the category remain subject to re-vision.

The feminist performer who denies internal coherence decenters subjectivity. Postmodern techniques deconstruct apparent truths by undermining closed and hegemonic systems. The techniques of parody, juxtaposition, the re-appropriation of images, irony and repetition can be usefully engaged to dismantle aspects of dominant culture through de-familiarising what has been presumed natural, given. In particular the appearance of woman as icon, as image and object par excellence can be consciously installed by the feminist performer through gesture and appearance, imposing narratives of femininity so as to deconstruct their constraining fictions on the body. Postmodern interventions in this sense engage with dominant culture in order to subvert it.

*Hysterix (video extract 12)*

We can hear her before we see her, LAUGHING
A luminous head and an invisible body she stands there in the darkness.
Slowly she steps forward - coming 'into the light' - revealing her (body)-self
Arms extended she smiles invitingly, welcomingly, enticingly.
Smile transforms to grimace, mocking, taunting, knowing.
*Her body gives way, collapsing into itself - ungainly awkwardness - she’s ‘let herself go’.*
Beckons, "come hither"
Hand slam against face, shutting off her eyes, her over-exposed self-hoods.
She peeks through the 'peep-holes' her spread fingers make, she is watched and watching, but we can't see her look
"To perform is to display!" She shows us her shank, skin unfolding skin
Hands swoop through legs, plunging to reach all the way back; swallowing topography. Fingers tremble, touch, tempt the air.
Arms reach with a plunge forward, heaven-bound.
Locking her arms over her head, it is framed, boxed, contained.
Freed she reaches out grabbing fistfuls of air.
She touches herself, there, there and there.
Sinks her hands down below the knees, weighted and scooped, enveloping space.
Stuffing her mouth full with fingers, she eats herself.

Josephine's solo is crowded with 'Other' women:

hysteric cock-tease seductress devourer Mother
girl-object mystic visionary whore model
machine monster Saint crone

Her dance plays into the peculiarly 'feminine' danger involved in making a show of oneself as a performer - 'making a spectacle':

...the exposed bra strap, the run in the stocking, the broken heel, the embarrassing remark made under pressure, the giggle in the voice, the inability to stop talking once started, to start once stopped....

"'SHE' [the Other woman] is making a spectacle of herself." (Russo 1986, p213).

Confronted with the ubiquity of this legacy Josephine enacts her "complicitous critique" in parodying existing imagery.

Each of the images within this dance are only momentarily installed before being erased by the incumbent image. Through this fluidity of identities the spectator is deprived of a unitary, fixed definition, and the performer becomes a 'subject-in-flux'. The parodic proliferation of images divests hegemonic culture of naturalised or essentialist categories of identity (Butler 1990). In Hysterix the setting of the image is suggestive but superficial, the artifice of its construction is revealed in the rapid, split-second change of posture, position and association. However the presence of the performer remains constant, so that whilst her appearance alters radically according to the figuration of gesture and pose, we recognise her throughout. A "concert of personalizations called I" (Cixous 1986, p84). Her live presence is the
continuous thread through which these multiple images of femininity are enacted.

Taking traditional images of women, such as that of the seductress and the hysteric, and working with these in a self-consciously critical way goes beyond narcissism, voyeurism and masochism, as it exposes the artifice of the construction. Such a postmodern tactic of subversion requires a convincing performance, "we have to feel the seduction in order to question it" and from this basis of parodic gender performance a critical space is opened through which to theorise the site of that contradiction (Hutcheon 1989, p154). The display of a display results in a hyperbolic style of "overacting". Like Charcot’s photographs of hysterics - paid actresses employed to act out its symptoms - the repeated acting out of hysteria encodes its own fiction, but on the borders of this lurks the opportunity for radical destabilisation. Mary Russo (1986) sees the potential in installing the image of the hysteric as "provisional strategy" in subverting femininity:

If hysteria is understood as feminine in its image, accoutrements, and stage business (rather than in its physiology), then it may be used to rig us up (for lack of the phallic term) into discourse. The possibility, indeed the necessity, of using the female body in this sense allows for the distance necessary for articulation.

Russo 1986, p223.

This ‘rigging’ operates anterior to signification as a knowing installing of images of ‘Woman’ which have become fixed and ‘naturalised’ across time through strategies of mimicry, masquerade and exaggeration.

In Navigating the Body Part II - How to Get Into a Car (video extract 13), Josephine adopts the identity of a female deportment lecturer. This section of
Bloodsongs developed out of improvisations based on personal experiences of "being coded female" and is drawn from memory of a similar lecture offered at Josephine's school in Scotland in the early 1980s.

Josephine stands downstage right with her hands placed on the back of a chair, facing the audience. She addresses her audience in the manner of a lecturer:

_You're dressed to kill, wearing your little black dress, your fifteen denier sheer silk stockings, perky wonderbra, manicured nails, glossy groomed hair - you look fabulous. The car arrives and presents the main problem of the evening - how to get in AND remain 100% intact and confident. Here's a few handy tips_

Firstly, your legs are glued together throughout the evening [she indicates her knees with the fingers of both hands].

Secondly, your bottom is the first part of your body to reach the inside of the car, anchoring your skirt with your hands [she holds both knees together with one hand] ease your bottom into the seat [she slowly descends to sit on the chair], swing your legs through the door [she pivots on the seat to swing her legs beneath her], but remember that posture.

Fourthly, the seatbelt, they tend to squash the breasts and create unflattering lines, but, if you fasten the seatbelt between the breasts [she draws a line diagonally across her chest with her fingers], any disruption may be avoided.

Fifthly, remember these legs [she indicates towards the legs]. Together throughout the journey and don't let them stray towards the gearstick or create any unnecessary distraction.

_E enjoy your evening._

Contemporary artists in dealing with "imposture" and "dissimulation" underline the constructed, invented, falsity of these representations. The hyperbolic performance of masquerade offers an initial fielding of the possibilities for the "acting out" the dilemmas of femininity. Parody on its own however is not necessarily subversive. Some kinds of parodic repetitions are disruptive and troubling, whereas others risk domestication and recirculation as further instruments of cultural hegemony. There
cannot be a typology of the subversive parodic action, what must be considered however is the context of production and reception within which subversive acts can be fostered. As Judith Butler sees it:

What performance where [sic] will invert the inner/outer distinctions and compel a radical rethinking of the psychological presuppositions of gender identity and sexuality? What performance where [sic] will compel a reconsideration of the *place* and stability of the masculine and the feminine? And what kind of gender performance will enact and reveal the performativity of gender itself in a way that destabilises the naturalized categories of identity and desire?

Butler 1990, p139.

Different performance modes encourage different modes of reception and therefore condition the possibilities for subverting or reinforcing normative definitions of Woman. In Bloodsongs a variety of styles of delivery for movement and text were experimented with. There was an attempt to vary these through the performance as a way of breaking the ‘mould’ and set of expectations set up within any performance situation according to ‘appearances’. Part of this challenge was also on a personal level, in attempts to exceed our own expectations of ourselves. Like the audience member who is encouraged to position herself elsewhere in the auditorium to feel what it is like from a different perspective, as dancers we re-positioned ourselves within the performance frame so as to keep mobile the identities our shifting motilities gave rise to.

Each new choreography addresses issues of subjectivity: the constitutive powers of movement inscriptions; the dangers of exposure and display, and the costs of concealment in relation to the female body; the perspectives enabled through multi-sensorial figurations in space-time; the making of meaning beyond language and not
before; and the double-edged representation of the woman artist as agent and icon.

Through these measures spaces are opened for the assertion of differences from
dominant values and for locating one’s agency as a woman. This is empowering for
the woman choreography but at the same time makes her vulnerable as she is subject
to the risks of appropriation and re-territorialisation by the hegemonic order. For
these reasons the emptying, reversing and displacing of power relations which is the
basis of much feminist practice requires mobile responses in moving critically,
analytically, with power and with pleasure.

Notes

1. Although choreographers may wish for greater flexibility in the kinds of
performance environments they operate in, they are often limited to meeting
the venue requirements of funding applications and for independent dance this
means negotiating bookings with small to middle-scale theatres which remain
modelled on the proscenium theatre layout with its clear subdivision between
audience and performance spaces.

2. Emilyn Claid for example in Virginia Minx at Play, combines dance,
theatre, music and song in a work which she describes as "live art",
resisting the hegemonic framing of her performance as "dance".

3. Antecedents to this thematic and structural use of the inspectorial gaze within
choreography are found in Kontakthof (1978) by Pina Bausch and Ellis Island
(1981) by Meredith Monk. The opening of the former sees the dancers
presenting themselves to the audience at the front of the stage. They display
their profiles, their full faces and back views, they stretch out their hands and
feet, run their hands through their hair, and bare their teeth, before returning
to their places. This motif of self-display locates the dancers within a specular
economy whereby their material value is assessed according to the measure
and documentation of the body’s parts. Kaplan (1987) describes this fragment
of choreography as one of the few instances within Bausch’s oeuvre in which
some kind of direct social-historical challenge is in evidence. This, she hints,
is the persecution of Jews by their concentration camp captors. A further
example of a similar technique used with critical leverage is the inspection
scene in Monk’s film Ellis Island in which prospective immigrants are
numbered, shot (with cameras) and inspected. Instances of detailed bodily inspection are also found in the work of Lea Anderson for the Cholmondeleys and Featherstonehaughs. In Perfect Moment (1992) for example, the dancers engage in detailed examinations of facial hair, mouth, ears, nose etc.. Their actions are however located within the personal frame of male-female relations rather than the institutional frame of prison, concentration camp or immigration centre.

4. Kristeva documents the sense of loathing which accompanies certain experiences of food (the skin of milk), death, body fluids and defilement in explaining the role of abjection. According to her thesis, the "I" of discourse is made possible on condition that the abject and the maternal, archaic space is given up and the "proper" is put in its place (Grosz 1986, p115). It is through abjection therefore, that the boundaries of the body and the contours of the subject are installed. As she describes it: "Nausea makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it. "I" want none of that element, sign of their desire; "I" do not want to listen, "I" do not assimilate it, "I" expel it. but since the food is not an "other" for "me", who am only in their desire, I expel myself within the same motion through which "I" spit myself out, I abject myself within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish myself" (Kristeva 1982, p3).

5. Though through the field of virtual reality choreographing cyberspace brings new correspondences between bodies and machines, flesh and metal, extending the possiblities of the human form beyond its previously known limits. Nonetheless as Kozel states, "it is through flesh not in spite of it that we gain access to the virtual" (Kozel 1994b, p37). New spaces for choreography which transcend the customary limits of the physical body are being opened through technology, these may, as Kozel (1994) points out work both ways, leading either to a new materialism, extending the possibilities of the human form or further fetishising and distancing the body, abandoning it for travels through digital space.

6. Cixous writes, :"There is no invention of any other I, no poetry, no fiction without a certain homosexuality (the I/play of bisexuality) acting as a crystallization of my ultrasubjectivities..in the concert of personalizations called I" (1986, p84).
Conclusion: Dancing Beyond the Ending
Conclusion

Dancing Beyond the Ending

The solo performance which concludes this thesis comprises three sections - The Anatomy of Reason; The Mechanics of Fluids; and Acts of Becoming - collectively titled, The Mechanics of Fluids. This was performed at the University of Surrey’s PATS Dance Studio, 15 March 1995 however parts of the work had been performed earlier. The Anatomy of Reason was devised in November/December 1994 and had its first performance at the Lilian Baylis Theatre, 9 December 1994, The Mechanics of Fluids was first performed at the Lilian Baylis Theatre, 6 October 1994 and has been extensively reworked since then. Acts of Becoming is the most recent choreography and receives its premiere performance in this production. Although these three works are differentiated in style and subject matter, they are intended to be seen collectively as a trilogy of representations exploring issues of the female body in performance.

One of the major themes of the thesis has been the relationship between knowledges and bodies. In particular I have attempted to expose, through feminist theory and criticism, how Western constructions of knowledge have relied upon the exclusion and metaphorisation of the feminine in legitimating the pursuits of reason, truth and logic. These debates are deliberately invoked in the solo the Anatomy of Reason. In this dance ideas about the female body and femininity are explicitly referenced in the performance texts (these are reproduced below) as well as through the use of costume, ‘posture’ and gesture.
Taking a series of phrases, words and objects into the studio and playfully interrogating their "sex" through devices of parody, mimicry and juxtaposition, the performance frame is opened to a number of re-couplings, of figures and letters, objects and organisms, myths and realities. By these means the polarities of passion and reason, form and matter, as well as the ‘body’ of reason and its feminine subtext, as critically analysed in Chapter 2.1 of the thesis, are reconfigured.

Key referents from a variety of discursive fields are appropriated and assembled within this performance construction. In particular autobiographical, psychoanalytical and philosophical discourses are invoked through the use of words associated with these specific fields of knowledge (see below), and dominant images of woman as object - as model/dancer - are re-appropriated. Playing on the languages of philosophy and psychoanalytic theory through posture, gesture and appearance repositions their meanings out of context and in the margins of the discursive fields they are customarily associated with. Plays on the iconicity of the female performer, in my posturing and self-display, and through a mischievous play with objects, the doll and the satchel, can be seen to force consideration of the materiality of these discourses. In this way the "critical baggage" of the performer can be recognised as not solely ideological, but also material.

The body of the performer as physiological substance is mapped and territorialised by diverse narratives but through cultural agency she is capable of activating signs and codings, reconfiguring their symbolic meaning through reappropriations and resignifications (see Chapter 7). Dressed in a white satin panty girdle and bra my
body is unclothed, exposed and made vulnerable as object. But its physiological reality, its material substance and motor-sensory capabilities, are also foregrounded through the activity of moving. The involuntary animation of the body’s boundaries through the exertions of dancing - muscles contour skin, veins swell and the diaphragm expands and contracts - confound a reading of the body as passive object. Rather the self-conscious appropriation of imagery of woman as decor is read through the constant transformations of coporeality engendered by the choreography displacing naturalised readings of her body through its simultaneous presence as material reality and social artifact.

If, following Irigaray (1985a), women are the "blind spot" in Western discourses of philosophy and psychoanalytic theory, and as Le Doeuff (1987) claims, Western thought derives its legitimacy through the exclusion of the feminine from the symbolic realm, part of the task of the feminist is to expose the exclusive practices of philosophy through the erasure and disavowal of the female body. Irigaray’s injunction for women to "mimic" phallocentric thought is referenced through texts which accompany a series of repeated gestures which draw attention to the sexual specificity of my own body. As I walk in a square formation, I speak, "I’m miming philosophy..." at the same time touching my nipple with thumb and index finger and gazing down my underpants, as if their contents had become a site of anxiety (the search for the lost object?). By these means the notion that Woman connotes a lack or absence is playfully interrogated.²

The significance of the doll is crucial in this context. ‘She’ is set apart from my own
body but as an actual object which can be manipulated, shaped and controlled, draws attention to the object-like status of the female body in performance.³ The spatial proximity of the doll to my own body encourages the association of woman as 'living doll', it also references current preoccupations in contemporary fashions with the 'baby-doll look', also described as "kinderwhore".⁴

Despite the play on the insignias of 'woman-as-object-to-be-looked-at' the physicality of the work displaces the freezing of my own image into any singular category: pedestrian movement, walking, crouching and standing, is combined with more stylised sections of movement, mermaid-like humping across the floor; sharp cuts of limbs through space and music-box like posturings. How the female body is "divided by language" and "inscribed by ideas", is in this work interrogated through pointed texts and movements which attempt to instal, in order to subvert, images of her/my body as a bound and contained object, idealised and fetishised but also oddly resistant to territorialisation.⁵ Though she appears with the accoutrements of feminine passivity, she is not reducible to this image, there is a fierceness in the striking of limbs across the floor and an ironical glint in the eye as the text is spoken.

The presentational mode of this performance involved my direct engagement with the audience through eye contact and speech as well as through the spatial organisation of the dance. In questioning the audience, and in positioning myself as an audience member who steps into the performance space, the traditional boundary between invisible audience and over-exposed performer is transgressed.⁶ The theatrical framing of the performance also exceeds conventions as the performance begins with
an inordinately long black-out during which the absence of visual spectacle draws attention to the aural environment of the theatre. This includes the sounds of the audiences' distractedness as their expectations of performance fail to materialise. The silence and darkness draws attention to their material presence within the theatre and acknowledges their role in the construction of the event.

The music for the Anatomy combines guitar, bass, drums and voices. Voices are recorded backwards and sampled from videos to create a curious collage of sounds. At times stridently rhythmical and at other times seamlessly haunting, the aural environments these compositions evoke is closely associated with the qualititative dimensions of each section of the choreography, but it also exceeds these in the unexpected whisper, the sudden exclamation and shriek from a voice off-stage.

The direct mode of performance in the Anatomy is in contrast to the following section, The Mechanics of Fluids which, apart from its initial 'set-up' within the performance - "How to Become an Object..." - turns the focus inward, on the "mechanics" of bodily composition as organism and object.

At the end of The Anatomy I walk downstage to address the audience. Point by point I outline a number of stages in making oneself into an "object". By these means I alert the audience to the subsequent transformation which I am about to undergo. This Brechtian device operates self-reflexively in exposing the contrivance of the construction thus eschewing any resort to naturalised readings of my own body. The audience is alerted to this as I gesture towards Jacqui and Anne in the audience,
asking them to bring my plinth onto the stage.

Jacqui and Anne are dressed similarly to my own initial appearance, in short black dresses and court shoes. They emerge from the audience to re-dress the stage for the following dance, placing the plinth in position and laying out the costume onstage. Moving with a slow, careful unity their stylised manoeuvres mark their difference from the customarily invisible stage hands. Exposing the apparatus of the theatre in this way and complicating their roles through costume and appearance makes their entry-points in the theatrical frame also part of the dance.

The Mechanics of Fluids is organised into four distinct parts, its fractured form is denoted through dramatic shifts in lighting environments, subdivided by blackouts, as well as contrasting music. In the first section, "the body" is positioned on the plinth for display. Awkward and resistant 'it' is an object gone hard. Sculpting my body from the inside into a series of different configurations and holding these through precarious balances requires a tensile stillness and a slow, careful manoeuvring from one position to another. This section evolved out of explorations into the tradition of the female nude in art history and the problematic representation of the female figure - prone and naked - in performance. In particular the issue of how to de-eroticise and de-naturalise the image of a silent and still female body was explored. Through distortions and tensile stillness, 'her' body can be seen as both derelict and resistant. The wig, as a device of feminine disguise, serves to heighten this effect, making Her more vulnerable in one sense, as "living doll", and in another sense, further distancing Herself from my-self, opening a gap between the
representation of my body as object and myself as cultural agent. This effect is heightened by the sentient presence of the doll propped in the satchel onstage and lit in her prominent downstage position. Occasionally her shadow falls across my own body, marking it with the trace of her inanimate presence. This reminds me of how a women, though a cultural agent in her own right, is always forced to negotiate the legacy of women's compromised and subordinate roles throughout history as object and icon (see Chapter 4.2). Like the doll my own body is naked and exposed however through movement and placement the materiality of my body is foregrounded and made to 'speak' our differences. The pliability of my own body is configured not in the service of smoothness and softness but to convey a jagged and hard body, a body which ruptures the aesthetics of 'good taste', in this sense it has depths as well as surfaces, an inside and an outside.

The music for the plinth section is fierce, insistent and discordant, it involves electric guitar, drums and voices. It has a fast driving rhythm which spasmodically shatters into the frayed dissonance of guitar feedback and a howling voice. The slowness of my own moving body is contrasted with the speed of the music, a tension which hardens in the stiff plank-like rhythmic rocking of my body on the edge of the plinth.

As described in Chapter 4.2 woman is constructed as 'sign' and 'object par excellence' through the subordination of the female body within dominant discourses. In taking up a number of positions on the plinth, I am attempting to superimpose narratives of a subordinate body-subject onto my own body, but through distortion and exaggeration so that the image of my prone and semi-naked body exceeds its
historical placement.

The section on the plinth is followed by three different kinds of journeys. The first travels across the back of the stage in short bursts of fretting, halting and tip-toeings, moving 'into the light' and extinguishing it. Travelling from upstage right to upstage left my body is lit by three pin-head lights with a blue back light. The intention of these being to transect and divide the body into sections. As I move across the space the differing levels of light capture specific moments - momentarily - the shaking of hands above my head, the swinging of an arm and the ankles as I tip-toe. The soundtrack for this section of the dance is suggestive of a ritual with its bells, howls, murmurs and rustlings. The signing of my body into specific gestures as I traverse this upstage corridor of light could be suggestive of hieroglyphic writing. The symbolisations this body-writing evokes are however obscure and elusive and difficult to decipher. The arms are outstretched crucifix like, and shaking, firm hands beat a quick nervous rhythm onto the chest, and the back is arched into a totem-like figurine, balancing on the balls of the feet and tottering forward. The narrow focus of the lights creates a slim corridor through which my body journeys, further suggesting the raised surface of a relief sculpture. A kind of hiatus is reached as I approach the light stand and the lights fade to black-out as if extinguished by my own body.

The music for this section is a collection of sounds; soft murmurs, the rustling of paper, stones dropping, bells tinkering and ringing, and a voice, distant and entreating, crying. The aural environment combined with the lighting environment
serves to map the body as a discursive construction caught up in a plurality of heterogeneous experiences through which past and present are refracted.

A second journey begins with a precarious balancing game through which I re-dress my own body and reiterate some of the still poses from the plinth. In the slow traversing of a diagonally lit strip of the stage, moving precariously from upstage left to downstage right, shifts in weight from one leg to another are negotiated as if ‘through a minefield’. The repeated stabbing of the ball of one foot onto the floor followed by a circular action through the hips is alternated with more fluid passages of motion as my body sweeps in curves into and out of the floor in rapid changes of level. These alternations of energy and spaces build to an extended passage of movement which swoops, swerves and spirals as I approach the doll, this concludes as one arm is brushed up to touch another and I turn back to face the plinth. Music for this section is Fratres by Arvo Part. It also evokes a sense of ritual journey through its use of repetition, silence and bells. In moving from one place to another through a varied landscape of imagined forms, and in changing dynamic, rhythm and level, a sense of discontinuous passage is imbued through the work. The interrupted passage of motion from upstage left to the downstage right diagonal is lit with a blue footlight and a back toplight also in blue. This creates a deep blue haze across the dance floor and casts a long shadow in front of my tottering body. As I move with downcast gaze in the direction of the doll my shadow precedes me, but in constantly stepping towards this, the threshold between inside and outside is drawn attention to.

Through these differing passages in The Mechanics of Fluids I envisage myself as a
journeywoman, mapping differing trajectories of space-time and energy and in beginning, again and again, without resolution nor ending. The edgy quality of the plinth section is maintained until the final section when the gestural motility shifts to an-other space and is externalised as a contradictory array of gestures - imploring, supplicating and teasing - is communicated towards the doll. In this final passage the doll becomes the focus for a transformation of attention and energy. I gesture towards her, revealing an unclothed arm, and repeatedly shaking my hands in a prayer-like position, I touch myself placing my hands in succession down the side of my leg and grabbing my foot in towards my crutch, my fingers draw a circle over my belly and my arms, outstretched reach upward in a crucifix-like form vibrating before releasing into an S-curve above my head. These gestures are tight, articulate and insistent. Their discursive quality suggests a number of differing narratives but they are also elusive and contradictory. As a series of coordinated manipulations directed towards the doll their absurdity lies in the absence of any promise of reciprocation. These gestures are turned back on myself, making of my body both the instrument and theatre for these provocations. Their is no clear ending to this, I reach inside the bag which has become the doll’s prop and remove a number of articles of clothing, reassuringly I remind the doll that I will be "right back" and walk off stage to change.

Acts of Becoming represents an attempt to draw and reflect upon aspects of my own experience in the processes of becoming a dancer through the animation of boundaries between dancer and choreographer, performer and spectator. In utilising recognisably stylised dance language, it shifts gear from the other two sections of the
work into a space where the genealogy of my own dancing body becomes the subject of the work itself. The dance within a dance operates reflexively in the context of the performance drawing attention to the discursive spaces of dance practices. The form of the choreography interposes dance and spoken texts, segmenting and dividing roles as speaker/mover so as to heighten the effect of differing modes of perception inside and outside the dance. I enter the stage and take up a position on a stool with my back to the audience. Locating myself as a viewer within the context of the performance I speak, making commands and instructions and giving suggestions to my imagined dancer. Bringing her to life in this way, 'she' begins to dance.

The initial phrase of the 'dance' is repeated four times with minor variations in detail. Each section of spinning which follows this initial phrase is differentiated by name, the "schlinger", the "schöpf kreis", the "arm kreis", and the "impuls", names given to specific movements common to the Bodenwieser technique and here incorporated into the action of spinning. In this way my own specific inheritance as a dancer is signified within the work. Whilst the repeated enactment of the dance reiterates its form, the momentum increases across these repetitions and builds until the final section of spinning which, with its continuity, its shifts of axis and percussive thrusts breaks with the controlled formalism of what has gone before.

The music of Czechoslovakian singer, Iva Bittova accompanies this dance. Her voice patterns with their clipped and sonorous ululations are evocative of ritual and folkloric dancing. As her voice rises and falls in volume and shifts gear from fast to slow and
back to quick tempi, the dance trips through its circular and linear patternings at
times catching the music, at other times, receding from it, sitting down again just as
the volume and energy builds. This cat-and-mouse quality, of music chasing dance,
dance chasing music continues until the final extended passage of dancing which
builds with the crescendo in the music. Music and movement come together in a
moment of synthesis, but then the music stops and I continue to build the spinning
and whip-like actions of arms and legs in silence. Dance and music intersect but also
retain their separate identities as if they have different but overlapping stories to tell.

The alternation between forms of activity, - spinning, and ‘directing’ - is a deliberate
device intended to break the flow and lyricism of the dance with the poetics of words
positioned outside of, but in reference to, the dance. This follows the claims made
in the thesis of the need to break with acquired patterns of movement which risk
naturalising assumptions about the body as well as the ongoing need to acknowledge
female genealogies⁸. At the same time this work attempts to move into a more poetic
space through its privileging of rhythm, pulse and spinning. In this context the
choreography can be seen as a metaphor for the becoming spaces of the feminine
imaginary as articulated in the writings of Luce Irigaray. The spoken texts refer to
both an inheritance of codes and correctives received as a dancer, and feminist
writings which attempt to retrieve the body for women (these are reproduced below).
The co-presence of other voices - ‘I’ as other, ‘I’ as another - attests to the
differences within and between women as they negotiate their real and imaginary
inheritances. In this sense an attempt is made to override and collapse subject and
object positions within the dance. This situation is not resolved but shifts to an-other
space as the dancer, 'I' relocates her/my "baggages" and addressing her audience begins - dancing beyond the ending.

Regrouping my objects so that they are facing the audience I stand alongside these and take my gaze out to the audience. There is a pause, I breathe, register a shift in perspective and perception, the new facing brings new possibilities, there is no set choreography for my body to fall into at this moment. So I take the moment as it comes. Falling and glimpsing.

The relationship between these choreographies and the written thesis is associative rather than illustrative. The ideas, arguments and philosophies articulated in the latter are embodied, to some degree, in the former. But being two different kinds of cultural production, operating within their own modes and codes of practice, the inter-relationships between the two are not contained by the internal parameters of the work but rather can be said to proliferate beyond its boundaries.

Coming as it does, after the presentation of the written thesis, The Mechanics of Fluids can be regarded as a reflection on the theorising articulated in the text, Inscribing the Body: Feminist Choreographic Practices, but it is important to recognise that it moves beyond this too. The open-ended structure of this performance suggests passage, on-goingness and non-bounded space wherein the fluid interventions of the feminist subject are enabled.
The Anatomy of Reason

This is my Brainchild. Well haven't you ever wondered what it would be like to be pregnant with an idea? Imagine the indigestion from all those words, and what old man philosophers we'd give birth to, Plato for instance.

I'm miming philosophy, partaking in the phallocentric phantasmagoria of post-Freudian anal-alysis.

Psychobabble.

I'm miming philosophy, partaking in the phallocentric phantasmagoria of post-Freudian anal-alysis.

The hegemony of languages, dizzying spells of glossolalia. In speaking, repeating, past narrations of he-she fantasies.

Is reason sexed?

[Whisper to doll] Look, if you're going to go into the forest you're going to have to take a clean handkerchief, carry some spare change with you, and whatever you do, don't talk to strangers.

I have all these bits and pieces, a left side and a right side, an upper body, a middle body and a lower body, a front side and a back side, a top and a bottom, an inside and an outside, and when I was very young, I imagined that all of these bits, and pieces, could fold in on themselves, and that I could make myself into a work of origami. And then I'd imagine that I had a join through the middle, running from the top of my head to the base of my pubic bone and that I could fold in half, like a suitcase.

Are you following me?


I have all this critical baggage, I hope you don't mind if I share some of it with you.

How to become an Object.
Number one, remove all clothing. Number two, position the body for display, a raised surface will do. Number three, pose. [To the doll] Don't move, I'll be right back.

Acts of Becoming

I'm speaking to you. Ready the space, make it possible, make it real.

Mark/sign/imprint/trace/seal.

Step together, stop, wind, unwind, step, turn, thrust, schlinger and breathe.

And speak to me in this silence.

The 'I' stretches through the tendons and spilling, spinning, tripping, moves to an-other place.

Never to close the circle, keep it open, keep it whole.

The schöpf kreis.

Listen, I want the feeling of listening, of listening and leaping, of leaping into listening.

Put rhythm, pulse and humming space into movement. [Adapted from du Plessis 1990].

Oh, and don't forget to breathe.

The arm kreis.

And why stop. You must keep going.

Your body is not the same today as it was yesterday.

Be what you are becoming, not what you might have been [adapted from Irigaray in Humm 1992, p210].

The impuls.
Notes

1. For a video representation of these works see the final section of the attached video, also appendix three for programme details.

2. See Chapter 4 on the problematic representation of 'woman'.

3. See p121 on Irigaray's explanation of woman's limited choice of body-image.

4. "Kinderwhore" is the term given by fashion critics for adult women who follow the trend in fashion initiated by artists such as Courtney Love, of the rock group Hole, in wearing baby-doll dresses and nighties, often in pastels, pinks and blues and accessorising with baby dummies' and dolls. See for example Caroline Sullivan's (1985) review of Courtney Love's performance at Wolverhampton.

5. See the introduction to the thesis for an explanation of Foucauldian conceptions of the body and feminist theorists explanations of the need to acknowledge the specificity of its construction according to sexual difference.

6. See Chapter 4.5 and Chapter 8.3.

7. For a discussion on the problematics of this in relation to deconstructive feminist art see Chapter 5.4.

8. See Chapter 7.1.
Dancing through the Wild Zone

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Choreographer and Dancers
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-- PAUSE --

MAKING A WOMAN
A trilogy of dances inspired by the writings of Antonia White and the making and meaning of different kinds of femininity.

FROST

SUGAR

ESSENCE

-- INTERMISSION --

JOAN OF ARC
Worker, fighter, martyr, saint, the glory and tragedy of this famous heroine is conveyed in three scenes. Original choreography by Gertrude Bodenwieser (1890-1959) on Shona Dunlop in Sydney, Australia 1947. Reconstructed by Shona Dunlop MacTavish on Carol Brown in Dunedin, New Zealand in December 1991. Original composition by Marcel Lorber. Arranged and played by Terrence Dennis for the reconstruction. Costumes constructed by Charmian Smith. Supported by the QEII Arts Council of New Zealand.

SHE WHO LAUGHS LAST
I think the place where it (a female syntax) could best be deciphered is in the gestural codes of women's bodies. But, since their gestures are often paralysed or part of the masquerade, in effect they are often difficult to 'read'. Except for what resists or subsists 'beyond'. In suffering, but also in women's laughter. And again 'in what they dare' - do or say - when they are among themselves. Luce Irigaray

Choreographed and performed by Carol Brown and Josephine Leask. Music by Noise.
CAROL BROWN & COMPANY

presents

BLOODSONGS

dance theatre

Friday 28 January
University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey.

Saturday 29 January
South Hill Park Dance Studio, Bracknell, Berks.

Saturday 12 March
Riverhouse Barn, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey.
Bloodsongs is a collection of new choreographies by Carol Brown centering on a variety of bodily pleasures and tensions threaded through with humour, grace and wildness. Three women explore a universe of borders, fields of experience at the turning points between the familiar and the strange. These wanderings expose strengths and fears, abjections and lyricisms in a compelling dance-theatre of the forces that shape women's experiences.


Carol Brown is a dancer/choreographer from New Zealand living and working in England. Bloodsongs is her first full-length dance-theatre work made in this country and follows on from her previous Dancing Through the Wild Zone which was shown here last year. She has been working professionally in dance for more than ten years, creating and performing dances which are characterised by their startling physicality and rich imagery. Carol Brown was originally trained in dance-theatre with Shona Dunlop-MacTavish in New Zealand and more recently with Hilda Holger in London. She has an MA in Dance Studies from the University of Surrey where she is currently undertaking research into feminist choreographic practices.

Performances 1994
Premier: Friday 28 January, 7.30pm. University of Surrey
PATS Dance Studio
Guildford Surrey GU2 5XH.
Tel. 0483 509905

Saturday 12 March, 8pm. Riverhouse Barn Manor Road Walton-on-Thames Surrey KT12 2NZ Tel. 0932 253354

Saturday 29 January, 8pm South Hill Park Dance Studio Bracknell Berkshire RG12 7PA Tel. 0344 484123

Carol Brown & Company is supported by South East Arts, the University of Surrey Choreographic Laboratory, Campusdance and Campusport.
THE MECHANICS OF FLUIDS
CHOREOGRAPHED AND PERFORMED BY CAROL BROWN

WEDNESDAY 15 MARCH 1995, 7.30 p.m.
Performing Arts Technology Studios

What are the processes of ‘becoming woman’? How is the body coded and produced as feminine/masculine/’other’? What is its genealogy as a body and, whose body is it anyway?

Informed by ideas about femininity and the body from Plato to Freud, and the critical discourse on this tradition in recent feminist thought, Carol Brown's solo choreographies dissolve divisions between passion and reason, depth and surface, form and matter.

The Mechanics of Fluids comprises a series of solos devised through PhD choreographic research based at the University of Surrey's Department of Dance Studies. The theoretical underpinnings of this work are examined in her thesis, Inscribing the Body: Feminist Choreographic Practices.

Original music for the piece is by New Zealand composer Russell Scoones. Scored for voice, guitars, percussion and found sounds his compositions are characterised by their varied textures, haunting qualities and driving rhythms. The lighting design is by Phillipa Wickham. This work follows Dancing Through the Wild Zone performed in 1992 and a South East regional tour of Bloodsongs in 1993-4.

About the choreographer:

Carol Brown is originally from New Zealand. Her early training was in the Central European dance theatre techniques of Gertrude Bodenwieser (1890-1958) which she studied with Shona Dunlop-MacTavish in New Zealand, and subsequently with Bettina Vernon, Evelyn Ippen and Hilda Holger in England. She has performed and choreographed extensively throughout New Zealand with Dunedin Dance Theatre, Carousel, Dance = Arts and Bronwen Judge. In 1987-88 Carol completed an MA in Dance Studies at the University of Surrey. Returning to New Zealand in 1989 she worked as a freelance choreographer, performer and teacher until her return to England in 1992. Since 1992 Carol has been based in the Department of Dance Studies where she is completing her PhD in Feminist Choreography.

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234
Wednesday 15 March 1995, 7.30pm
Performing Arts Technology Studio

Choreographed and performed by Carol Brown
With original music by Russell Scoones
Additional music by Iva Bittova, Ne-Neh
and Arvo Part, Frates
Lighting Design by Philippa Wickham

The Anatomy of Reason
Informed by ideas about femininity and the body from Plato
to Freud this work attempts to re-dress the 'body' of reason
and its feminine subtext.

The Mechanics of Fluids

What are the processes of 'becoming women'? How is the body
coded and produced as feminine/masculine/other? What is its
genealogy as a body and, whose body is it anyway?

In this solo the materiality of the body becomes a screen for
projections as object, sign and other as well as a site of
resistance.

Acts of Becoming
Tracings of journeys made and voices inhabited combine in
the confluence of differences within and between post-
colonial nomads.

The Mechanics of Fluids concludes Carol Brown’s PhD
research into Feminist Choreographic Practices. It follows the
previous works, Dancing Through the 'Wild Zone' (1992) and
Bloodsongs (1993-94), constructed for Carol Brown and
Company. Of primary concern to these choreographic
explorations has been the issue of how the woman
cancer/choreographer as cultural agent, can negotiate and
subvert the legacy of dualistic assumptions which situate the
female body in dominant Western culture as 'object par
excellence'. The theoretical underpinnings to this work are
articulated in the thesis, Inscribing the Body: Feminist
Choreographic Practices.

Technical Manager: Amanda Garrett
Stage Manager: Jacqui Wilson
Front of house: Year 2 (Management Studies),
BA (Hons) Dance & Society
Video operator: Verity Sutton

This work has been supported by a University of Surrey Research Scholarship and a
study grant from the Arts Council of New Zealand, Toi Aotearoa.

Carol Brown wishes to thank Janet Lansdale and Liz Aggiss for their support through
the making of this work, also Rosemary Butcher, Sophia Preston, Jaana Lamsa, Sophia
Lycouris, Sarah Passfield, Linda Jasper, Jacqui Wilson, Josephine L and Verity
Sutton.
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