Reworking the Ballet: Refiguring the Body and Swan Lake

by Vida Midgelow

March 2003

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
For Naomi
&
my parents, with love.
Abstract

Reworking the ballet: Refiguring the body and ‘Swan Lake’ illuminates the choreographic praxis, context and politics of reworkings of classic ballets. Dance reworkings can be seen as unruly acts framed within the status quo of the canon and are positioned as examples of canonical counter-discourse. Deconstructing the canon through processes of demythologisation and the strategies of intertextuality, reworkings have the potential to resist the nostalgic and the authoritative frame of the canon. Revealing gaps and omissions, elucidating assumptions and privileges, and exposing gender and ethnic specificities, these dances evoke difference and diversity, and bring the partial and the provisional to the fore.

Through close readings and using feminist / postfeminist and postcolonial perspectives particular attention is given to the revision of gender within these dances. Gender is shown to be especially fictive within reworkings due to the explicit reappropriation, and reinscription, of the body within these dances. The ways in which three radical reworkings of Swan Lake by Susan Foster, Shakti and myself refigure the female body and the erotic forms the main focus of the thesis. These dance makers rework the already highly gendered body of the ballerina – reclaiming the body and the erotic as a force for women, such that they have the potential to enjoy the power and pleasure of their own sexuality without recourse to dominant orthodoxies.

Reworkings assert the simultaneous habitation of multiple and overlapping formulations. As hybrid, intertextual works these dances activate, at the very least, a bi-directional gaze - simultaneously challenging and evoking their source texts. Through this ‘double gesture’ these dances have the potential to reconfigure their source texts, and the bodies therein, in such a manner as to operate beyond binary oppositions of canon/counter-canon.
## INTRODUCTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 INTRODUCTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 1: REWORKING THE BALLET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 1: Reworking the Ballet: (En)Countering the Canon</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Reworking the ballet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Defining the terms of the discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Reviewing four <em>Giselles</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Reworkings in context: canonicity, history and myth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.1 The canon and myth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.2 Canonical counter-discourse: postcolonialism and feminism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.3 Reconsidering the past: reworkings as postmodern historiography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Intertextuality and parody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Towards a definition of reworkings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 2: Canonical Crossings</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Strategies of dissonance - moments of sameness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Re-telling tales: re-contextualising the dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Inverting bodies: reformulating the dance vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Crossing genders: cross-casting and cross-dressing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 The heterosexual matrix and beyond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Cultural exchange, reworking imperialism and intertextuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2: RADICAL REWORKINGS, POSTFEMINISM AND ‘SWAN LAKE’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 3: Reworking ‘Swan Lake’: Refiguring the Body</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Reworkings and feminism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Reworking <em>Swan Lake</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Feminism / postfeminism: refiguring the female body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1 Performative bodies: unstable identities and parodies of gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2 Material bodies: the fluid, grotesque and unruly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.3 Plural bodies – hybrid bodies – becoming bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Erotic bodies: (re)claiming the erotic in dance reworkings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Viewing the body - (re)viewing the ballerina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Reworking the ballet: Refiguring the body and 'Swan Lake' aims to illuminate the choreographic praxis, context and politics of reworkings of classic ballets. In this thesis I investigate dance reworkings as examples of canonical counter-discourse and I propose that these dances can be seen as unruly acts framed within the status quo of the canon. The perspective that permeates the discussion is a feminist one. I seek to assess the potential of reworkings as a strategy for feminist resistance. In particular I question the extent to which the reworkings discussed refigure the already highly gendered body of the ballerina — reclaiming the body and the erotic as a force for women in the light of postfeminist agendas.

Since 1980 there has been a proliferation of dances that have used and abused, reworked and revisioned dances from the Classical and Romantic ballet canon. Mark Morris in his work The Hard Nut (1991) presents a reworking of The Nutcracker (1892). In The Hard Nut Morris creates a modern family with mutant offspring and oversized toys to tell a tale of love and acceptance in a playful and parodic style. Coppélia, created by Maguy Marin and adapted for television in 1994, presents the mechanical doll in the media age. Coppélia, in this version, is a blond wigged, red suited figure that steps out of a celluloid film and rapidly replicates into multiple copies. Aurora (1994), by Meryl Tankard and her Australian Dance Theatre, is a version of The Sleeping Beauty (1890). Playfully making use of an eclectic range of styles, the dance is formed as a gleeful hotchpotch, cutting across boundaries, happily mixing traditionally disparate elements. This is an uncompromisingly contemporary work that Tankard has suggested was inspired, at least to some extent, by all the press attention given to Lady Diana and the British Royal family (Hallet, 1994). British choreographer Matthew Bourne produced a much publicised 'all male' Swan Lake (1995) in which he recasts the traditionally female swans with a corps of men. These male swans, with bare torsos and wearing feather-covered pantaloons, emphasise the powerful and the untamed in contrast to the ballet's conventionally tragic and passive female swans.
While reworkings in dance have become more accepted (that is if the commercial success of Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake* can be used as an indicator) they are still not as common as they are in theatre, opera, and literature. In these forms canonical texts are rewritten and restaged regularly (although not always counter-discursively). Roger Copeland pointed out in 1994:

> Granted, one can cite Dance Theatre of Harlem's créole *Giselle*, or Mats Ek's madhouse *Giselle*, or Béjart's male *Firebird* or Mark Morris' nutty *Nutcracker*, but these are exceptions to the rule, much less common than say, Peter Sellars transposing the setting for a Mozart opera to Trump Tower or Harlem.
>
> (Copeland, 1994, p.19)

Extended discussions of examples of reworkings in theatre are found in Green (1994), Bennett (1996), Gilbert and Tompkins (1996), and Solomon (1997). In a chapter entitled 'Production and Proliferation', in an illuminating book by Susan Bennett (1996), no less than seventeen versions of *King Lear* are mentioned, all made between 1980 and 1990. Particularly pertinent to my study is Bennett's analysis of *Lear's Daughters* by the Women's Theatre Group with Elaine Feinstein, and *Kathakali King Lear* conceived and directed by David McRuvie with Annette Leday. Crossing geographical and gender lines these plays rework *King Lear* so as give rise to questions which 'challenge the authority of Shakespeare, the cumulative power of mainstream production, and the operation of that authority in the politics of culture' (Bennett, 1996, p.51).

In literature the rewritings of fairy tales by Angela Carter, Anne Sexton and Margaret Atwood, among others (see Zipes 1993 and Warner 1995), similarly give rise to questions about ownership and boundaries between genres. Significantly these writers refigure female characters in light of feminist perspectives. Carter, in works like *The Company of Wolves*, in which she reworks the tale of *Little Red Riding Hood*, explores the erotic and conjures the lure of the wild. Challenging conventional misogyny she refuses 'the wholesome or pretty picture of female gender (nurturing, caring) and deal[s] plainly with erotic dominance as a source of pleasure for men - and for women' (Warner, 1995, p.310).
Whilst dance reworkings have received attention in the popular press, very little academic consideration of these dances exists. Of the few individual essays that include analysis of the dances that I here term reworkings, none focus upon these dances as reworkings. For instance Deveril Garraghan's 'Too many cooks mix the metaphors: Marin and Spink, and the Sandman link' (1999) discusses Coppélia by Maguy Marin in the context of an intertextual analysis. Susan Foster's recent essay 'A closet full of dances' (2001) and Gay Morris's 1996 essay, "Styles of the flesh": gender in the dances of Mark Morris', present insightful and probing readings of Swan Lake by Matthew Bourne and The Hard Nut by Mark Morris respectively. These two essays focus on gender and sexuality, placing the choreographies by Matthew Bourne and Mark Morris into context with other 'queer' choreographers (Foster) and other works by the same choreographer (Morris). Whilst I continue the analysis of gender representation started in these two essays, I locate this discussion within the context of the practice and theory of reworkings, and I focus (in Part Two) on the ways in which female bodies have been refigured. I write from the premise that reworkings can be effectively considered as a group of dances and that they can be seen to operate in relational ways. Importantly I suggest that the identification of these dances as reworkings significantly affects the ways in which they are perceived and interpreted.

While the contemporary dances discussed in this thesis are described throughout as reworkings, I note in Chapter One that a number of related terms could be used to describe the dances in question. I choose not to attempt to classify the different approaches to the task of reworking too tightly. Instead I focus on dances that might be broadly perceived to depart from their source text(s) in order to give rise to a new dance which has a significantly different resonance. The works I discuss in this study can be seen to intervene, altering the dances of the past, for whilst classical revival has always meant revision, and every theatrical age remakes texts in their own image, these dances represent a much more self-conscious insurgence.

This study is limited to reworkings since 1980 (although a few earlier examples are included) and to reworkings of dances from the Classical and Romantic ballet canon. This is not to suggest that the only dances to be reworked are those from this canon, or that reworkings are not found prior to 1980. For instance, in the mid-nineteenth
century Giselle was remade in various guises. Dance historian Ivor Guest (1955) describes six versions of this ballet crossing the theatre, burlesque and ballet stages. All of these six dances might be considered reworkings and would make an interesting case study, incorporating, as they do, a source text that is variously parodied, extracted from, and altered. I also do not, for instance, discuss Giselle (1984) by Dance Theatre of Harlem. This dance interestingly recontextualises the libretto of the ballet in order to comment upon the Black slave experience in America. However as the work maintains the coded ballet vocabulary I choose not to include it here, for the re-conceptualising and re-choreographing of the movement language is seen as a defining feature of reworkings. This is examined in Chapter Two.

Some other current reworkings could also have proved interesting, but are similarly not included. For instance Romeo and Juliet (2001) by Rennie Harris, takes Shakespeare’s play and the ballet by MacMillian and reformulates them into a Black American context in a hip hop and rap style. O (1994) by Michael Clark also incorporates extended references to Ballet Russes ballets, using music and movement images to his own ends. These dances are fascinating examples of reworkings but are not within the remit of this study. Whilst prior to my post 1980 frame of reference I do however include brief discussions of two examples of reworkings from the mid to late 1970s. These pieces, by two British choreographers, Fergus Early and Jacky Lansley, are Sunrise (1979) based on Giselle, and a version of Swan Lake premiered in 1976. Early and Lansley also collaborated to create I, Giselle (1981) (see Chapter One). I include these dances as they can usefully be seen to reflect feminist perspectives and could be seen as precursors to the works discussed in Part Two.

The boundaries I set for the study nevertheless do reflect a common thrust. While reworkings of modern ballets, like those by Clark, can be found, more commonly choreographers have tended to revisit the most well-known and most canonical ballets of the nineteenth century. Arguably, as is implied in Chapter One, the reason for this is because canonical dances represent a body of works that perpetuate particular ideologies which need to be questioned. Conversely, they also represent values, themes and ideas that might be seen to traverse historical and cultural bounds and thereby be worthy of revisiting. Also pertinent is the very popularity and visibility of dances such
as *Swan Lake* and *Giselle*. Reworkings in many ways rely on, or at least use, an audience’s prior knowledge of the dance which they reference. By using a well-known ballet, references can be mobilised with at least some confidence that an audience will recognise the allusions.

Current reworkings, I argue, reconfigure the dances of the past in the light of the cultural, critical and artistic climate formed by the insights of poststructuralism, feminism/postfeminism and postcolonialism. I investigate the extent to which these dances demythologise the dances of the canon and participate in canonical counter-discourses. Representing an egalitarian stew of approaches, reworkings abandon the modernist quest for historical authenticity and open classic texts to an infinite range of possibilities. Thereby the dance texts discussed in this thesis generally take up a polemic stance toward their source text as they operate within the gaps of the ballet canon. These gaps become the very foundation of reworkings making what is usually hidden manifest. They contradict, criticise, dislocate, update, celebrate, refocus and otherwise re-imagine their source texts on stage.

Part One is made up of two chapters, *Reworking the ballet: (En)countering the Canon* and *Canonical Crossings*. These chapters present an overview of the context and practice of reworkings and provide the starting point for a theoretical understanding of this choreographic practice. Chapter One establishes the language and critical framework used and developed in the discussion that follows. Of particular interest are the construction and deconstruction of the canon, the processes of myth and the strategies of intertextuality.

Chapter Two, *Canonical Crossings*, provides an overview of the various counter-canonical strategies employed by choreographers. The contemporary reworkings of the ballet canon discussed here encompass works from Britain, America, Australia, Sweden, and Japan (via France). These dances are intended to give the reader a sense of the breadth of the field. Whilst all the dances discussed could be considered from a variety of perspectives the examples have been selected in order to illuminate particular choreographic strategies and themes. The choreographers of these works take up
particular feminist, queer, postcolonial and postmodern principles to reconstruct notions of gender identity, and in this chapter I analyze the specific ways in which reworkings have altered the ballet and refigured the body in unruly ways. However it is also consistently apparent that the canon is not surpassed but continues to reverberate within these dances.

Following this overview of contexts and practices I turn in Radical Reworkings, Postfeminism and ‘Swan Lake’ (Part Two), to focus specifically upon three radical reworkings by female, arguably feminist, choreographers. The dances - *Lac de Signes* (1996) by Susan Foster, *Swan Lake* (1998/9) by Shakti and my own, *O* (*a set of footnotes to Swan Lake*) (2002) – all have the ballet *Swan Lake* as their source. They have been selected in order to demonstrate three very different but inter-linked perspectives and choreographic methods. Each embodies, literally, the integration and simultaneous interrogation of theory through the process of reworking. The concept of enacting gender criticism on and through the body is presented as a potentially valuable critical practice. The act of making and performing their own work is seen as an act of agency (especially within the context of the ballet canon and the relative limitation of women’s agency therein). These artists might best be described as marginal artists who are creating small-scale works. The dances discussed in this section exemplify and highlight therefore the specific and the local rather than that which has come to seem universal. My selection of these artists brings voices to the centre that might not otherwise be heard. This is not, of course, a neutral choice; rather it puts into practice feminist discourses that assert the importance of recognising (and celebrating) the margins.

Introducing *Swan Lake* as a case study, and establishing the theoretical concerns of Part Two, Chapter Three, *Reworking ‘Swan Lake’: Refiguring the Body*, extends the broad conceptual frame established in Part One and lays the ground for a more specific consideration of the reinscription of the female body in reworkings. This chapter therefore reviews the reworking of the ballet in the light of postfeminist reconceptualisations of the body and the erotic. In this overview of postfeminist theories of the body it becomes clear that the body needs to be considered beyond the binary nexus of male/female, subject/object and self/other. The theories of writers such
as Butler, Deleuze and Guattari, Grosz, Irigaray and Mohanty are discussed in order to illuminate this discourse. I examine how far it is possible for Shakti, Foster and me to de/re-constitute and locate the swan women for current contexts, and importantly consider the extent to which they reflect and problematise feminist/postfeminist debates.

Chapters Four, Five and Six consider the dances Lac de Signes (1996), Swan Lake (1998/9) and O (a set of footnotes to Swan Lake) (2002) as case studies in feminist reworkings. The dances are analyzed individually and particular attention is paid to the specifics of each work. This process implicitly asserts these reworkings are not in any way connected by necessity just because each has the same source text (a model which would reassert the primacy of the source). The emphasis is therefore upon analysis of each dance on its own terms, as opposed to an assumption that as reworkings of Swan Lake they can be homogenized into a single view. What does come to the fore is that each in its own distinctive way refigures and eroticises the female body.

In Chapter Four I explore the way in which Foster, in her dance Lac de Signes, uses strategies of parody and consider the theme of looking-at-to-be-looked-at-ness. I also examine the potential of the ballerina-as-phallus and question the extent to which the phallic images presented by Foster affords the ballerina the opportunity to be perceived subjectively; with her race, history, gender being differentiated and fluid. In Chapter Five I analyse Shakti’s presentation of a highly sexual silver swan, a woman that she argues both incorporates and transcends both Odette and Odile. I consider Shakti’s work in the light of Indian philosophies and theorisation’s of Orientalism. Arguably this silver swan challenges Western feminist assumptions by demonstrating how the Oriental female body is repressed as much by feminist discourse as it is by cultural Imperialism. Chapter Six focuses upon my own reworking of Swan Lake – O (a set of footnotes to ‘Swan Lake’). I examine the potential of the haptic presence evident in this dance, for the haptic is a sense that focuses upon the tactile rather than the visual. Considering the extent to which this dance presents at once both plural, unstable bodies and the single specific body, I reflect on and problematise postfeminist accounts of the body.
As these three works are not commonly available to view live or on video I incorporate extracts from these dances on the video that accompanies this written thesis. The reader may view this tape in conjunction with the written text or find it illuminating to view this tape before reading Part Two. The dances *Lac de Signes* and *Swan Lake* are each represented through four short extracts (numbers 1-4 & 5-8). These extracts take the viewer through the pieces in a logical and linear fashion, highlighting some of the specific images discussed. The final extract (number 9) is of my own reworking, *O* (*a set of footnotes to ‘Swan Lake’*). This dance, made as part of the research process for this thesis, is in the form of an improvised and durational installation. It is therefore not possible to capture a definitive version of this work on video and so I instead include a montage of clips that are suggestive of the type of activities, images and movement that make up this work. These clips are from various viewing perspectives, different time periods and are edited from video recordings made at two presentations of this installation.

Through this thesis I present the new and relatively unknown (the radical reworking), reflecting on the relationships established between this and the seemingly well known (the classic ballet). The analysis of these dances thereby traces the symbiotic relationship established between the present contemporary performance (the reworking) and the historical source text (the nineteenth century ballet which is revisited by the reworking). I investigate the extent to which the re-reading of the ballet evident in reworkings represents not simply an unrelenting critique but may demonstrate both a distance and a yearning. Through these dances it is proposed, it may be possible to come to know the dances of the past but to know them differently. This is important for, as Adrienne Rich writes, ‘we need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us’ (1980, p.35).
Notes

For example see the plethora of reviews of Bourne’s Swan Lake. A good collection of reviews of this work can be found in Theatre Record, Sept, 1996.
Part 1

REWORKING THE BALLET
Chapter 1

REWORKING THE BALLET: (EN)COUNTERING THE CANON

1.1 Reworking the ballet

What cultural and artistic period reworks The Nutcracker as a 1960s comic book, characterises Aurora in The Sleeping Beauty as a drug addict, and replays Swan Lake as a homoerotic love story? Since 1980 choreographers have presented cherished ballets from the past in maverick and radical ways, challenging the edifice of received meanings. In this chapter I consider the ways choreographic reworkings of canonical ballets might be accounted for within the context of the current milieu and establish the critical frame within which reworkings exist.

I start, in Defining the terms of the discourse, by providing an overview of terminology. I outline particular classification systems proposed within the fields of dance, theatre and literary studies for use in the analysis of differing versions of a source text. The section that follows, Reviewing four Giselles, compares four reworkings of Giselle. These four dances exemplify typical practices associated with reworking, and the brief analysis presented begins to illuminate the choreographic strategies and recurring themes within these dances. The middle two sections, Reworkings in context and Intertextuality and parody outline the tenacious web within which these dances operate. This web is woven with threads that emanate from, amongst others, poststructuralist, postcolonialist and feminist discourse. These bodies of knowledge, as they intersect with postmodernism, have provided the critical climate of the current era. Strands of these discourses are unravelled in order to give rise to a critical language and analytical method with which reworkings, analysed in detail in subsequent chapters, can be discussed. Particularly influential threads evident in the acts of reworking discussed in this thesis are the challenges to the discursive production of power and knowledge, especially as exemplified by re-formations of the artistic canon. This, together with challenges to notions of authorial authority, authenticity and truth, and the corresponding awareness of the historical and social construction of gender, form the critical basis from which these works can be considered. The final section, Towards a definition of reworkings, begins to delineate
the common features of reworkings. I suggest that reworkings reflect the principle of 'reading against the grain', as choreographers create new texts that can help us to recognise our assumptions and shift our perceptions about both the past and the present. I propose that reworkings can usefully be considered as hybrid texts that evoke a particularly bi-directional gaze as they exist within a double frame, simultaneously evoking and questioning their sources.

1.2 Defining the terms of the discourse

The term 'reworking' is not a standardised or commonly understood term and the dances I here label 'reworkings' do not demonstrate a single set of easily definable features. There are almost as many approaches and terms as there are dances and writers. The following proliferation of terms - revivals, remakes, reconstructions, recreations, restorations, reworkings and revisions - amongst others, represents a contradictory mix of approaches. However it is nevertheless useful to attempt to delineate approaches and define features in order that effective analysis may be undertaken. What is similar in the dances that are here called reworkings, and what is reflected in this set of terms, is the pre-fix 're'. These terms all describe dances that have a pre-existing dance text, or pre-text(s), as a source that they 're'visit in a variety of ways. In other words they all describe dances that have source texts that are worked on, or taken off from.

The relationship between the source text(s) (or sometimes it might be more appropriate to describe it as a target text(s)) and the newly constructed text is an important one which distinguishes one mode of 're'visiting from another. The emphasis here is upon dances that substantially alter the ballet in order create a new work that has a significantly different resonance. Reworking, as I use the term, needs to be differentiated from other essentially more restorative trends. Various authors have attempted to clarify these different trends and have sought to establish frames of reference for discussing the relationships between a source text and the newly produced text. Interestingly most of the authors cited in the following overview discuss theatre or literature rather than dance. In dance there has been little attention paid to this enterprise; however at a dance conference entitled Dance Reconstructed: Modern Dance Art Past, Present and Future held in 1992, A. William Smith suggested
that the terms *reconstruction, recreation, resetting* and *revival* could be described in the following ways.

*Reconstruction* suggests intensive labor, research, piecework, maybe educated guesswork about some details, and generally implies a date of performance distant from that when the work was first produced. *Recreation* implies that the spirit of a dance is captured [even] though the details may be totally wrong, and the term is often used, for example, when discussing a modern performance of medieval entertainment in which descriptions from the period are scarce. If a dance with costumes and sets from one production is being set on another cast within a relatively short interval of time, the term *resetting* is often used. The term *revival* is often used when a dance is produced, usually under the direction of the choreographer, after not being performed for several years.

(Smith, 1992, p.248-9)

In a paper entitled 'Is authenticity to be had?' Ann Hutchinson Guest (2000) follows a similar vein of thought. Hutchinson Guest suggests that *reconstruction* implies 'constructing a work anew from all available sources of information aiming for the result to be as close as possible to the original' (2000, p.65). In this category she offers the work of Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer as an example. *Revival*, she suggests, is a term that describes the bringing to life of choreographic work from notation. Of a *reworked* dance she has little more to say than that if the choreography is reworked it should be indicated clearly whether it is by the original choreographer or by some other person (Hutchinson Guest, 2000, p.65-66).

Both of these writers focus on recuperative approaches. Theatre analysts have emphasised works that are more distant from their source texts. Amy Green in *The Revisionist Stage* (1994) cites Robert Brustein’s formulation which categorises two approaches to the conceptual rewritings of classic plays. These are: *Simile* productions, in which plays are recontextualised wholesale into different historical contexts, and productions which are conceptualised on the basis of *poetic metaphor*. These productions are ‘suggestive of the play rather than specific, reverberant rather than concrete’ (Brustein, in Green, 1994, p.13). Geoffrey Wagner (1975) and Darko Suvin (1988) similarly identify and categorise productions as they become progressively distant from the source text. Wagner, discussing adaptations from novels to films, uses the terms *transposition, commentary* and *analogy*. Of these
transposition has the minimum of apparent interference, whereas the commentary re-emphasises or re-structures the work in some way. These changes might include changing characters, dealing with inner stories, altering the context or surrounding imagery. The final term, analogy, represents a parallel argument to Brustein's poetic metaphor in that this approach may only hint at the source text.

The set of terms established by Suvin (1988) provides perhaps the most concrete model of categorisation, but, in attempting to be definitive, it is also problematic. Suvin formulates what he calls 'interpretative pragmatics' (1988, p.395) in order to discuss directorial interpretations. Suvin argues that any signifying situation in printed or performed dramas induce a 'Possible World' in the reader or spectator (1988, p.395). Therefore, he goes on, each world will unavoidably have some limits and central features. Whilst acknowledging that diverse readings of these possible worlds are probable he argues that 'they will have to have what Wittgenstein called a family likeness, that is some parameters in common: negatively, limits; positively, features' (Suvin, 1988, p.376). He labels these central features invariants. Suvin develops a system of identifying these invariants and attempts to distinguish between different stagings of plays based on their preservation, or not, of significant invariants. He calls these variants, adaptations and rewrites.

A variant observes the central structural features of the text being interpreted. In this formulation any staging is a variant. An adaptation uses only some of the central invariants, but these 'are sufficient to establish its “family likeness” to other members of that family' (Suvin, 1988, p.410). His final term, rewrite, indicates a work that 'is no longer, strictly speaking, an interpretation but a use of some elements from the anterior structure as a semi-finished product'; in these works only a few invariants may be evident (although at least one must be evident) and these 'are used for radically differing purpose' (Suvin, 1988, p.410).

Dance reworkings, as I use the term, are found across what Suvin categorises as adaptations and rewrites. However Suvin's formulation is not easily adapted for dance, for whilst possible worlds are inevitably evoked in the viewer in dance texts and play texts, Suvin relies heavily on the written play text as a fixed anterior source.
Without this, as is the case in a dance text, the invariants are harder to establish. A performance text, such as a dance, has an infinitely greater number of invariants. For dance the closest that it may be possible to come to the identification of invariants is the discernment of form and the relationships between typical components in a particular work. Janet Adshead’s (1988) dance analysis model provides a framework for this type of analysis. Using Adshead’s model it is possible to note and locate the particular and distinctive features of a dance. For example, Valerie Briginshaw, exemplifying the methodology discussed by Adshead, reveals how different versions of Swan Lake remain consistently recognisable as Swan Lake despite adaptation by many choreographers over its long history. Briginshaw focuses upon variations in choreography and performance within what remain ballet versions of Swan Lake. She comments that while the treatment of subject matter may change in different versions, via variations in characterisation, visual setting, lighting, movement, dynamics and pace, ‘there remains a common core of meanings … that enable us to recognise the dance as Swan Lake’ (1988, p.125).

However the question that remains for an analysis of reworkings is not how can a dance be recognised as a version (however it is adapted) of the ballet, but rather how can different types of reworkings be understood and analysed in relational terms. Whilst prolific in the generation of terminology these models of classification are not exhaustive and tend toward a rather over-schematic pigeonholing. For the purpose of this thesis I do not find it necessary to tightly classify different approaches as specific types but use the term reworkings to cover a range of dances which depart from their source text(s) in order to give rise to a new dance. Suvin’s model could usefully distinguish between say Mats Ek’s reworking of Swan Lake and Susan Foster’s as two reworkings that represent what Suvin would term an adaptation and a rewrite. However it does little to identify the differences between Giselle by Ek and Aurora by Meryl Tankard. Nor does his model help distinguish between Javier de Frutos’ use of Swan Lake and my own references to the ballet in O (a set of footnotes to ‘Swan Lake’). In order to understand these differences a much more detailed analysis needs to be undertaken of individual works in order to identify the differing relationships to the source texts and choreographic strategies used.
What is important in the identification of terminology to assist in the categorisation of different versions of a ballet is to differentiate between versions which essentially copy or duplicate the ballet, and those that are significantly different from the ballet at their source. The term reworking, in that it is an active term, implies a process, a rethinking, a reconceptualising, and a revising of the source text in order to bring about some new resonance. As Jack Zipes in his discussion of fairy tales notes, to revise something is to 'create something new that incorporates the critical and creative thinking of the producer and corresponds to the changed demands and tastes of audiences' (Zipes, 1994, p.9). One of the purposes of reworkings is to alter the convention and, whilst as Zipes notes not all revised texts are progressive, the basic premise evident in these dances is that the source needs to be gone over or re-examined. The creators of reworkings can be seen to map out an alternative aesthetic terrain, which to varying extents, diverge from the perspectives evident in the dances which they rework.

### 1.3 Reviewing four Giselles

This overview of four reworkings of Giselle compares different choreographic approaches to reworkings and begins to illuminate the concepts embedded in, and applied to, these dances. In chronological order the dances that I review here are: 

- **Sunrise** (1979) by Fergus Early; 
- **I, Giselle** (1980) by Fergus Early and Jacky Lansley; 
- **Giselle** (1982) by Mats Ek, and my own work *The Original Sylph* (1997/8). These reworkings, which range from large-scale theatre works to small-scale dances with small casts in non-traditional spaces, exemplify differing relationships to the conventional Giselles at their source. Also, while some of these four Giselle's are more explicit than others in their revisionary purpose all reflect and participate in artistic and cultural agendas. For example, at what might be considered opposite ends of a continuum are **Sunrise** by Early and **Giselle** by Ek. **Sunrise** is a solo dance work which refers only in passing to the ballet, whilst using the character of Giselle and illuminating a previously absent narrative. **Giselle** by Ek is has a large cast and is a dance that parallels the ballet closely, whilst also significantly altering the context, characterisation and dance vocabulary.

*I, Giselle* reflects the agendas of the 1970s feminist movement, representing a critique of Giselle and the ballet genre whilst at the same time maintaining a respect for the
ballet. Lansley and Early state in their programme notes to *I, Giselle*, that they wished to ‘reclaim some of [ballet’s] positive elements and skills, particularly its theatrical quality and use these in new contexts’ (cited in Huxley, 1988, p.167). This dance, akin to other reworkings, does not treat the ballet flippantly; rather whilst deconstructing *Giselle*, Early and Lansley find aspects of the ballet of value and of interest. *I, Giselle* takes the established narrative and examines its politics, ideology and sexual roles. The piece was performed by five performers dancing the roles of Albrecht, Hilarion, Berthe and Myrtha - (danced by the same performer and presented as two aspects of a single powerful woman), and two Giselles (act one by an actress and act two by a dancer).

Consonant with the growing trend in new and postmodern dance in the 1970s, *I, Giselle*, whilst maintaining the central narrative, is an eclectic work which crosses styles and refuses boundaries. The music score by Steve Montague uses and distorts a recoded version of the conventional music by Adolphe Adam alongside atmospheric sound, and the live performance contains speech and songs. Set on a plain cloth-draped stage the dance incorporates slide projections of the various famous ballerinas who have danced Giselle and, in Act II, slides of ever multiplying Wilis. The movement crosses genres and includes mime, gesture, ballet, and movements influenced by release based forms.

Prior to creating *I, Giselle* Lansley noted that when she viewed the ballet she ‘always felt the autonomy of the Wilis as a group. They are raised up to dance with each other and for their queen, they do not seek out men, but when disturbed they kill’ (1979-80, p.10). This conceptualisation of the Wilis as an independent group of women who live in and enjoy a female realm is evident in *I, Giselle*. Giselle is also a strong, assertive character in charge of her own fate. Rather than falling into madness and death, this Giselle makes a clear choice to join the powerful Wilis. When Giselle enters this realm it is not a tragedy but a celebration of sisterhood, she does not have to be coerced by Myrtha. Giselle joins in a dance full of energy and circular patterns – reflecting feminist celebrations of womanhood and community (Early and Lansley, 1999, personal interview).
Of Albrecht, Huxley writes that in ‘I, Giselle Albrecht is trapped by the Romantic role accorded him, in a version where Giselle discovers his subterfuge in Act One, and he is punished for his deception rather than his noble love’ (Huxley, 1988, p.168). This reinterpretation disrupts the values embedded in Giselle and in the Romantic style. Early, who danced the role of Albrecht, has ‘a distinctive performance style, a somewhat diffident presentation which belies the expected macho role of the male dancer’ (Huxley, 1988, p.165). Within this reworking the gendered vocabulary of ballet is extended as Early performs the steps of the ballet but with a different dynamic and body attitude. This anti-virtuosic language and ‘softer’, alternative physicality, may challenge conventional expectations of the male dancing body.

Early took a similar approach to the vocabulary of ballet in Sunrise - a one act, one man ‘ballet’, with music from Giselle by Adam. In this dance Early enters the stage from an escape route in the roof of the theatre. Emerging down a ladder, wearing a white wedding dress and veil, whilst playing Adam’s music on a recorder, Early walks slowly down the space on his toes. In the centre of the space he kneels down and removes the wedding dress to reveal a pair of white Y-fronts underneath. Early then goes on to perform sequences of mime that allude to the gestures in the ballet Giselle - hinting at the ballet's story. Performing in his Y-fronts Early moves along the green mats laid out on the floor and displays a relaxed balletic virtuosity. Jacky Lansley in her review of the dance said that she found it ‘extremely satisfying to see the energy and skill of a ballet dancer’, and that ‘many of the movements which have evolved for the proscenium arch are, close up, larger than life and amazing’ (Lansley, 1979-80, p.13).

Sunrise takes place after Act II of the Giselle libretto. In this way the dance takes place ‘in the gaps’, filling out and shifting the understanding of Giselle’s experience. My own reworking of Giselle ironically entitled The Original Sylph (1997/8), like Sunrise by Early, takes place in the gaps of the ballet. Rather than re-choreographing the ballet while retaining the structural form, as Ek does, Early and I make references to Giselle, exploring intersecting themes without reworking the narrative or specific parts of the ballet. The Original Sylph is a small-scale solo dance that begins with the overture to Giselle by Adam. I lie under a mound of earth over which white flowers
are spread. As the music reaches its climax I burst from under the mound of earth
gasping for air. The images of the grave, death and resurrection recur throughout the
dance. These images clearly refer to Act II of the ballet but are also used as a
metaphor for the process of reworking, of the resuscitation of the past. Drawing on
poststructuralist accounts of history this dance works through the past that is ‘dead’,
which can only be found in history, and resurrects the past in a different form. This
new form comments on past forms and acknowledges its debt to the past, but also is a
dance clearly of the late twentieth century.

Leaving the grave I struggle in pointe shoes and totter towards the audience.
Reaching the front of the stage I stop, look up and gaze back at those gazing upon me.
Looking down at my feet encased in pink ribboned shoes I squat and begin to untie the
ribbons. Whether this is a rejection of the shoe or an inability to conform to the
requirements of the shoes is ambiguous. Either way I assert myself/Giselle as flesh not
fantasy, real not ethereal. In an ironic and playful reference I begin to gesture with my
arms and hands. The gestures are drawn from the ballet but they are pared down and
abstracted in such a way that they become like an encoded semaphore. Alongside these
gestures I speak of love.

‘I love you madly.’
‘A women who loves a very cultivated man knows she cannot say to him “I
love you madly.”’
‘Because she knows that he knows (and that he knows that she knows) that
these words have already been written by Barbara Cartland.’
‘Still, there is a solution to this problem. She can say, “As Barbara Cartland
would have put it, “I love you madly”. At this point, having avoided false
innocence, having clearly said that it is no longer possible to speak innocently,
she will nevertheless have said what she wanted to say: that she loves him, but
that she loves in an age of lost innocence’

(after Eco, 1984, p.67-8)

This reference to Umberto Eco’s work on the postmodern condition contextualises this
reworking. Operating intertextually, in the manner described by Riffaterre (1990) and
de Marinis (1993) (discussed later in this chapter), the dance references a number of
sources. The conventional Giselle is the most overt, and obligatory reference. This
reference resonates throughout the work via set, music, costume, movement
vocabulary and characterisation. Other references embodied in the dance are those of writers: Eco, as paraphrased above, Salman Rushdie and Susan Foster. These self-conscious intertexts form the basis of the spoken text and create a self-commentary within the dance. Cutting across the character of Giselle, whilst being voiced by her, these references help signify a woman who is multifaceted, aware of her own past, her own history and able to refer to others. In this way The Original Sylph represents a disruptive account recalling Foucault’s assertion that the task of genealogy is ‘to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history’s deconstruction of the body’ (in Bennett, 1996, p.52).

The incorporation of spoken text, following other postmodern dances, presents a sylph who refuses to be safely silent, refuses to evoke an ephemeral world within which she need not be taken too seriously (Foster, 1996b, p.219). Using physicality and voice, the sylph evokes a sense of ‘knowingness’. She embodies the role of sylph, albeit a different kind of sylph, and also comments upon and critiques her role going some way towards countering the ballerina’s thwarted impulse to speak. In asserting an alternative vision of this canonical work which foregrounds the female as creator and interpreter as well as subject, the dance seeks to reclaim and affirm female agency within dance history. Tracing the construction of her identity, Giselle in this reworking suggests the possibility that she might shun her mythical status and dance out of her grave.

Both Early and I present Giselle in a very pared down form using only a few direct elements of the source ballet within the new text’s own structure. In contrast, the most well known reworkings presented by choreographers such as Matthew Bourne, Mark Morris and Mats Ek, follow the narratives, use the music and maintain a close structural link to their sources. Ek updates Giselle placing it into a twentieth century context. Ek’s approach removes the supernatural elements of the dance and locates the tale in a symbolically painted, Freudian inspired, stage designed by Marie-Louise Ekman. In the first act the painted ‘landscape’ loosely resembles a woman’s body with boldly coloured hills shaped like breasts out of which trees sprout and under which green grasses grow, which are reminiscent of pubic hair. This concept is developed in
the second act when female body parts (fingers and breasts) are represented as
dismembered and fragmented objects.

Ek, speaking in 1983 of his reworking of *Giselle*, comments that:

> Over ten years ago I saw it [*Giselle*] for the first time – with Makarova. She
> was the one who really grabbed me. Already then, I thought the traditional
> story of *Giselle* contains many hidden possibilities which are not recognized.
> There are various trails leading inside, but they are not utilized. They lie fallow
> or else are powdered over.

(cited in Tegeder, 1983, p.19)

Bringing into focus subtexts from the ballet, his work highlights class differentiation
and the tensions between individuality and conformity. Following the traditional
narrative, Giselle, a country girl, falls in love in Act I with Albrecht, who in this version
is not a fairy tale aristocrat but a sophisticated, rather spoilt young ‘townie’. Giselle is
not an innocent virgin but a passionate, if rather peculiar, woman. Giselle’s love for
Albrecht is a sexual love and themes of sexuality and fertility are to the fore. These
themes are particularly evident in the backdrop and the giant eggs with which the
women dance.

From his first entrance Albrecht is clearly of a different class from that of Giselle - if his
more upright alignment and flowing movement style did not mark his difference
enough his white tail coat, distinct from Giselle’s ‘peasant’ brown, certainly does.
However Giselle, unbridled by social constraints, loves him. She does not appear to
understand that they cannot be together simply because they have been brought up in
different classes. Because of her infatuation with Albrecht, Giselle is positioned apart
from her fellow country folk. She is a woman who attempts to transgress the bounds
of societal norms and subsequently is neither accepted in her own social group or that
of Albrecht. Indeed, rather than dying of a broken heart, in this version she is punished
for her open sexuality and for attempting to transgress her social background. At the
end of Act I her own people trap her – pinning her down like a dangerous animal with
their two-pronged forks and banishing her to what appears to be a lunatic asylum, the
context for the second act.
In Act II the traditional Wilis are replaced by a host of female hospital patients and a strict matron replaces Myrtha. Whether these women are supposed to be truly mentally ill or, like Giselle, are women society would rather ignore is not clear. For whatever reason, these women are restricted and controlled. Confused and intense, they rock, shuffle and lay on the floor, their bodies held in tense contortions. It has been suggested that they were conceived as nymphomaniacs (Poesio, 1994, p.695), and they certainly demonstrate an obsession with sex and pregnancy. They are also fearful of men and their at times violent response to Albrecht seems to be driven by this fear. Hilarion, a more three dimensional character in this version, is allowed to leave the hospital, but Albrecht, the focus of the women's attentions, is stripped naked and left exposed and vulnerable.

Born in 1945, the second son of the choreographer Birgit Cullberg, Ek studied dance, alongside drama, with Donya Feuer from 1962 to 1965. In 1966 he began working at the Royal Dramatic Theatre and at the Puppet Theatre in Stockholm as a producer. Having been initially engaged as a dancer by the Cullberg Ballet, he became the company's Artistic Director in 1982, forging the dramatic, expressive style, for which the company is renowned. Ek resigned his directorship in 1993 to work freelance. His earlier choreographies had explicit socio-political messages. Soweto (1977) is a clear example of this approach in its direct confrontation of apartheid. Later works are less explicit in their political agenda as community and family relationships become the focus as Old Children (1989) and Light Beings (1991) demonstrate. Ek has also had an ongoing thematic interest in legendary tales, narrative form and creating characters.

Ek's reworkings of the classics, Giselle (1982), Swan Lake (1987) and The Sleeping Beauty (1996) draw together these different aspects of his work. Through his reworkings Ek creates alternative narratives, re-examining the legendary tales and characters. Transforming and recontextualising the traditional scenarios, he makes them relevant to current audiences. Ek's representation of the workings of psychology and social strictures upon female sexuality is particularly evident in Giselle. Problematically however in Ek's Giselle, the way in which the imagery on the painted back drop, Giselle's sexual desires and the red doll/cushion (which Giselle cradles and pushes inside her top) combine, suggests that 'sexuality, fertility and the maternal
instinct are one’ (Ulzen, 1990/1, p.45). Further the representation of women as psychologically unstable, and as unable to their control sexual desires, may also reinforce negative images of women.

‘Worse still’, critic Karen van Ulzen points out, is ‘the overly simplistic portrayal of country life as equated with earthy, natural sexuality and its comparison with the sanitised, modern medical world’ (1990/1, p.45). Whilst these issues are, I would argue, present in conventional versions, but perhaps hidden by the Romantic form, Ek’s modern work emphasises these points and does little to ‘correct’ them. Indeed in this version Giselle, whilst more assertive, is chastised for her wilful sexual transgression rather than her folly as being too innocent in love, as in the ballet and the potential strength and power of the Wilis and Myrtha has been removed by Ek. However, whilst containing contentious elements Ek’s reworking brings new perspectives and depths of understanding to our dancing heritage. Full of original ideas this dance will make you think again.

These four dances implicitly embody the cultural climate created by poststructuralism, feminism and postcolonialism. These theories bring to the surface debates about the nature of human existence and relationships. They are fundamental because they are political and result in a questioning of power and discrimination. These theories demonstrate how power and knowledge are constructed and thereby help to deconstruct the edifice of received norms. It is to these concepts as they relate to reworkings that I now turn.

1.4 Reworkings in context: canonicity, history and myth
The parallel and interactive operations of the canon, history and myth have served to imbue Classical and Romantic ballets, the dances that are revisited in reworkings, with the gloss of transcendence and ahistoricism. Contemporary discourses have dispelled this gloss and opened up canonical texts to reveal their artistic, cultural and political specificity. Reworkings both reflect and add to this discourse entering the canon from alternative, and at times discordant, directions.
1.4.1 The canon and myth

The term ‘canon’ traces back to the Greek ‘kanon’ denoting notions of rule, ruler, model or standard. The establishment of a canon has been part of church practice. One of the most pertinent meanings is that a canon is an authoritative list of books accepted as Holy Scripture (hence the description of canonical works as ‘sacred’). Thereby canons may be understood as a consolidated narrative of origin that forms the legitimating backbone of a cultural and political identity. Other definitions that are particularly useful are the canon as the authentic works of a writer, and as a criterion or standard of judgement. Marcia J. Citron in *Gender and the Musical Canon* writes that ‘canons are exemplary, act as models, instruct, represent high quality, endure, and embody at least some degree of moral or ethical force’ (1993, p.15). Canons therefore exert formidable power, setting the standards of what is considered to be worthy, to be of quality and good. Associated with the authority of the canon is a set of transhistorical aesthetic values evidenced by the unquestionably ‘great’ creators which establish models to be studied (and aspired to) by those wishing to gain entry to the practice (Pollock, 1999, p.3). Works are judged as to whether they ‘match up’ and works which fail to meet the criterion are then excluded and, as a result, partially ignored.

As a potent symbol of the identity of a culture the canon is not value free but value laden. As Citron states ‘the canon is seen as a replication of social relations and a potent symbol on their behalf’ (1993, p.1). Those who have control over it are in commanding positions for the canon tends to reflect and perpetuate the ideologies of particular points of view. Almost invariably, especially until more recently, it has been the points of view of privileged, white, Western males that have formed the criteria of canonicity.

The canon appears to present a unified vision of quality, for although the works included within canons do shift, the process takes place over long periods of time. Thereby the works included within the canon become, over time, entrenched as canonical. This ‘entrenching’ is further enhanced by the perception that a work should be able to ‘stand the test of time’ in order to be considered truly canonical. Works within the canon then take on a normative significance. The types of works included in
the dance canon have tended to perpetuate a particular type and approach to the
making of dances and by extension present only certain representations of gender,
sexuality and ethnicity.

Through the operation of the canon, and what Barthes (1977) terms myth, the rows of
identically dressed women that form the corps de ballet, the extended linear positions
of the ballet vocabulary, and fairy tale narratives that are the basis of many ballet
librettos, come to be considered mythic. Barthes presents an essentially Marxist
interpretation, and writes that myth ‘consists of overturning culture into nature or, at
least, the social, the cultural, the ideological, the historical into the ‘natural’ (1977,
p.165). Barthes argues that myth is a collective representation that is socially produced
but inverted in order to appear ‘a matter of course’ (1977, p.165). Myth, like the
canon, acts to deny social and political development and refuses to be named,
producing the effect of an eternal, historical, apolitical artefact.

In his early but highly influential text, Mythologies (1993) (originally published in
1957), Barthes reads beyond the apparent neutrality of texts in order to uncover their
cover meanings and considers the way texts become myth.iii His study, anticipating
intertextuality (which is discussed in the following section of this chapter), examines
the ways existing signs are remobilised as tokens of socially and politically charged
networks of meaning. As a ‘type of speech’ (Barthes, 1993, p.109) myth belongs to
the general science of semiology. Extending the three-fold linguistic system consisting
of signifier, signified and resulting sign, mythical speech is a second order semiological
system. Myth operates at the level of metalanguage, speaking about the language
object without needing the details of the linguistic schema, concerning itself with the
total or global sign. In this second order the composite sign of the first system
becomes a mere signifier. This mythic signifier empties the full sign of meaning and
functions as form. The value systems, history and geography contained in the full sign
of the first order is placed at a distance in the second such that history and meaning
evaporate into form and enter into a ‘constant game of hide-and-seek’ (Barthes, 1993,
p.188).
The composite sign of the second order, signification, the myth itself, is a distorted, shifting sign that appropriates speech and makes it appear neutral and innocent. As Barthes states:

Myth is speech stolen and restored. Only, speech which is restored is no longer quite that which was stolen: when it was brought back, it was not put exactly in its place. It is this brief act of larceny, this moment taken for surreptitious faking, which gives mythical speech its benumbed look.

(Barthes, 1993, p.125)

Applying this system to canonical ballets can help to reveal the way in which they have come to seem, through mythification, universal and transcendent, rather than specific and contextualised. In the first system the sign of the ballet is composed of the signifying image, in the second order this sign is both full of meaning and empty form. This empty form is filled with significations, for example, of ideal feminine beauty, transcendent love and universality, evoking mythical aspirations. In this way myth removes the particulars of time and place, of dancers and makers, and of steps, patterns and narratives. These elements are formed all together under the mythical sign that is ‘the ballet’.

This same pattern can be seen to homogenise differences between one ballet and another. There is no ratio of proportion between signifier and signified in myth. Numerous signifying images may fill the repeated concept; for example, the Romantic ballet may be filled by not only numerous ballets but also by aspects of any of those ballets. Hence the concept (the signified in the second order) works with only a few of the many features of the filled sign of the first order. The mythical is therefore incomplete.

This incomplete sign is also a depoliticised sign that operates to permanently suppress the contingent and historical make-up of signs. Barthes states:

Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply it purifies them, it makes them look innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact…. it does away with all dialectics, with any going
back beyond what is immediately visible, it organizes a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves.

(Barthes, 1993, p.143)

In this way the mythical becomes difficult to challenge or to see through. Lost in dense layers of signification, the more transparent first order takes on the appearance of that which goes without saying and loses the reality of its social construction. The mythical ballet therefore is just as it 'always has been' and perhaps more problematically as 'it should be'. Ballets thereby come to seem static and unchanging as differences between specific ballets and specific performances are eroded by the workings of myth. It is this mythic, generalised and standardised source that is referred to in reworkings. So although some reworkings may reference a particular version in general the references, and the audience's perception of the references, are to a mythic version. Reworkings both reveal and utilise the mythic status of the ballet, for, to a certain extent, they rely on the generalisation of ballet as they use audience's shared knowledge of convention and choreographic codes. They do not differentiate between one version of their source and another but 'use' a generic marker recognisable as the source. At the same time however, the process of reworking also brings to the fore the individual and specific in contrast to myth.

Barthes argues myth, precisely because it is a type of speech, can be 'righted' or demystified. Particular dances, and the very concept of ballet itself, can, having assumed the status of myth, be deciphered. Barthes suggests three different approaches to the reading of myth. Each of these three ways of reading focus upon the duplicity of the signifier as both meaning and form. The first method focuses upon the empty signifier and fills it with the concept of the myth. For example, looking for an ideal representation of the feminine I choose an image of a ballerina in order to fulfil my mythic concept. This reading still allows the ballerina to symbolise femininity unproblematically. Whilst Barthes considers this to be a cynical reading it runs parallel to a contemporary audience's suspension of belief as they fill the empty form of the ballet with the mythical concepts of magical transformations, transcendence and passions (Claid, 1998, p.29).
The second reading focuses upon the full signifier with its meaning intact and recognises the distortion of the sign by myth and thereby reveals the myth. This method invites a deconstructive reading in which the reality behind the myth and the fantasy are made known. This process of demythologising texts has much in common with the process of deconstruction suggested by poststructuralists. Poststructuralist deconstruction involves ‘reading against the grain’ or ‘reading the text against itself’. A deconstructive approach, like Barthes’ strategies for reading myth, seeks to uncover all things that overt textuality glosses over or fails to recognise. ‘The deconstruction of a text’, writes Barbara Johnson, proceeds by ‘the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within the text’ (cited in Barry, 1995, p.71). Derrida’s own description of deconstructive reading purports that it ‘attempts to make the not-seen accessible to sight’ (Derrida, 1976, p.163). Therefore a reworking taking a deconstructionist stance operates in the gaps, fissures and discontinuities of a source. The ballet is shown to be a particular cultural construction; the ballerina is a real woman leading a real life who has undertaken years of training to achieve the required image. The myth is undone and becomes an imposture. This second mode of reading is particularly open for feminist, postcolonialist, Marxist and postmodern perspectives. Such an approach opens up myth by unmasking it, unmasking, in particular, the hidden ideology of the myth.

It is through the third mode however that Barthes suggests we can become readers of myths. ‘If’ he argues ‘I focus on the mythical signifier as on an inextricable whole made of meaning and form, I receive an ambiguous signification’ (Barthes, 1993, p.128). Using the very structure of myth this method allows the reader to live ‘myth as a story at once true and unreal’ (1993, p.128). Hence the reader can decipher both the semiological and the ideological. Demythologising that which has become mythic and revealing it or re-constructing it as specific, it is within this third mode of reading that reworkings operate. Through the duplicitous use of the signifiers meaning and form as an inextricable whole, audiences recognise the mythical transcendent source and the simultaneous process of deconstruction. Reworkings of ballets are then modes of reading myth which to reveal the ballets mythification. They work to question, illuminate and make relevant or accessible that which has become mythic.
1.4.2 Canonical counter-discourse: postcolonialism and feminism

The potential of the demythologising features of reworkings enables the assumed authority and embedded socio-cultural values of the 'classic' or 'canonical' text to be unveiled and dismantled in a process analogous to the project describe by Helen Tiffin as 'canonical counter-discourse" (1995, p.97) (originally published 1987). Thinking through the counter strategies of postcolonialism, Tiffin suggests that canonical counter-discourse has become a process through which artistic and literary decolonialisation can take place. This strategy is described as 'one in which a post-colonial writer takes up a character or characters, or the basic assumptions of a British canonical text, unveils those assumptions, subverting the text for post-colonial purposes' (Tiffin, 1995, p.97). Mapping out the dominant discourses' canonical counter-discourse exposes the underlying assumptions, from cross-cultural standpoints, of the imperially subjectified 'local' (Tiffin, 1995, p.98).

Postcolonialism is a discourse that has arisen out of particular moments of time and space after colonisation, for example following British colonial rule in Indian during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Postcolonialist theory importantly speaks of strategies of regulation not only across boundaries of race and nation, but also gender and sexuality. While the particulars of colonial and postcolonial experiences are still key other oppositional readings of the term postcolonial are also useful. Stephen Slemon writes:

[T]he concept [of the postcolonial] proves most useful not when it is used synonymously with a post-independence historical period in once-colonized nations but rather when it locates a specifically ...post-colonial discursive purchase in culture, one which begins in the moment that colonial power inscribes itself onto the body and space of its Others.

(Slemon, 1990, p.3)

Both concepts of postcolonialism can be used in relation to reworkings. The discourse of postcolonialism becomes particularly pertinent to the reworkings of ballets when the ballet genre is acknowledged as a colonising form. The ballet genre has been adopted or imposed (as is the case in many colonialist situations) in many non-European countries. The implicit values inherent in the technique and aesthetics of ballet travel
with it to these new locations. As Joann Kealiinohomoku makes clear in her much cited essay 'An anthropologist looks at ballet as a form of ethnic dance' (1983), ballet embodies its Western aristocratic cultural heritage. This heritage has been transported across the globe disguised within an aesthetic form that has been so mythicised such that its heritage goes unnoticed. As Susan Foster somewhat sardonically writes:

The world sees more and more of her [the ballerina] as ballet, taken up by former colonies in the Pacific and Latin American, and also in China and Japan spreads across the globe. Strong contender for a universal standard of physical achievement in dance, ballet, with its pedagogical orderliness and clear criteria for excellence, promises a homogenizing medium for the expression of cultural difference. It offers a global aesthetic whose universal claims enable each community to particularize itself while at the same time assuring each community’s access to the status of a world player of the form.

(Foster, 1996a, p.2)

Reworkings offer the potentialities of refiguring canonical texts, bringing their heritage to the fore and re-placing the coded bodies of ballet with disobedient, postcolonial and postmodern bodies which persist in slipping into the canon; into the heart of dominant Western culture. It is unruly bodies like these that are found in the close readings of Foster, Shakti and my own versions of Swan Lake. These reworkings, I suggest, assert their difference from canonical forms and suggest ambivalence towards their supposed authority so destabilising neat power structures.

The strategies of postcolonial canonical counter-discourse reflect those undertaken by feminists. Feminist and postcolonial discourses both seek to reinstate the marginalised in the face of the dominant, and early feminist theory, like early nationalist postcolonial criticism, was concerned with inverting the structures of domination, substituting, for instance, the male-dominated canon with a female one. But like postcolonial criticism, feminist theory has rejected such simple inversions in favour of a more general questioning of forms and modes, and the unmasking of the spurious authority on which canonical constructions are founded.

Since the 1970s feminist literary studies, soon followed by feminist and postcolonialist theatre studies, have established bodies of scholarship concerned with countering the literary and theatrical canons. These studies have revealed how the canon is based on
dominant economic and social systems and have highlighted the resultant ethnic and gender bias. Feminists and postcolonialists have sought to challenge the hegemony of the canon in two distinct ways. Firstly they have attempted to expand the canon, aiming to create a more balanced canon which more adequately reflects the work of women and non-Westerners who, through history, have been disenfranchised. This approach seeks to rediscover the so-called ‘lost’ work of women and non-Western artists. The inclusion of these works, which have traditionally been considered ‘other’, seeks to add diversity and difference which, because of the normative power of the canon, tends to be papered over. However whilst an important project this approach encourages the separation and continuing marginalisation of ‘others’. ‘The real history of art’, suggests Griselda Pollock, ‘remains fundamentally unaffected because its mythological and psychic centre is fundamentally or exclusively to do not with art and its histories but with the Western masculine subject.... The Story of Art is an illustrated Story of Man’ (1999, p.24).

From this perspective the addition of ‘other’ voices to the canon or the establishment of a counter but parallel canon, whilst in many ways necessary and positive, runs the risk of resembling an ‘add and stir’ approach in which the flavour may be changed but the overall product does not. The danger is that the addition of a more diverse range of works to the canon does not challenge the concept of canonicity itself. In fact such a methodology can be seen to support those existing structures by buying into them, which, when the concept of canonicity is shown to reside in a patriarchal approach, is problematic. The values that implicitly form the canon need from this perspective to be brought to the foreground and questioned.

Secondly, more recent approaches seek to reveal that the canon is a discursive formation. Through deconstruction the canon becomes visible as ‘an enunciation of Western masculinity’ (Pollock, 1999, p.26). The deconstruction of the canon has led to radical new knowledge that undercuts the seemingly ‘ungendered’ and ‘universal’ domains of the canon and insists that sex and race is everywhere. Re-reading canonical texts as a charged signifier and re-reading for what is not said as much as what is allows meaning to be produced in the space between. This allows the canon to be seen and understood anew; thus canonical objects can be reconsidered and challenged.
Applying poststructuralist devices the reader resists the ideological work of the 'master' text in order to read against the grain.

1.4.3 Reconsidering the past: reworkings as postmodern historiography

Reading against the grain of canonical dances, reworkings adapt, embrace and question this heritage, drawing attention to history – my own *The Original Sylph* does so explicitly, as described previously. In reworkings, I propose, historical contexts are reinstalled as significant, whilst they are also problematised. The historical referent in reworkings is recognised as 'textualised' as the past only comes to us in the form of indirect representations, through collections of textual traces. Reworkings are, I suggest, thereby unavoidably discursive, as the textual traces of history are opened to interpretation. The choreographers of these dances enter the canon and reveal the discursive production of history.

Poststructuralist and postmodernist theorists distrust the gloss of neutrality and pretence of objective recounting evident in traditional history writing. Instead postmodernist history becomes histories and questions. It asks, whose history gets told? And, for what purpose and in whose name? 'Postmodernism is about histories not told, retold, untold. History as it never was. Histories forgotten, hidden, invisible, considered unimportant, changed, eradicated' (Marshall, 1992, p.4). Thereby, rather than coming towards the end of history or a rejection of history as suggested by some commentators, history is proliferating. We now have multiple histories that are inclusive of herstories and your stories. Postmodern history attempts to tell the stories of the winners and the losers, those at the centre and at the periphery. History has become overtly narrativised as the facts of the past become known as constructed accounts. So, rather than forming a grand narrative, postmodernism constructs a montage of narratives that are provisional and problematic. Hence history becomes recognised as 'hybrid tracings' rather than historical fact because history has been shown to be a shifting discourse within which changes of gaze and new interpretations may appear. This challenge to the totalising impulse of the continuity of history, and of history writing, creates a position in which history is seen as unstable, relational and provisional.
Reflecting what Lyotard has called 'the postmodern condition', reworkings bring the fluid and transient nature of history to the fore. He notes that grand narratives of legitimisation are no longer credible for metadiscourse purports to narrate a story about the whole of human history. In contrast postmodern narratives becomes plural, local and immanent. Similarly choreographers of reworkings reflect the subjective and particular. Following Lyotard's concept reworkings might usefully be considered *petits recits* (little stories) in contrast to a *un grand recit* (one grand overarching story or narrative) (Lyotard, 1984). Whilst reworkings range from approaches that suggest a complete narrative (for example Ek's version of *Giselle*) to those which are fragmentary in form (for example my own work, *The Original Sylph*), the very proliferation of reworkings of a single source serve to reveal and contest the conception of the source as a unity, as a single history. The spaces between and conflicts across different versions preclude any assumption that only one narrative exists.

Feminist challenges to history have also exposed the constructed categories of 'man' and 'woman'. They are revealed to be non-categories, or rather categories formulated within a patriarchal system. So whilst through history 'man' and 'woman' have become seemingly fixed and natural they are exposed as historically situated and socially constituted. Women and men (and the corresponding 'genders' feminine/masculine) are organised in terms of mutually exclusive difference. A feminist analysis deconstructs these categories, incessantly questioning these constructs, holding them as permanently contested site of meaning.

Through such revelations it is evident that any claim to a single objective 'Truth' is not plausible. Through postmodernism 'truth' is interrogated as to its power and politics. Following Foucault and Nietzsche it becomes inconsistent to speak of objective knowledge or absolutes for they are only formulated on the prevailing and generally dominant ideologies of knowledge. Rather than searching for a truth within postmodernism the historian, author and choreographer construct persuasive and meaningful hypotheses. The challenge to the concept of 'truth' offers freer rein to the possibilities of fancy and imagination. Rather than events being presented as fixed monoliths they can be presented in new lights and are open to constant modification.
Alternative possibilities can be exposed which make us aware of alternative options for the future.

The interest in revisiting history is also evident in recent dance practices, and reworkings, consonant with these postmodern dance practices, reinstall history as an issue. Previously the appropriation of existing representations was considered taboo as Roger Copeland makes clear in his essay: ‘Mark Morris, postmodernism, and history recycled’ (1997). In this essay Copeland argues that modern choreographers placed their emphasis on originality and prided themselves on having ‘broken with history and tradition’. For example Martha Graham, as a modern dancer, ‘practised a scorched earth policy with regard to the past: her mission was to ‘begin again’ (Copeland, 1997, p.20). In contrast, for postmodern choreographers, there’s no starting over, no returning to innocence, no going home again. More important, the ‘frame of mind’ in which many postmodern choreographers create has itself been historicised in that they possess a divided or double consciousness, being acutely aware of their relationship to both the past and present.

And further:

Rather than deceiving themselves into believing that at this late date in the twentieth century it is possible to be wholly original... many postmodern choreographers use a heightened consciousness of dance history as their point of departure.

(Copeland, 1997, p.20)

In 1991, Valerie Briginshaw highlighted this fascination with the past in postmodern dance practices. She notes that, the use of classical techniques, historical themes and events, as well as the revisiting of past dances in postmodern works, are evidence of the renewed interaction with history in postmodernism (Briginshaw, 1991, p.18). The use of classical techniques is exemplified in the work of artists such as Michael Clark and Karole Armitage. Drastic Classicism (1981) and The Watteau Duet (1985) by Armitage present movements from the ballet canon with a raw energy, in a punk context. Sally Banes has suggested that Armitage 'deconstructed ballet' and whilst her work assaults the senses it is also 'consciously interwoven with art world and dance world achievements' (Banes, 1994, p.298). The fascination with the past is also
evident in the thematic content of works by artists like Yolande Snaith. Step in Time Girls (1988) and Germs (1989) recall the lives of women. The historical references in the costumes are, suggests Snaith, ‘tied up with the body and the different ideals for the human body.... the absurd outfits women wore to fit in with the ideals of the time’ (cited in Adair, 1992, p.225). Similarly the allusion to past events in a manner that both reclaims and restates the past can be seen in much of Ian Spink’s work. Two Numbers, created by Spink in 1977, juxtaposes sections of material from Coppélia (1870) and references to the horrors of the suppression of the Paris Commune, an event which occurred in the same year as the ballet’s premiere (Jordan, 1992, p.186). The propinquity of the two elements serves to contextualise the ballet in a horrifically telling manner, making a harsh statement about the gap between the romantic ideas of the ballet and reality.

Reworkings overtly and self-consciously revisit the dances of the past to create dances that comment on both the present and the past. Decolonising and deconstructing the canonical order, these dances can serve to reveal traditional ballet as a form of cultural imperialism and to destabilise the way that canons disguise their own histories in order to present an illusion of a natural aesthetic order. In the light of poststructuralist accounts choreographers can be seen to insert themselves creatively into past texts, which have been shown to be unstable texts. This insertion by choreographers of reworkings does not help ‘make sense’ of past texts (although this is a feature of some reworkings), but engages with the past in conscious play. While reworkings are not all, by any means, radical or deconstructive in purposeful or explicit ways, by entering old texts from new directions these dances open up the canon and demythologise the texts within it. Thereby reworkings, by their very nature, represent a potential strategy for creating discursive counter texts.

1.5 Intertextuality and parody

Like Barthes, John Frow makes clear that texts, mythic, reworked or otherwise, do not exist as closed systems; rather texts are part of a ‘general discursive structure (genre, discursive formation, ideology)’ (Frow, 1990, p.46). All texts are, in some senses, intertexts as they are shaped by other textual structures and the ability of the reader/viewer to reconstruct the codes which are realised, or contested, within them.
Reworkings are, I argue, a particular kind of intertextual practice. As Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins note, whilst counter-discourse is inherently intertextual, not all intertextual texts necessitate a rewriting project as by definition counter discourse actively works to destabilise power structures (1996, p.16).

Janet Adshead-Lansdale writes that the theory of intertextuality maintains,

> the idea of a text as a series of traces, which endlessly multiply and for which there can be no consensus of interpretation. In this area the reader’s [the reader here is understood to be the viewer, choreographer, critic etc.] activity becomes one of unravelling threads, rather than deciphering fixed meanings, choosing which colour in the tapestry to follow, where and when to start, change direction and conclude.

(Adshead - Lansdale, 1999, p.8)

The threads that I trace in the course of my analysis in order to illuminate reworkings are manifold. For example in Chapter Five my analysis of Shakti’s *Swan Lake* includes the identification and discussion of: other dance texts (in particular the identified key source text(s) and other Indian dance works), other reworkings, strip tease, performance art practices, postcolonial and feminist criticism. The intertexts listed here are not of course exhaustive of the possible range of intertexts that could be brought to the dance discussed and I therefore only refer to certain aspects of the possible range of intertextual interpretations. As Michael Worton and Judith Still write:

> What is produced at the moment of reading is due to the cross-fertilisation of the packed textual material... by all the texts that the reader brings to it. A delicate allusion to a work unknown to the reader, which therefore goes unnoticed, will have a dormant existence in that reading. On the other hand, the reader’s experience of some practice or theory unknown to the author may lead to a fresh interpretation.

(Worton and Still, 1990, p.1-2)

If intertextual analysis is understood to be a deliberate positioning of a creative product within a network of other texts, then reworkings can usefully be positioned as a particular type of intertextual practice. Reworkings involve liberal references to, and quotations from, their source text(s) and the choreographers of reworkings can be seen to self-consciously embed, cite, and allude to other pre-texts in their dances. This
relates to common devices within intertextuality which, as de Marinis states, involve
the ‘complex and variegated play of borrowing, citation, implicit or explicit references,
dialogues from afar, and substitutions, which substantiate the relationships between the
texts of a given culture (and even between texts of different cultures)’ (de Marinis,
1993, p.4).

Reworkings form a relationship between the old and the new such that a conversation
arises (either explicitly in the work or implicitly via the reader’s connections) between
the traditional and the innovative. These intertextual sites in reworkings, like all
intertexts, may seem more or less visible to particular viewers depending upon their
ability to see, and their knowledge of, the allusion being made. Indeed reworkings
encompass layered acts of reading by the choreographer and the viewer. These works
are often founded upon the choreographer’s ability to make an open reading of source,
working within the gaps and from different perspectives to be able to imagine it
otherwise. The viewer of a reworking is then required to make connections between
texts in order to enjoy the intertextual play. These dances encourage the simultaneous
consideration of the reworking and source alongside the numerous other texts at play.
As Adshead-Lansdale suggests the reader becomes an ‘aggressive participant’ in the
construction of meaning as, in works of this kind, the ‘knowledgeable reader is
expected and invited to pick up the appropriate references when required to do so by
the text’ (Adshead-Lansdale, 1999, p.19). Reworkings as performative acts are the
practical realisation of creative interpretation, and as Worton notes in his forward to
Dancing Texts (1999) ‘performative interpretation must bring about its own criteria
and persuade the unknown reader of their worth’ (Worton, in Lansdale, 1999, p.xi).
Further, as performative acts of interpretation ‘they move between numerous
discourses in order to liberate us and the works they consider from the tyranny of
singular concepts of telling, showing, explaining’ (Worton, in Lansdale, 1999, p.xi).

However, whilst shifting between discourses and operating in the manner of an
intertextual text, reworkings also have a vested interest in maintaining an identifiable, if
mythic, source text to which they repeatedly, however literally or obscurely, refer. The
relationship in reworkings to this source gives rise to questions about the connections
between these dances, source criticism and intertextual practices. John Frow comments:

Intertextual analysis is distinguished from source criticism by this stress on interpretation rather than the establishment of particular facts, and by its rejection of a unilinear causality (the concept of 'influence') in favour of an account of the work performed upon intertextual material and its functional integration in the later text.

(Frow, 1990, p.46)

And Barthes writes that the

intertextual in which every text is held, it itself being the text-between of another text, is not to be confused with some origin of the text: to try to find the 'sources', the 'influences' of a work, is to fall in with the myth of filiation; the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet already read: they are quotations without inverted commas.

(Barthes, 1977, p.160)

Intertextual approaches as distinguished from those of source criticism mitigate against the search for a 'source' or 'origin' and emphasize instead playfulness and ambiguity. Whilst reworkings, to be identified as reworkings at all, do contain clear and 'known' sources, these sources are not treated by the choreographers of these dances in terms of 'influence' but rather in a dialectic exchange. Whilst knowledge of the ballet that is being reworked will undoubtedly provide for the viewer of these dances an added pleasure, the identification of the 'source' text is different from the search for a source of meaning. Frow argues that the 'identification of an intertext is an act of interpretation. The intertext is not a real and causative source but a theoretical construct formed by and serving the purposes of a reading' (1990, p.46). However reworkings rely on what Michael Riffaterre has describe as the 'obligatory intertext' (1990, p.56). That is the text(s) which the reader must know in order 'to understand a work of literature in terms of its overall significance' (Riffaterre, 1990, p.56). The pre­textual intertext at the source of reworkings is very real and causative. Failure to note this intertext would be to miss an overt and distinguishing feature of these dances. This is not to say however that the audience member who does not recognise the ballet intertext will be unable to make a reading of these dances – rather that these dances consciously mobilise their pre-text(s). However rather than the 'known' source
existing in the manner of an originary text these dances open up and unfix their pre­
texts such that they become in the new work one (albeit key) intertext amongst many.
Whilst, like all texts, reworkings are open to multiple readings, the knowledge of the
source invokes another level of pleasure and can assist in the reader's capacity to
generate 'appropriate' meanings.

In line with Barthes' concept of intertextuality, most of the reworkings I discuss do not
put their references in quotation marks, however a number of reworkings such as those
by Foster, Bourne and Morris do incorporate overt and parodic intertexts in their
dances. These dances use strategic quotation in the manner of parody. Linda
Hutcheon defines parody, 'in its ironic "trans-contextualisation" and inversion', as
'repetition with difference' (1985, p.32). In an argument that aligns parody with
metafiction she contends that parody can be seen as an overt form of intertextual
practice. Parody like intertextuality is essentially a discourse between texts but parody,
via its ironic quotation marks, makes 'intertextual references into something more than
simply academic play or some infinite regress into textuality' (Hutcheon, 1989,
p.95).viii

Parody has also been related to burlesque, travesty, pastiche, satire, plagiarism, citation
and quotation but remains distinct from them. Whilst all these concepts involve some
sort of extra-textual or inter-textual relationship the mode and intent of the relationship
differs. Pastiche, for example, tends to be imitative of its source and often takes the
form of a cliché. Parody on the other hand is transformative of its source and allows
for adaptation. The parodic may be accused of plagiarising a text, however, the
plagiarist attempts to conceal the background text whereas the parodist attempts to
engage the reader in a re-interpretation of the background text. Indeed much of the
effect of parody is lost if the reader is not aware of the existence of a background text.
Travesty and burlesque may involve ridicule, but parody does not necessarily ridicule.
Whilst the satiric may be also used in parody, the negative connotations of satire are
not present in parody per se ix

Of the other related terms listed above, quotation and citation are the closest to that of
parody. The parodic clearly involves the quotation and citation of other texts and, in
quotation, citation and parody, these other texts are, to use Hutcheon’s term, ‘trans-contextualised’ (1985, p.32). Quotation and citation do not however necessitate the same ‘critical distance’ (1985, p.32) suggested by Hutcheon’s definition of parody. Current parodic practices could however be seen as an extended form of trans-contextual reference.

Whilst parodic strategy has a long history, reaching back to the ancient Greeks, xi Malcolm Bradbury argues that in the twentieth century parody has become a central feature of works of art and literature, and, I would add, dance. He writes:

So it seems clear that in our century parodic activity has vastly increased, moved, in art and literature, in practice and in theory, from the margins to the centre, and become a primary level of textual or painterly representation. An essential part of our art is an art of mirrorings and quotations, inward self-reference and mocking-mimesis, of figural violation and aesthetic self-presence, which has displaced and estranged the naïve-mimetic prototypes we associated with much nineteenth century writing and challenged its habits of direct vraisemblance, orderly narrative, and dominant authorial control.

(cited in Rose, 1993, p.270)

Through a politicisation of theories of parody by writers such as Bradbury and Hutcheon (1988 & 1989), it is possible to note how reworkings (as parodic and intertextual texts that in particular ways ‘appropriate’ other texts) might foreground the politics of representation. Hutcheon writes that parody ‘contests our humanist assumptions about artistic originality and uniqueness and our capitalist notions of ownership and property’ (1989, p.93). Further, she notes that postmodern ironic parody engages ‘the history of art and the memory of the viewer in a re-evaluation of aesthetic forms and contents through a reconsideration of their usually unacknowledged politics of representation’ (Hutcheon, 1989, p.100). This de-naturalising (to use Hutcheon’s term) of past representations is parallel to Barthes’ notion of demythologising that which appears ‘natural’. This is not to suggest that all reworkings have a political agenda, or that those with political agendas are necessarily overt; rather I propose that the act of reworking itself inherently de-naturalises representation by bringing to the fore continuity, and importantly, difference. Thereby these dances can make us think again about the dances of the past, and the ideologies embedded within them.
However parody has been considered to be trivial and trivialising, indeed postmodern parodic techniques have been accused by Marxist critic Fredric Jameson of creating ‘pseudo-historical depth, in which the history of aesthetic styles displaces “real” history’ (1993, p.76). Jameson sees a symbiotic relationship between the expansion of capitalist hegemony and postmodernism. He is critical of postmodern tendencies to commodify all of culture. The postmodern, he argues, is fascinated with the ‘whole “degraded” landscape of schlock and kitsch, TV soaps and Readers’ Digest, advertising, motels, the late show, grade-B Hollywood film and pulp fiction’ (Jameson, 1993, p.63). This commercial culture is no longer simply quoted or parodied, in the manner described by Hutcheon but ‘incorporated into their very substance’ (Jameson, 1993, p.63).

Jamesons’ view leaves little room for a critical role for postmodernism arguing that in postmodernism pastiche has eclipsed parody:

Parody finds itself without vocation; it has lived, and that strange new thing pastiche comes to take its place. Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar mask, speech in dead language: but it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody’s ulterior motive, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction.... Pastiche is thus blank parody, a statue with blind eyeballs.

(Jameson, 1993, p.74)

Pastiche, according to Jameson, is dead parody and this death is a typical feature of the logic of late capitalism. He argues that there is an increasing unavailability of personal style and uniqueness as ‘the producers of culture have nowhere to turn to but to the past: the imitation of dead styles, speech through all the masks and voices stored up in the imaginary museum of a now global culture’ (Jameson, 1993, p.74).

Charles Jencks’ view of postmodern parody is however altogether more positive. In his upbeat discussion of postmodern architecture he argues that, in a postmodernism of ‘returns’, these returns are inventive and avoid replication. The reinterpretation of tradition must always carry some overtones of pastiche however, since conventions are simultaneously affirmed and distorted. Old forms, he suggests, are given new meanings
and it is only after we understand the new context that they gain validity and the aura of pastiche disappears (Jencks, 1993, p.291).

Postmodern parody is therefore double coded, and as it simultaneously legitimatises and subverts there is a need to consider the manner of this double coding. Hutcheon labels it ‘authorised transgression’. This term is drawn from Bakhtin’s discussion of carnival. He argues that the subversive nature of the carnival is actually ‘consecrated by tradition’. It is this ‘consecration’ (which is social and ecclesiastical for Bakhtin) that legalises the subversion. This subversion can only take place within certain bounds, for example temporal or spatial bounds. The subversion of norms paradoxically relies on the recognition of the very norms that are transgressed and inverted, but also in a sense incorporated. Hutcheon states that this authorised transgression is ‘characteristic of all parodic discourse insofar as parody posits, as prerequisite to its very existence, a certain aesthetic institutionalisation which entails the acknowledgement of recognisable, stable forms and conventions’ (Hutcheon, 1985, p.75).

The inherent ambiguity of parodic strategy makes this approach doubly dangerous for the politically motivated artist. For as Hutcheon stresses ‘one of the lessons of the doubleness of postmodernism is that you cannot step outside that which you contest, you are always implicated in the value you choose to challenge’ (1988, p.223). In other words that which is quoted or referenced as an obligatory intertext in reworkings, carries its own embedded values which cannot be escaped, the use, and choice to use, a particular intertext is not ‘free’ but carries with it a set of implications, perspectives and assumptions. This perspective runs throughout the analyses undertaken in chapter two and is applied in detail to Susan Foster’s work (see Chapter Four). Whilst remaining implicated within the canon I suggest that Foster’s use of parody reveals the ways in which this strategy has the potential to subvert the discourse of power inherent in reworkings.

1.6 Towards a definition of reworkings
I now turn to discuss what might be the considered the delineating features of reworkings and provide the rationale for the mode of analysis that will follow.
Reworkings, it has so far been suggested, can de-naturalise, or demythologise, the mythic dances of the ballet canon. Creating against the grain, reworkings can reflect feminist and postcolonialist practices, deconstructing the canon to reveal the limited representations of gender, sexuality and ethnicity in a process analogous to the strategies of canonical counter-discourse as describe by Tiffin (1995). Emulating postmodern historiography reworkings, I have argued, are like petit recits, in that they represent the local and the specific rather than the global and the ahistorical. As particular kinds of intertextual practice reworkings operate through references to an obligatory intertext (the source) whilst simultaneously unfixing that very intertext.

Whilst canonical dances, due to changing contexts of production and importantly reception, are in a constant metamorphoses, reworkings suggest a much more conscious interpolation. Reworkings are particularly discursive and evoke multiple gazes. These dances must, at the very least, mobilise a bi-directional gaze - to itself and backwards to the source. As a delineating feature of reworkings it can be seen that a text that does not signal a clear enough relationship to a source text may not be able to be recognised as a reworking at all. If the signifier of the source, or to use Riffertere's phrase the obligatory intertext, is absent or too obscured it becomes just another intertextual work, not a reworking. Conversely a dance that does not clearly signal its difference from the source so as to be recognised as being sufficiently 'new' may only reiterate the source text and therefore would not be considered a reworking either.

Through the following chapters I consider the extent to which the bi-directional gaze evoked by reworkings might be able to operate in a fluid, rather than a fixed, form. I review the shifting nature of reworkings and argue that they may be seen as a hybrid that inhabits the 'in-between'. As hybrids, to apply the concept of postcolonialist writer Homi Bhabha (1991), these dances embody not a singular alterity but a myriad of shifting markers. The hybrid nature of reworkings is I propose at times explicit, through strategies such as parody, but always implicit, via the signifiers of the obligatory intertext. Reworkings express a multifaceted identity, an identity which takes into account tradition whilst refusing to be locked under the sign 'authenticity'. Rather than reversing or replacing the established order (the canonical ballet) these
dances provide an implicit critique of fixed and stable forms. They are, I suggest, formed in-between cultures and genres, portraying bodies that are in-between genders and races.

The viewer of these works I suggest has the opportunity to move beyond binaries - beyond one and its other – for these dances do not seek to displace (as if that were possible), but stand as ‘differences’ (or Derridian *différance*). It may be that these dances can avoid the hierarchical relationship between binaries in which the ‘other’ (the reworking) is always placed in opposition to, and is perceived to be less than, the dominant norm (the canonical ballet). For by opening up the possibilities of their source texts reworkings do not ignore the past; they interact with it such that the previously ‘pure’ is replaced with plurality.

In reworkings the source text(s) are simultaneously and paradoxically insignificant and highly important. Even the most radical of reworkings thereby enters into a discourse with the canon evoking a double-edged relationship. As contemporary works (full of socio-cultural imperatives that cannot be avoided) that simultaneously evoke source texts (with all their own histories) these dances exist within a double frame. This means, at least to a certain extent, that they exist within the status quo of the canon. At one level reworkings might be seen to challenge the canonical texts upon which they are based, but in other ways reworkings also reinforce canonical works through the implicit value given to the canon by revisiting the works within it. So whilst the content and form of any particular reworking may in and of itself be transgressive, or include transgressive elements, via the return to the canon the importance of canonical texts may be seen to be re-stated. Reworkings operate polemically. As Barthes states when reading myth

> we constantly drift between the object and its demystification, powerless to render its wholeness. For if we penetrate the object, we liberate it but we destroy it; and if we acknowledge its full weight, we respect it but we restore it to a state which is still mystified.

*(Barthes, 1993, p.159)*

If the makers of reworkings find something of interested in the source - something worthy of exploration, celebration or exposition, then the reworker mirrors Barthes’
The challenge of reworking is thereby how to penetrate the source text, how to liberate it, without either destroying it or restoring it. This view is also voiced by Helen Tiffin when she points out that the risk of counter-discursive strategies are that they may be neo-assimilative in their use of colonialist models of production (Tiffin, 1995, p.96). In a similar manner to postcolonial texts and contexts reworkings always risk being contaminated by the colonial. There is no going back or being free of the contaminant. This neo-assimilative and conservative impulse in reworkings is particularly evident when dance reworkings are perceived as buying into the commercial success of their canonical sources. The cache of the source may be used to attract programmers, media attention and audiences. The existing stature of the source text as canonical may be perceived to 'rub off' on the reworking - providing the reworking with more recognition than it would otherwise achieve. This view implicates reworkings in the commercialisation of the canon. As Manning (2001) notes Bourne’s Swan Lake is implicated in just this way. Bourne remains uncritical of the way his dance exists within and is commodified by global capitalism. The context of commodification also is highlighted as a particular problem in Shakti’s reworking of Swan Lake in Chapter Five. This dance I argue risks commodification by the global economy of sex. Reworkings operate on a tight rope between that which re-enshrines the canon and that which alters and exposes the canon creating a dynamic counter discourse. I suggest that while varying in degree reworkings tend to operate in both of these ways at the same time.

Whilst reworkings maintain a complex and at times tense relationship to their influential forebears, I suggest that this relationship is not consonant with, indeed may contest, what has been called 'the anxiety of influence'. Literary critic and traditionalist Harold Bloom (1997) (originally published 1973) developed the critical concept of influence, arguing that for artists to achieve significant originality they need to bear the burden of influence of existing canonical works/artists. For Bloom standards are only maintained when artists (Bloom uses the more specific term 'poets') enter into an interpersonal (if imaginary) antagonistic struggle with past artists. He writes that 'tradition is not only a handing-down or process of benign transmission; it is also a conflict between past genius and present aspiration, in which the prize is literary survival or canonical inclusion' (Bloom, 1995, p.9). Whilst in some senses Bloom’s
concept is consistent with theories of intertextuality (and reworkings, as discussed above, are a particular form of intertextual practice), as he acknowledges the way in which all literary works come into being and are resonant with precursor works, his focus upon the 'genius' of particular authors and inheritance belies the much more open and inclusive concept of intertextuality used here. Bloom's response to calls to liberalise the canon is to suggest that quality is being replaced by ideology, labelling all 'other' voices a 'school of resentment'. What he fails to recognise is his own ideological position in the maintenance of the status quo. In his model the standards and values set by past artists are perpetuated and so the power and authority of particular groups are maintained. Bloom's position actively creates a hierarchical genealogy of father-son succession and replicates patriarchal mythologies of exclusively masculine (and white, heterosexual) creativity.

I suggest that reworkings can challenge this model. Bearing the influence of and contesting the authority of the influential source texts, reworkings question the epistemology of the canon. The model of analysis applied in this thesis attempts to be non-hierarchical and focuses upon the reworkings (the daughters) rather than the source (their oppressing fathers). Whilst I acknowledge that the daughter could not have come into being without the father this analysis works from the assumption that whilst the daughter is younger that does not mean that she is by necessity less than or secondary to her father. I emphasize the differences and similarities across a range of reworkings, establishing the field, and whilst I regularly refer to the source ballets it is generally to note how a particular reworking is different from, rather than a continuation of, that source. The challenge to canonical influence is particularly evident in Part Two, Radical Reworkings, Postfeminism and 'Swan Lake'. Here I analyse each work on its own merits, following and unravelling the intertexts that I find, of which the father text is but one text among many.

Conclusion

Whilst the character and purpose of reworkings are varied the choreographers of reworkings must, I suggest, find something of value or interest in the conventional dances which they choose to rework; something to celebrate, challenge, illuminate or subvert. The rationale for reworkings is not therefore wholly subversive, nor wholly
celebratory. What they offer is not simply an unrelenting critique, nor an uncritical homage, but rather complex and multifaceted (re)visions that implicitly (and at times explicitly) bring to the surface a variety of social and aesthetic issues. These dances say as much about the interests of contemporary performance and current cultural concerns as they do about the ballets of the past.

Reworkings then are hybrid texts that evoke, at the very least, a bi-directional gaze. This gaze is, I have argued, fluid and shifting rather than fixed. However reworkings are, perhaps unavoidably, implicated within the status quo of the canon such that they risk reinforcing that which they actively re-interpret and question. Reworkings exist in an unstable, problematic dialectic, lodged somewhere between the changeless by rule (the canonical) and the changing by definition (the reworking); between a text objectified by its historical permanence (the canon) and a type of intervention (that of the choreographer) that is subjective.

Particularly relevant to an understanding of reworkings are the operations of myth that have rendered classic texts as normative. Poststructuralist, feminist and postcolonialist theorists have demythologised canonical texts to reveal they are not timeless and universal but are fundamentally entangled in the political, social and aesthetic developments of their time. Poststructuralist criticism has shifted the focus from fixed sets of received meanings to themes of motion and flux. Texts, characterised by disunity rather than unity, give rise to a multiplicity of meanings when read and re-read by the reader/viewer. These fluid texts formulated by and within discourse are inseparable from power structures. These power structures govern what it is possible to say and the criterion for 'truth'. In order to reveal the implied 'truths' in a text, poststructuralists set the text to work against itself and refuse to be fixed by single meanings, deconstructing them to reveal the power behind established knowledge.

This understanding has enabled choreographers to unfix texts and discourses, and has led to the subsequent de-frocking of the canon, as an example of a particularly powerful discourse, within reworkings. The acknowledgement of the canon as a discourse and the sense that texts are more unstable and interactive than once perceived permeates reworkings as choreographers embrace the freedom to re-
interpret freely and activate the political dimension of the ballets at their source for our own era. However, as particular kinds of intertextual practice, reworkings self-consciously incorporate their sources as an obligatory intertext; therefore the canon embodied within reworkings consistently re-asserts itself. This places these dances in a precarious position.

Whilst terms to describe reworkings proliferate, perhaps the promising way to understand and to identify the features of these dances is through the close examination of individual works. In the following chapter I turn from this conceptual overview to a consideration of practice. Such an examination reveals recurring choreographic strategies, as well as differences. The discussion of these contemporary dances deliberately puts gender and sexuality in the foreground. I emphasize the ways in which choreographers re-present gender in different and diverse ways, often in contrast to their source texts.
Notes

i Here I am referring to the reworkings by Mark Morris, Mats Ek and Matthew Bourne respectively. These dances are discussed further in Chapter Two.

ii See my discussion of mythification in 1.3.1. I point out here that reworkings rely on a mythic version as a source rather than any particular staging.

iii Barthes first published his reflections upon the processes of myth in 'Myth Today' as part of collection of essays entitled Mythologies (1993)(first published 1957). This was followed by 'Change the Object Itself - Mythology today', in Image, Music, Text (1977), in which Barthes revisits his earlier work in the light of new developments. Whilst in some senses these references are dated, I use them here as Barthes account of the processes of myth are vivid and his writings animate contemporary culture. Also, Barthes works is overtly politicised and runs in parallel with the erasure of differences that the canon embodies. Pollock writes that using Barthes analysis of mythic structures 'avoids distracting arguments over who and what is or is not, should or should not be in which canon. Beyond the cultural wars over its contents ... we need to pierce the naturalising carapace of myth to delineate the social and political investments in canonicity which make it so powerful an element in the hegemony of dominant social groups' (1999, p.9).

iv For an account of poststructuralist deconstruction see Norris 1982.

v Tiffin uses and develops Richard Terdiman's concept of counter-discourse. Tiffin notes that 'Terdiman theorises the potential and limitations of counter-discursive literary revolution within a dominant discourse noting that counter-discourses have the power to situate: to relativise the authority and stability of a dominant system of utterances which cannot even countenance their existence' (Tiffin, 1995, p.98, n.1).

vi The general point made by Foster can be supported by Judy Van Zile's discussion of ballet in a Korean context. Zile writes that 'ballet in Korea continues to demonstrate its classical European origins, as well as Korean influences' (1995, p.250). Foster also notes that the global dissemination of ballet could be usefully probed by postcolonial theory, however, she comments that a detailed study of the migration of ballet from Europe still needs to be written (Foster, 1996a, p.17, n.4).

vii For example Fredric Jameson argues the past in postmodernism has been reduced to commodity in which we can 'only "represent" our ideas and stereotypes about that past' (Jameson, 1993, p.79). The revisiting of the past in postmodern art he argues is an indictment of consumer capitalism and is a symptom of a society that has become incapable of dealing with time and history. Jameson laments the loss of 'real' history to nostalgia. He argues that postmodernism's fascination with the past keeps us 'imprisoned in the past' and that through the replication of a mythic past we are prevented from confronting the present. The postmodern remake, Jameson argues, presents a retro-past in which the history is presented in a nostalgic non-critical mode. Further Jameson has stated that 'we are condemned to seek History by way of our own pop images and simulacra of that history, which itself remains forever out of reach' (1993, p.79). Widdowson supports this view stating:

In this scenario, postmodernism is the last great gambit of capitalism to defeat opposition, contestation and change.... We are left in a world of radically 'empty' signifier's. No meaning. No classes. No history. Just a ceaseless procession of simulacra, the past is played and replayed as an amusing range of styles, genres, signifying practices to be combined and re-combined at will... The only history that exists here is the history of the signifier and that is no history at all.

(cited in Jenkins, 1991, p.67)

viii Whilst I agree with Linda Hutcheon that parody and intertextuality are linked strategies I would temper her reading of intertextuality. Rather than simply 'academic play' as Hutcheon (1989, p.95) puts it, I suggest that intertextual readings and practices very usefully bring to the fore the interrelated and ambiguous nature of texts and reading.

ix For a fuller discussion of the differences and similarities between these concepts and that of parody see Rose, 1993 and Hutcheon, 1985.

x Linda Hutcheon (1985) argues that in parody there is a critical distance between the background text being parodied and the new work. This distance, she suggests, is usually signalled by irony.

xi Margaret A. Rose provides a clear account of the changing concept of parody from ancient to contemporary times in her text Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-Modern (1993).

xii Whilst for clarity I stress the bi-directional nature of these works, it is important to note that reworkings, like other texts, may also suggest to the viewer not just two, but many directions. I use bi-directionality however to highlight the necessary feature of simultaneity in these dances. My use of
bi-directionality also relates to Hutcheon (1985) who also uses this term to describe the operation of parody.

Derrida's term *differance* usefully expresses the constantly deferred and differential nature of meanings. See Norris (1987).

The language used here attempts to both 'speak back' to Bloom's (1997) father-son model and also evokes Wittgenstein's (1953) model of 'family resemblances'.

---

xiii Derrida's term *differance* usefully expresses the constantly deferred and differential nature of meanings. See Norris (1987).

xiv The language used here attempts to both 'speak back' to Bloom's (1997) father-son model and also evokes Wittgenstein's (1953) model of 'family resemblances'.

---
Chapter 2

CANONICAL CROSSINGS

It was my intention to refocus the dance on the exquisite score of Mr. Tchaikovsky. In using an unedited version of the score and studying the original Hoffman text, I set out to revivify the beauties of the sound score and the story.

(Mark Morris, personal communication, 1999)

I make use of the fundamental story and the original music but I am not interested in keeping to the classic tradition. Cultural heritage is the point of departure. I see it as a big bowl which I can break down, recreate and fill with my own meaning.

(Mats Ek, cited in Hutera, 1999a, p.44)

There’s a willingness to take risks ... I’ve had the idea to reinterpret Sleeping Beauty for ages – I don’t know why – perhaps it’s all the press that’s stirred in my mind questions of love and the world (the) royals must submit themselves to.

(Meryl Tankard, cited in Hallet, 1994)

2.1 Strategies of dissonance – moments of sameness

These quotations provide evidence of the range of rationales and methods that choreographers that undertake reworkings demonstrate. This chapter seeks to illuminate these choreographic strategies and the ways in which choreographers may have unhinged old dance texts to re-play them upon the contemporary stage in revisionary ways. I also consider the grip of canonical discourse and argue that the canon impacts upon the reading of these dances, for what reverberates throughout this chapter is that however radical or subversive a particular reworking may be the tenacious web of canonicity may always re-assert itself. As Susan Bennett points out in her discussion of postcolonial rewritings of Shakespeare’s The Tempest:

To reproduce a classical text of the European imperial archive is always to risk its willing and wistfully nostalgic assent to (re)claim its own authority. Those texts are simply so heavily overcoded, value laden, that the production and reception of the ‘new’ text necessarily becomes bound to the tradition that encompasses and promotes the old ‘authentic’ version. This remains the argument against the revival/rewriting of The Tempest or any other classical text: that containment is an inevitable effect.

(Bennett, 1996, p.145)
Drawing on, and elucidating, specific examples I review the content, form and reception of seven reworkings, produced across four continents, of four nineteenth-century ballets. The choreographers represented here range from the well known and commercially successful to little known practitioners performing in fringe contexts. In tracing some of the common strategies and recurring themes evident in recent examples of reworkings, this chapter shifts from dances that retain key structural invariants of their source ballets (for example dances by Ek, Bourne and Morris) to those that use the ballet only in passing and for radically different purposes (for example Iwana and de Frutos).

A recurring theme in the reworkings discussed in this chapter is the divergence from traditional representations of gender and sexuality. These reworkings have rewritten and recast the ballets at their source across gender lines. The vocabulary of ballet has been discarded, inverted and appropriated to different ends and placed within an eclectic range of styles. Reworkings can be seen to reflect current attitudes, offering a proliferation of re-conceptualisations of the body, gender and sexuality.

The first section, Re-telling tales: recontextualising the dance, discusses Highland Fling by Matthew Bourne in the light of the ways in which narrative can be revisited and updated. It is argued that recent reworkings are part of the larger interest driven by poststructuralism to reclaim narrative forms whilst also questioning those forms. Swan Lake by Mats Ek provides the focus for the following section entitled Inverting bodies: reformulating the dance vocabulary. The emphasis here is the dance language itself. Reworkings have commonly radically altered the vocabulary of the ballet – destabilising the body whilst also, at times, echoing the form and patterns of the ballet. I suggest that this re-choreographing of the movement vocabulary is arguably one of the most important aspect of dance reworkings. In Crossing gender: cross casting and cross dressing the dances Swan Lake by Bourne and The Hard Nut by Mark Morris are used to exemplify the ways in which the body has been re-configured as roles have been shifted across lines of gender and sexuality. These crossings, it is argued, have the potential to deviate significantly from the heterosexual impulse of the nineteenth-century ballet. Javier de Frutos, I suggest, extends this potential in his work The Hypochondriac Bird. The final section Intercultural exchange, reworking imperialism
and intertextuality, considers the work of Butoh artist Masaki Iwana and Meryl Tankard, director of Australian Dance Theatre. These choreographers, I argue, reform the ballet and challenge the cultural homogeneity of the canon.

2.2 Re-telling tales: re-contextualising the dance
Reworkings echo the trend from the 1980s still evident in current independent dance toward a renewed interest in narrative. This interest in narrative has involved a revisiting of the conventions, meanings and reception of narrative. Given that the ballet, in its Romantic and Classical forms, is arguably the epitome of the narrative form in dance it is perhaps not surprising that choreographers have turned their attention to the ballet. The form is not accepted wholesale however but in reworkings the ballets’ narratives have been contextualised anew, re-focused and fragmented. This approach is part of the poststructuralist drive to examine how a dance can narrate and, at the same time, encompasses questions about dance history, genre and style as well as considering socio-political implications. As Sally Banes writes, ‘in the age of poststructuralism, narrative in general has captured the intellectual and artistic imagination, where it has been analysed, dismantled, and deconstructed’ (1994, p.280).

One of the ways in which narrative has been reworked is the relocation of traditional libretti into new time periods, most commonly into more contemporary contexts. To name but a few examples: Mark Morris relocated The Nutcracker (1892) to a 1970s American comic book context; Coppélia (1870) has been taken out of her rural village and resituated, by Maguy Marin, in a modern inner city housing block; Giselle (1841), when reworked by Mats Ek, becomes a Freudian analysis of sexuality and class; and Matthew Bourne shifts La Sylphide (1832) to 1980s Scotland. One potential value of these dances is that by recontextualising traditional narratives they give them a new relevance to current audiences. The latter example is discussed here.

At a conference in 1997 Matthew Bourne remarked that his ‘intention is to break the mould, to bring ballet into the next century and to stop it becoming old fashioned’ (in Bannerman, 2000, p.247). Bourne’s reworking of La Sylphide, renamed Highland Fling - A Romantic Wee Ballet (1994), can be seen to ‘break the mould’ in terms of context, character and movement vocabulary while working closely within the
traditional storyline and ballet structure. In this short analysis I am concerned with two questions. Firstly, what does this reworking reveal about La Sylphide? Secondly, how does Highland Fling represent contemporary Scotland?

Bourne’s company, Adventures in Motion Pictures, was founded in 1987 with David Massingham and Emma Gladstone. Bourne, now solo artistic director of the company, has a reputation for creating light hearted works and has created a number of dances which rework ballets. His most well known work Swan Lake (1995) is discussed later in the chapter, but prior to this he also created a version of The Nutcracker (1992) and he has also made works that reference ballet such as Spitfire (1988). As critic Jennifer Grant notes, in Spitfire ‘Matthew Bourne has created a piece encompassing the male image in two areas, underwear and the ballet world’ (1988, p.31). She continues stating that ‘they soon get into their stride as Bourne’s creativity flaunts a knowledge of the classical ballet vocabulary’ (Grant, 1988, p.31). In these dances, suggests Burnside, Bourne ‘pokes fun at the sentimentality of his originals, he solicits the complicity of the audience as his contemporaries rather than provoking a head on collision’ (1994, p.40).

Highland Fling toured the UK and had a three week season at the Donmar Warehouse in London. Allen Robertson writes that Highland Fling is ‘a sincere re-evaluation of a nineteenth-century masterwork newly minted for late twentieth-century eyes’ (1995, p.7). Brought up to date through the new 1980s setting the work becomes, arguably, more accessible and appealing to a broad contemporary audience. Rather than representing Scotland as a remote, unknown, even exotic world (to the 1832 Paris audience), Bourne presents a contemporary Scotland, familiar to his audience, of clubs, drink and drugs. Throughout the first act Bourne makes reference to a number of dance styles, from modern to disco, and to steps taken from folk dances – including the Highland Fling. The work opens with James leaning in a drunken stupor against a graffiti covered urinal. James and his friends are, we discover, enjoying a night out at the ‘Highland Horse Social Club Disco’. This prologue added by Bourne is a far cry from the mist covered, quiet opening of the romantic version. This dance, full of lively, hip grinding club dancing and ending in a fist fight, locates the viewer in the modern day and dispels the possibility of a ‘happy ever after’ tale.
Scene two is set in a Glasgow council flat, complete with plaid covered walls and sparse furniture. The scene begins with James and his friends lounging and sleeping in front of a television after their night of drinking. From the television the music ‘Once in the Highlands’ blares. After James’ friends leave the scene picks up the ballet narrative. The sylph visits James, caressing him whilst he slumbers on a chair. At this point the references to the ballet are clear and James and the sylph dance a duet that mirrors the ballet version. The correspondence between the two duets is such that Burnside writes, ‘here Bourne and Bournonville meet’ (1994, p.40). The opening image of the duet is a clear and obvious reference to what occurs in the ballet. However whilst in conventional versions the sylph poses at the side of James’ chair, looks and gestures towards him and dances light steps around him, only once touching him with a gentle kiss on the cheek, Bourne’s sylph is far more tactile in approach. Pulling at his hands and head, she playfully notes his drink and drug induced daze. Rolling her whole weight on to him she slides and sits upon his back. Later as he stumbles about the room, she sits upon the top of the doorframe, as he reaches up to her she appears to lift him up and then passionately kisses him on the lips. Whilst both the Romantic sylph and Bourne’s sylph might be seen to represent an otherworldly, living dead, Bourne’s sylph is more garish in her appearance. This sylph is more like a waif from a Goth club rather than a woodland spirit. She has black paint surrounding her eyes and the rest of her face and body is painted white, which looks as if it is peeling. This deathly and direct sylph is however no less elusive; echoing of the earlier Sylph, she is ‘both dangerous and enchanting’ (Aschengreen, 1974, p.11).

While the sylph remains a supernatural figure Madge is re-characterised as a drug-pushing ‘friend’ with an interest in tarot cards. She retains the manipulative characteristics evident in the ballet, and her interest in tarot cards links her, if rather tangentially, to foreknowledge and insights of another world. However, casting Madge as drug-pushing friend removes the witches from the work. Whilst Banes and Carroll describe them as ‘monstrous inversions of humanity’ (1997, p.99), in fairy tales witches can be seen as strong wise women (Rowe, 1993). Taking out this third key group (the other two are the sylphs and the ordinary folk) from the dance perhaps creates a more modern and believable tale (as James’ visions are explicitly represented as drug related) but it also limits the range of female characters on stage. Bourne
problematically follows gender stereotypes through this dance. At the point in the ballet narrative where Effie would normally enter with her mother and girl friends for example, *Highland Fling* offers a domestic scene in which Effie and her friends iron clothing and rearrange the flat. Whilst the sylph later, in a parody of domesticity, stands at the ironing board mimicking the action of ironing in a 'zombie' fashion, Effie and her girl friends maintain their traditional roles.

The second act is set on a piece of wasteland that overlooks the city, complete with a derelict car. In this mundane setting James is compelled by the fascinating sylphs that are here both male and female. Like their nineteenth-century counterparts these sylphs lightly cross the stage. Shifting through the space, dancing in unison and canon, these sylphs resonate with an unearthly spirit. As James tries to capture his elusive fantasy this spirit world turns to nightmare. Retaining a disturbingly misogynist aspect of the ballet James asserts his desire to contain the sylph. Taking a pair of gardening shears he cuts off her wings. Blood-smeared, the sylph, with her arm linked to James, walks a grotesque and sinister wedding march. This horrific modern ending highlights James' violent act. Whereas in the ballet James' violence is softened by the gentleness of a scarf, here his unforgivable selfishness is marked as aggressive and abhorrent.

The recontextualising of the narrative contemporarises the ballet. The emphasis throughout *Highland Fling* is upon the everyday interactions between friends and peers in the form of a danced drama. The emphasis on friendship removes the concepts of family and formality evident in the ballet and makes this present day version seem less about duty and responsibility and more to do with peer groups and individual desires. The work makes explicit themes of drug-induced visions, domestic life and violence, which are present but tend to be only implicit within ballet versions. The reiteration of the ballet in a modern context suggests that the ballet's themes and narrative have something to offer modern day audiences beyond nostalgia for the Romantic ballet form. Problematically however the re-instatement of the importance of the ballet's themes may also reinforce the notion that *La Sylphide* is ahistorical and universal. The work also risks maintaining modern day stereotypes of Scotland as surely as it was previously exoticised. These criticisms of the dance provide evidence of ways in which a reworking may simultaneously reflect more contemporary
sensibilities and reveal the possible limitations of conventional versions, whilst still not always creating more positive portrayals of location or gender.

2.3 Inverting bodies: reformulating the dance vocabulary
Mats Ek has reworked *Giselle* (see Chapter One), *Swan Lake* and *The Sleeping Beauty*. Perhaps what is most distinctive about Ek’s work is his movement language which is characterised by the fluid and curving movement of the torso and the recurring usage of deep knee bends creating an earthy angularity as movements are drawn out of the dancer’s centre then pulled back in. Even leg extensions and leaping actions are performed with a sense of returning inwards and downwards. The movement vocabulary developed by Ek is weighted and grounded. Alongside this is a more idiosyncratic vocabulary as dancers twitch and shuffle: legs shoot out, backs arch fully over and arms are flung.

The rechoreographing of the dance language is a key feature of all the dances that I describe as reworkings. This is important as the vocabulary of ballet became increasingly gendered within the nineteenth century. As Susan Foster notes ‘the Romantic ballet celebrated the principle of distinct vocabularies for male and female dancers - the dainty and complex footwork, the *developés* of the leg and extended balances for women and the high leaps, jumps with beats, and multiple pirouettes for men’ (Foster, 1996a, p.4). The gendered vocabulary of ballet has become so emphatic, and dancers’ bodies have been so pressed upon through training, that it has led Foster to question the extent to which it is possible to present an egalitarian future for male and female bodies. In answer to her own question she remarks:

> The answer rests on the series of gendered bodies developed historically within the ballet tradition over the past two hundred years. Whether visible in reworked versions of the classical masterpieces - *Giselle, Swan Lake, Coppélia,* etc. - or merely in the vocabulary and style of the dancing, the weight of these past bodies presses too hard upon contemporary ballet to allow a nongendered reception of its meaning, or even to allow for the dismissal of gendered content as a superfluous formal feature analogous in impact only to that of an irrelevant cliché.

(Foster, 1996a, p.3)
Dancing bodies shaped by years of training and performance in distinctive vocabularies and styles are encoded with particular ideologies. These bodies as mediums of culture are not however simply acted upon by culture but are engaged in an interactive process with it. The analysis of the dancing body presented here insists on an awareness of the manner in which our lives and our bodies are (literally) shaped by complex sets of historical, cultural, and personal systems. The body in its materiality is seen here as a potential site of resistance. As Janet Wolff has argued:

There is every reason ... to propose the body as a privileged site of political intervention, precisely because it is the site of repression and possession. The body has been systematically repressed and marginalized in Western culture, with specific practices, ideologies, and discourses controlling and defining the female body. What is repressed, though, may threaten to erupt and challenge the established order.

(Wolff, 1990, p.122)

I suggest, therefore, that one of the tasks of a reworking which aims to be resistant to the canonical order is to redefine the dancing body, to re-choreograph the source and to re-think the dance vocabulary. Through the following analysis of Mats Ek’s work, and again in more detail in Part Two, I explore the ways in which reworking in dance implies not just a re-contextualisation but a reformulation of the codes of the choreography. Analysing the ways in which reworkings can be seen to encompass a wide variety of bodily incarnations, I reveal strategies that allow for difference and multiplicity, as opposed to uniformity and sameness in opposition to their sources.

Mats Ek’s version of Swan Lake (1987) I propose exemplifies such a strategy. It is not that Ek in fact breaks totally from the vocabulary of ballet but that he attempts to forge a cohesive choreographic language of his own which does not explicitly quote the classical movement language of the source. Whilst the vocabulary Ek uses in his reworking of Swan Lake carries the same signature movements that appear in all of Ek’s choreographies, due to the bi-directional nature of these dances they appear more pronounced here. This bi-directional nature (see Chapter One) means that the viewer is encouraged to make connections to the source such that, in this case, movements which in another dance may seem idiosyncratically Eks’ own, or clearly modern in style, here may be seen to reflect the codes of ballet. Conversely however the bi-
directional gaze also means that audiences can simultaneously note the way in which Ek’s choreography is differentiated from its source.

Eks’ swans, in what is known in the traditional ballet as the white act, enter not as mythical, distinctly feminine creatures floating through a mist as in the ballet, but as a set of independent earthy creatures that cross the stage with weighty gallops and stamping feet. They first enter by sliding on to the stage in a half split and come to stand in a parallel plié with the body bent over. The swans’ movements accentuate the angular and the awkward: they lift their knees high, carrying them out to the side, and their buttocks are allowed to protrude towards the audience. They walk flat footed and thrust their heads forward repeatedly; elbows, knees and shoulders are used in isolation and they stand feet together, hands pressed onto the front of their thighs and wobble from their hips through their whole bodies.

These swans, which are bold yet sensitive, break gender and racial bounds; mixing black and white, male and female performers. These are strong individuals as opposed to a homogenised corps. Whilst they move in a group as a corps, performing actions both in unison and canon, there is a decidedly more rebellious quality to these swans. Whereas Petipa and Ivanov’s swans stand in perfect lines, mirror each other exactly and perform their movements with decorum, Ek’s swans shift through space, have individual quirks and are indiscreet.

The ‘dance of the cygnets’, for example, offers not four swans in line dancing small sharp foot work in perfect unison, but four characters with large padded hands dancing gauche, awkward movements. The four dancers walk with their knees up high, bottoms out and with flexed feet. At the end of their dance they laugh, screech, point, and ‘hump’ the set as they blow ‘gas’ out of their bottoms. Fiona Burnside describes the swans thus:

> They were definitely a much more birdlike type of swan than those in any other production I have seen even though the bird they most resembled was a goose. There was a determined uglification in this production with a general issue of bald-heads and pigeon-toed stances.

(Burnside, 1996, p.26)
The swans’ movements are, suggests Burnside, ‘very anti-balletic’ (1996, p.26). The general impression, Peter Bohlin writes, has ‘the flavour of a duck pond’ (1988, p.32). The description of Ek’s swans by Bohlin and Burnside as ducks and geese, respectively, effectively demonstrates the extent to which Ek has re-figured them. In the classical ballet they tend, especially at the start of Act II, to be represented as vulnerable, scared, delicate creatures, whereas Ek presents pro-active, strong, dynamic creatures. That Bohlin and Burnside cannot envisage them as swans and resort to identifying them with other bird life also demonstrates the continuing influence of the traditional representation of the swan in *Swan Lake*.

Ek’s *Swan Lake* shares clear parallels with its Petipa and Ivanov source but pares down the number of characters and shifts the emphasis between them. Ek has retained the original music score (with cuts and alterations to its order) and the dance is one hour and forty minutes in duration, comprising of two acts. Act I is divided into two parts: the Prince’s birthday celebration and the dance of the swans. The Prince receives, as a birthday gift from his mother, a young woman, but he rejects her. After these celebrations the Prince dreams of a swan woman, Odette, and he falls in love with her as she dances with her companions. This swan woman is curiously controlled however by what appears to be an old man, (traditionally Rothbart), who, moments before the Prince awakes, is revealed to be his mother. Act II consists of dances representing various countries as the Prince travels to Russia, Israel and Spain. During these travels the Prince meets Odile, the black swan, with whom he also falls in love. The dance ends with Prince and Odette’s marriage, although as they exit it is Rothbart who holds the end of the bridle veil and Odile suggestively reappears.

The Odette/Odile roles, danced by Ana Laguna, are the antithesis of the traditional roles whilst they also echo them. Ek’s Odette is bald, barefoot and her movement is grounded. Rather than performing soft lyrical movements, as a traditional Odette, she takes long strides, flexes her feet and cocks her legs. She also incorporates movements that are more linear and extended such as positions akin to *arabesques* and *attitudes*, but these are not performed in the melting, swooning manner of her predecessors. Ek’s Odette is bolder, more direct and more independent in her movements.
However Odette, is, as in the Petipa and Ivanov version, still presented in opposition to her counterpart Odile. Odile enters shrieking at Rothbart, at whom she stabs her fingers and kicks her feet. Odile is a more volatile character than Odette, and whilst she performs many of the same movement motifs as Odette, Odile’s movements, as in the ballet, are more assertive and provocative. Whilst Ek’s Odile doesn’t perform any one step displaying such overt flamboyant virtuosity as thirty-two fouettés en tournant on pointe, as has become conventional in ballet versions, she does display virtuosity and is flamboyant. She performs childlike, aggressive and sexual actions. She playfully teases Rothbart, comically scratching her shoulder, and, in mimicry, menacingly wrings her hands. She also mimics herself dragging her feet in a parody of her own childish behaviour. A sexual being, Odile protrudes her buttocks towards the Prince and Rothbart, circles her hips, and then whips away in a rapid turn. At another point she runs her hands down over her hips and then repeatedly thrusts her pelvis forward as if holding an imaginary partner. The collection of images embedded in Odile’s movements suggests a complex character which whilst represented by a different movement vocabulary runs parallel to the traditional Odile.

It is the Prince who is the focus of Ek’s Swan Lake and it is he who accordingly is the most significantly re-conceived. The Prince is the first character introduced and as the dance begins we see him dressed in black, with his back to the audience, and his body curled up in a foetal position. The solo that follows is suggestive of his introverted, even neurotic, disposition, the movements are awkward, spasmodic and tentative. His hands twitch and shake, he squats to the floor, and bows underneath his own arm in an inward curve. This Prince is presented as the converse of the traditional Royal figure. Indeed the whole opening is a significant departure from the nineteenth-century source. In Petipa and Ivanov’s version the dance begins with preparations for Siegfried’s birthday. There is a large group of characters on stage drinking and dancing. Siegfried is presented as a social figure as he enters proudly with an outward arm gesture in acknowledgement of his guests. He is in many ways the archetypal hero, marking out his territory and covering large amounts of space. In contrast Ek’s Prince slips along linear pathways as if to minimise his presence. The traditional heroic figure is assertive and brave. The viewer is intended to identify with him and follow his course of action, to adopt his goals and share in his experiences, whereas Ek presents us with an anti-
hero who is fearful and introspective. The spectator is alienated from him, as is the rest of the court. Whilst he is central to the work the narrative takes over him as he almost stumbles from one experience to the next, failing to control his destiny or follow a specific course of action.

The Prince also manifests a confused sexual identity. He apparently has great difficulty relating to women and demonstrates a strong oedipal complex. The Prince dances with his mother, who is dressed in scarlet and is overtly sexual in her movements; their duet begins with the Prince circling the Queen with his body hunched over. She places her hands over his eyes in a clear reference to the myth of Oedipus. As they curve and rotate around each other his relationship with his mother transforms him. His movements become bold as he traverses the space in leaps and gallops. He seems to worship her but there is also sexual tension between them, something she appears to relish but he is confused by. At one point she runs her hands in a seductive motion across his chest. He avoids the contact, taking her hand and bowing under her arm.

The Prince's relationship with Odette is also in contrast to the traditionally confident heroic lover. Initially he attempts to catch her and lift her but she throws him to the floor and kicks him away. Later, in their love duet, he returns to his introverted movements circling the stage, his hands nervously waving back and forth. It is Odette's actions, rather than his, which liberate and support him as they develop their relationship. Ek presents the Prince not as a gender stereotype, but as a sensitive young man, who displays his inner emotions through his movements. Ek exposes complexities of character in an inversion of Petipa and Ivanov's far more conventional, idealised figure. This is made possible because of the movement language established by Ek. The vocabulary is not gender specific, and, in its mutability, it suggests a more extensive range in which genders can be perceived to be more fluid. Boundaries between male and female are significantly reduced and challenged. So although it may be considered unfortunate that a number of the characters demonstrate sexual neurosis, the movement language has the potential to usefully open up gender binaries.

However whilst the movement itself can be seen to invert the aerial language of ballet it also echoes the structural forms of conventional Swan Lakes, patterning movement
into marked phrases and repeats, and at times using movements which correspond to movements of the same nature in the ballet version. The cohesive feel of the movement also creates a sense of a rather closed text as opposed to offering a more open, overtly intertextual text. Operating within the bounds of a unified syntax the dance appears to present an alternative ‘truth’ which creates the impression of permanence rather than opening the work to the potential of multiple visions. This is not to take away from the richness of Ek’s style or the unfailing theatricality of his approach but brings again to the fore the tense relationship between reworkings and their sources.

2.4 Crossing genders: cross casting and cross dressing

How is it possible for reworkings to become a visible and significant site for the contestation of cultural power? Through this section I consider two dances that rework the ballet through cross casting and cross dressing. I reflect upon the effectiveness of the strategies used in these dances to challenge the gender and sexual norms evident in their source ballets. The first of these two works is another version of Swan Lake this time choreographed by Matthew Bourne. This dance has certainly been visible, receiving attention and accolades within popular and academic contexts. Whether it is a more resistant site for cultural contestation remains debatable. Arguably the most well known of all recent reworkings, the dance was premiered on November 9th, 1995 at Sadler's Wells Theatre. The dance then went on to a long run in London's West End, successfully transferring to Broadway New York, and also toured extensively. This work, similarly to Ek's version, retains the Tchaikovsky music, shares a commitment to full-scale theatricality and parallels the conventional libretto.

One of the most significant changes is in the choreography, as, like Ek, Bourne choreographs the dance anew to create a different movement form, this time reflecting release-based practices, social dance forms, and, Susan Foster suggests, is reminiscent of Humphrey technique (2001, p.191). Foster, in her illuminating essay ‘Closets Full of Dances’, writes that,

these swans do not perform ballet, nor do they execute the well-known choreography of Act II, [.....] The swan’s vocabulary contorts classical ballet stipulations for bodily geometry. Hips raise with legs; torsos duck and undulate; legs rotate inward and frequently extend at 45-degree angles to side front or side back. Where the ballet vocabulary constantly presses up and away
from gravity, in order to inhabit the aerial, the swans give into gravity, then
surge up out of its depths on curving pathways reminiscent of the modern
dance choreographer Doris Humphrey’s fall and rebound.

(Foster, 2001, p.191)

Bourne, also likeEk, whilst changing the vocabulary still echoes the choreographic
form of ballet. He retains the relationship between characters and musical sections, for
example the leading swan dances to the Swan Queen adagio and the ‘dance of the
cygnets’ is still a light and amusing quartet. He follows similar types of musical and
dance phrasing using dynamics, repeats, and variations typical of the ballet. He
similarly maintains a hierarchical stage arrangement with clearly marked differences for
central characters (front and centre) and the rest of the troupe who form an, albeit
rather untamed, corps de ballet.

The most significant, and most publicised, aspect of Bourne’s reworking is the casting
of men into the role of the swans. The Odette and Odile roles are performed by Royal
Ballet dancer Adam Cooper, who performs not in drag but as a sensual and compelling
male swan, with whom the Prince falls in love. This reworking can be seen as a gay
love story. Whilst Bourne and others have repeatedly played down the homosexual
implication of this cross casting (more of this later), the swapping of gender roles is a
substantial alteration of the canonical ballet and it brings to the fore the previously
restricted images of gender and sexuality presented on the ballet stage.

The dance begins with the music of the prologue. A large bed is centre stage, in which
a boy Prince is tossing and turning. In the morning the court servants dress the boy,
and as the waltz begins the Queen leads her son and entourage on a round of royal
appointments, from launching ships to awarding medals. During this period the Prince
grows up and acquires a fluffy haired blonde girlfriend. The group all goes to view a
ballet. This is a papillionesque ballet-within-a-ballet. Parodying the ballet form this is
a metatheatrical device that interestingly makes light of what are perhaps an audience’s
expectations of a reworking. During this ‘performance’ the Queen, disgusted by the
girlfriend’s behaviour, leaves. Later the Prince pleads for his mother’s understanding
but receives no support from her. He goes out with his girlfriend and proceeds to get
drunk and to fight in a sleazy bar. The Private Secretary attempts to pay off his
girlfriend, which she refuses. However the Prince only sees her being offered the money and dejected, for he assumes the worst, he goes to the municipal park to drown himself.

The entrance of the Swan, in contrast to convention, reveals a confident and knowing creature. There is none of the fright and panic of Odette, nor is there any explanation of the man-swan's existence. The Prince and the Swan dance together. Both Swan, and the rest of the male swans, maintain the 'otherness' of their predecessors. Foster evocatively describes them thus: 'half bird, half man, their heads and arm gestures, suggesting a swan's darting beak or curving wing, emerge briefly and then disappear into fulsome leaps, gliding runs, and arcing turns. With languorous sinuosity a wavelike impulse crosses their bodies, only to explode into sharp shifts of posture and weight' (2001, p.190). These swans, which, as noted above, both echo and subvert ballet vocabulary, at times resemble asexual beings. Their gestures, costumes, whitened skins and the audience's association with the source text, work to signify a transcendence from earthly pursuits (Claid, 1998, p.30). As Emilyn Claid notes, 'the men become feminised and mythical, in the minds of the audience' (Claid, 1998, p.28).

Claid's analysis of Bourne's Swan Lake is contextualised by the discourse of androgyny. She argues that the swans, as represented by Bourne, parallel the mythic signification of the male androgynous body as transcendent of sexual desire and evoking spiritual beauty. Following Barthes' discourse of myth, in a similar manner to my own use of myth in Chapter One, Claid suggests that due to the likely event of an audience's prior knowledge and seduction by the classical swan that these male swan bodies become, in Barthes' third order, 'the ideal empty form which the myth of androgyny fills with its concept' (Claid, 1998, p.30). The swans thereby are symbols of transcendence, beyond earthly pleasure. This is a compelling argument and interestingly illuminates the tension in reworkings generally between deconstruction and the mythic properties of the source texts, which continually assert themselves. In this case the mythical transcendence of classical swans works to hide the maleness of these newly re-figured swans. Claid writes: 'The identity of the male body becomes ambiguity, a secret, seductive as a shadow, all of which displaces and disguises
conventional 'truth' about man while his maleness remains unquestioned' (Claid, 1998, p.31).

In Act III the action returns to the royal court for a ball, parallel to the ballet. Various female dancers – the foreign princesses – dance for the Prince. The party is disrupted by the arrival of the Swan, this time clad in black leather, with whom all the women, including the Queen, are enchanted. The Black Swan taunts the Prince who, in his turmoil, seizes a gun. When a shot rings out it is the Private Secretary who has fired and (mistakenly?) shot the Prince’s girlfriend. In Act IV, the Prince returns to his bedroom, he is confused and distraught. The swans appear, sliding out from under the bed, and pouring in through the window. The Swan comforts the Prince but then the flock viciously attacks them both. This is a vengeful and harsh group action that leaves the Prince dead.

The strategy of cross casting the swans significantly shifts the reading of the ballet and has the potential to challenge heterosexist frameworks. Whether the dance fulfils this potential is debated. As Susan Foster convincingly argues the representation of homosexuality in this dance is exciting (as it has visibly placed homosexuality within the mainstream context) but is also problematic. Foster describes the end scene in which the Prince is cradled by the Swan having been gay bashed by ‘his own kind’ (2001, p.198) leaving his mother crying, and notes that this scene brings to the fore ‘how the closet in Bourne’s Swan Lake operates’ (2001, p.198).

Both the causal relationship between homosexuality and inadequate mothering that the dance depicts and the attack on Swan by his fellow swans issue from a framework of heteronormative assumptions about gay life. Prince’s homosexuality, created by the seductive mother’s failure to respond to his oversensitive neediness, is represented as a psychic maladjustment that finds resolution only in death. Swan’s choice of Prince, which ignites the instinctual fury of the flock, transforms the swans’ gay men’s society into the hate filled mob of straight men that has terrorized gay men for centuries. Homosexuality is thus rendered deficient and pathetic on the one hand, unpredictable and bestial on the other.

(Foster, 2001, p.198)
Mark Morris similarly interrogates gender and (homo)sexuality but this time via parody. The form of ballet itself is critiqued and characters are cross-dressed in the manner of drag. *The Hard Nut* (1991) by Mark Morris is based on the ballet *The Nutcracker* (1892) and the story by E.T.A. Hoffmann. The conventional version is set in an upper class nineteenth-century context and tells the tale of a girl who is given a nutcracker by her godfather, Drosselmeyer, for Christmas. She falls asleep and dreams that the nutcracker changes into a handsome Prince who takes her on a journey through a snowstorm and a kingdom of sweets. Morris sets his version in the 1960/70s. At the Christmas party given by Dr. and Mrs Stahlbaum the guests are a ‘pop nightmare: bouffant hairdos, push-'em-up bras, hip-huggers, skirts with slits’ (Acocella, 1993, p.184). While the first act follows generally the same narrative as the ballet, the second act focuses upon the story of the Hard Nut in which a queen rat attacks and spoils Pirlipat’s (the baby princess) face. The rat explains that the princess will only regain her beauty after a young man cracks the hard nut with his teeth. Drosselmeyer sets off around the world to find the hard nut. On his return it is Drosselmeyer’s own nephew who cracks the nut and kills the rat. Pirlipat rejects the young nephew as he begins to turn ugly - just like a nut cracker. At this point Dr. and Mrs Stahlbaum’s daughter, Marie, interrupts the story (which is being told to her by Drosselmeyer) and offers her love to the young nephew. And, as described in the programme notes, ‘everyone in the world joins Marie and the young Drosselmeyer in celebrating their love. The two go away together forever’ (Morris, 1995, Synopsis).

The Mark Morris Dance Group was formed in 1980 and has since toured widely. The dances Morris has produced for the company demonstrates a concern for gender issues. For example as early as 1982 he created *Jr.High* and *New Love Song Waltzes*. *Jr.High* dealt with a teenager’s feelings as he realised he was homosexual and in *New Love Song Waltzes* Morris portrayed sexual desire as freely shifting within and across genders. Morris has also been particularly open and vocal about his own homosexuality. He has often referred to this in press interviews noting that he ‘got tired of pretending to be a straight guy in love with a ballerina’ (cited in Tobias, 1984, p.30). Morris also demonstrates a willingness to incorporate a range of different physicalities into his dances. Morris himself has a sizeable build, which has a fleshy quality and from which protrudes a generous belly. His own physicality is therefore
not typically ‘dancerly’ and his company vary in shape and size from the extremely
diminutive to the large and fleshy. Acocella also notes that his dancers are older than
average American dancers and represent a ‘vivid ethnic assortment’ (1993, p.75).

It is Morris’s continuing interest in dealing with gender issues combined with his ability
to reference a wide range of dance styles that is at the heart of his strategic plays with
in the dances of Mark Morris’ (1996), convincingly argues that this overtly parodic
work creates, ‘a proliferation of gender identities’ (1996, p.150). ‘The waltz of the
snowflakes’ in The Hard Nut incorporates movements from the ballet canon in such a
way as to create conflicting gender cues. The waltz, in traditional versions, is danced
by the female corps de ballet, whereas in Morris’s version it is danced by both male
and female performers who are all dressed in tutu like skirts, satin halter neck cropped
tops, have ice-cream swirl head dresses, and a mixture of bare feet and pointe shoes.
The movements in the waltz are derived from ballet including steps such as bourrées,
poses in arabesque and grand jetés, but there is little attempt to recreate the quality of
ballet. This ‘waltz of the snowflakes’ is a delightful caper; the dancers enter in groups
with coltish pleasure, creating criss-cross patterns and spraying fist fulls of powdery
snow with their very leaps. The leaps, and corresponding puffs of snow, are timed to
occur with the accents in the music creating a veritable overflow of orgasmic bursts.
This is the ‘waltz of the snowflakes’ à la Busby Berkeley, with a good dash of irony
thrown in.

The incorporated ballet movements, which are usually performed for spectacular
effect, are in Morris’s work made to look awkward and difficult. The dancers clearly
do not have perfect ballet technique and they look heavy footed as they land from
grand jetés which are not fully extended. They throw their bodies rather than place
them and the lines through shoulders, hips and knees are allowed (or forced) to go
awry. Also many of the dancers on pointe, especially the male dancers, do not have
the expected technique. As Ann Nugent points out the dancers’ feet in pointe shoes
resemble ‘gnarled bananas’ (1995, p.18). Morris seems to deliberately push the
dancers past their physical limits and place ballet movements in situations in which they
cannot possibly achieve their usual effect. The dancers are not allowed to hide their
efforts but are made to struggle. Describing such a moment, Acocella notes how, towards the end of *The Hard Nut*, Morris has his dancers perform the spectacular *pirouette à la second*.

*P*irouette a la second is normally done solo; if two people tried to do it together, they would tend to go out of unison and thus rob the step of its look of focused perfection. Morris, however, has not just one or two people but ten people - none of them professional ballet dancers, many of them struggling to keep the leg from bending and drooping - perform *pirouettes a la second* in unison, with no allowance for ending early. The effect, and the goal, is not the look of perfection but of good-humoured effort. 

(Acocella, 1993, p.80)

The effect also provides a commentary upon the vocabulary of ballet itself. The parodic reprise of the vocabulary seemingly states "look, it is not so special after all." The use of the usually rarefied steps of ballet, as performed by his modern dancers suggests a more casual, relaxed approach to ballet technique, one which undermines the elitist and hierarchical perceptions of the form.

A number of critics have played down the ironic and parodic aspect of his work, valuing instead his musicality, phasing, and use of narrative and emotion. These critics, notes Ramsey Burt, place Morris within 'an ahistorical tradition of 'great' choreographers' (Burt, 1995, p.184). The critic Arlene Croce is quoted as an example. She states that Morris ‘doesn’t try to be more than a good choreographer and a completely sincere theatre artist’ (cited in Burt, 1995, p.184). Burt argues that because he makes use of traditional dance vocabularies and skills he may be unable to stop his work from being viewed from the dominant androcentric, heterosexual position (Burt, 1995, p.187).

This may well be the case, but it would be impossible for any sensitive viewer to miss the ironic tone of *The Hard Nut*, especially as it pertains to gender. As Nugent notes 'gender play was an essential element, and men were so regularly disguised as women that it was not always possible to know who was what. Morris's point was that it didn’t matter' (1995, p.18). In both 'The waltz of the snowflakes', described above, and 'The waltz of the flowers', a mixture of men and women perform in what is
traditionally a female dance. They dress and cross-dress, and perform ballet movements from both the male and female canon alongside movements from a modern idiom. Through such methods Morris 'proliferates gender to the point of erasing it altogether, since', as Gay Morris points out, 'the spectator can no longer make gender attributions' (Morris, 1996, p.154). This inability to ascribe gender, in a society that is based on the making of distinctions between male and female, has the potential to be an effective strategy.

Another and perhaps the most commented upon and overt way in which *The Nutcracker* has been re-figured by Morris is through cross-dressing in the form of drag. Cross-dressing has a time honoured tradition in dance and theatre. From the Greeks through to Shakespeare and beyond, in ballets and in pantomimes, performers have been cross-dressed. What is at stake in this analysis of cross-dressing is the extent to which the instances of cross-dressing in Morris's work operate to question the cultural and social assumptions of gender, and thus challenge heterosexist discourse, or whether they simply work to reinforce the status quo.

Cross-dressing or, more specifically, performing in drag, as Morris's characters do, can potentially highlight the negotiability of gender but, problematically, it can also present a misogynist view of women and stereotypical images of men. Drag, analysed by Butler, 'plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed' (1990, p.137). Three dimensions constitute drag: anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance. The potential of drag is thereby found in the dissonance between these dimensions. As Butler writes;

>If the anatomy of the performer is already distinct from the gender of the performer, and both of these are distinct from the gender of the performance, then the performance suggests a dissonance not only between sex and performance, but sex and gender, and gender and performance.

(Butler, 1990, p.137)

The Stahlbaum family incorporates three drag roles: Fritz, the youngest in the family is an ill-behaved boy played by Marianne Moore; the female Housekeeper is performed by Kraig Patterson and the Mother, Mrs Stahlbaum is also played by a man. Acocella
contends however that most of Morris's characters are not drag because 'most drag acts, by dint of their energetic but always imperfect imitation of one sex by the other, reaffirm the separation between the sexes' (Acocella, 1993, p.94). Further, she argues that 'the point of a drag act is that you can still tell the difference: gender is permanent, immovable' (Acocella, 1993, p.94). Morris, Acocella tells us, is not trying to conceal the difference or imitate gender but offering us both in one body. Within Butler's frame drag is not an attempt to copy or imitate an original gender but through parody drag imitates an imitation. Indeed it is the potential of dissonance between the act, sex and gender that makes drag performance interesting. Acocella suggests that whilst *The Hard Nut* does contain what she describes as travesty roles and that these roles 'like most modern travesty roles ... are based on an acceptance of difference between male and female, and they are played for comic effect' (Acocella, 1993, p.101). This casts aside the drag roles in a tone that suggests these roles are limited to comedy and strangely discounts Morris's repeated interrogation of gender through his work.

Gay Morris (1996) convincingly discusses the different approaches that these drag characters encompass. Fritz runs, slides and bashes around the Stahlbaum's living room. He teases and snarls at his sister, shadow boxes with the guests, and undertakes mock military charges around the furniture and through the guests. Morris states we 'see a "girl" who looks like a "boy" but still looks like a "girl" moving like a "boy", and we are struck by a series of jolts that constantly refocus our attention on the instability and performative aspects of gender' (Morris, 1996, p.151). These 'jolts' come from the tension between our knowledge that we are watching a female dancer perform typical boy-like behaviour and the treatment that he/she receives from the guests. For example, Fritz is generally allowed run amok and when disciplined it is with a physical reprimand. In many ways Marianne Moore presents us with a character who is more boy than boy, a virtuoso rendition of boy-like actions. What this calls to our attention is the performative nature of gender; it is the actions of Fritz that allow us to recognise the character as a "boy" rather than because of any prior gender identity. As Morris argues, 'that is to say, the performitivity of gender on the surface of the body causes identity rather than performitivity being the result of a natural or interior core of gender identity' (Morris, 1996, p.151).
Mrs Stahlbaum can be seen to foreground the discontinuity between the anatomy of the performer and the performance of gender even more overtly than Fritz. Peter Wing Healey plays Mrs Stahlbaum. S/he has a large build and wide fleshy shoulders that are revealed by a sumptuous off the shoulder dress in green velvet and satin. When we first see Mrs Stahlbaum she flits across the stage, her arms held out from the elbows as she gestures with her wrists and circles her shoulders. Throughout the opening party scene she performs in mostly mime with a few movements and gestures which are clearly balletic in style. For example she performs small beaten steps, gallops, and relevés with port de bras into fifth position. Overall she is presented as a larger than life ‘fluttery’ mother. In some respects she is the stereotypical drag queen. Mrs Stahlbaum is like a female impersonator who attempts to celebrate the feminine ideal (in this case the ideal mother) and generates humour from the ‘womanish’ mannerisms employed. Yet the incongruous nature of physical anatomy, gender and gender act belie the stereotype. Through drag Mrs. Stahlbaum presents a revision of the mother figure in *The Nutcracker* (1892), disrupting the traditional mother image through hyperbole not only of gender but also of class. Mrs. Stahlbaum, as played by Healey, is not the gracious upper class figure presented in conventional versions, but suburban housewife worrying about specks of dust, while trying to discipline her children and fussing around her guests.

The Housekeeper ‘is a drag queen who has ‘become’ a woman and savours every moment of it’, states Morris (1996, p.151). She performs the actions of femininity with pleasure and delight - as perhaps only a person who does not take such actions for granted could. She pushes the drinks trolley with a sway of her hips; delightedly opens Drosselmeier’s box of nuts; smells her perfumed wrist having circled it on a perfume sample in a magazine and tests Marie’s temperature - placing the back of her hand on both her own and Marie’s forehead in a dramatic gesture. Whether Mark Morris intends us to view the Housekeeper as a transsexual or drag queen is uncertain but she is highly feminine in looks and behaviour. She wears a maid’s uniform that is shaped into a slim waist and is cut short on the thighs. She dances on pointe and her signature movement is the pas de bourrée couru. In this reiteration of the gender codes of ballet, especially such a highly recognisable canonical action as pas de bourrée, the Housekeeper both reinforces and confuses normally female performative actions.
The extent to which any drag performance can destabilise gender assumptions has been asked by a number of feminist commentators. Alice Solomon argues that: ‘precisely because ‘man’ is the presumed universal, and “woman” the gussied-up other, drag changes meaning depending on who’s wearing it .... And since femininity is always drag, no matter who paints on the nails and mascara, it’s easy to caricature’ (Solomon, 1993, p.145) - hence the ambiguous status of drag. Sceptics like Solomon, and more radically Jill Dolan, have argued that drag relies on grotesque caricature and presents misogynist views of women. It is argued that in mirroring women’s socially constructed roles, the drag performer conspires to construct a male-identified subject. In a discussion of the way gender impersonation destroys or maintains gender roles Dolan says that,

women are non-existent in drag performance, but woman-as-myth, as a cultural, ideological object, is constructed in an agreed upon exchange between the male performer and the usually male spectator.

(Dolan, 1985, p.8)

Butler acknowledges that drag can be part of the heterosexist domain and cites Dustin Hoffman in Tootsie and Jack Lemmon in Some Like it Hot as examples (Butler, 1993, p.126). In these films of high net entertainment the potential homosexual consequences of the drag roles are deflected within the narrative of the film. This type of drag can possibly be seen to function, she suggests, as a ‘ritualistic release for a heterosexual economy that must constantly police its own boundaries against the invasion of queerness’ (Butler,1993, p.126). However, Butler also problematises the misogynist analysis of drag as it is presented by radical feminists. This analysis, she argues, figures male to female transsexuality, cross-dressing and drag as male homosexual activities (which they are not always) and further roots homosexuality in misogyny. The rooting of homosexuality in misogyny attempts to frame homosexuality as being “about women”, for, the argument goes “he is only gay because he hasn’t found the right woman”. Ironically in this frame the radical feminists’ argument against drag reinforces the heterosexual matrix, placing heterosexual love as the truth of drag and homosexuality (Butler, 1993, p.127-8). However this argument still leaves drag in an ambivalent position. ‘Sometimes,’ writes Butler, drag ‘remains caught in an
irresolvable tension, and sometimes a fatally unsubversive appropriation takes place' (1993, p.128).

Laura Jacobs in her critical review of *The Hard Nut* suggests that Morris's drag characters are in just such an ambiguous and possibly even fatally appropriated position. Jacobs points out that 'in *The Hard Nut*, anything maternal is played for laughs' (1993, pp.3-5). Morris removes the focus from the main female characters (The Sugar Plum Fairy doesn't appear in Morris's version and Marie is passive throughout the majority of the second act) and presents the other main female characters in drag (the mother / queen and the housekeeper / nurse). Jacobs argues, in line with feminist critics of drag performance, that in removing the female roles, or by giving those roles to men, Morris removes any of the potential matriarchal readings available in conventional versions. In doing so Morris shifts the focus of the work to the masculine and presents the women as objects of ridicule. The cartoon staging of *The Hard Nut* also plays an important part in the way the drag characters are perceived. The comic and one-dimensional image of the set carries in to the characterisations, which are stereotypical and emphasises the humorous. The gender roles presented are, for Jacobs, unconvincing and in the end 'it is the women who look most worn' (Jacobs, 1993, p.4).

2.5 The heterosexual matrix and beyond

*The Hard Nut* by Morris and *Swan Lake* by Bourne both rework the ballet from male homosexual perspectives. Their dances intervene in the canon in ways that have the potential to be deviant. This potential is particularly significant given that Classical and Romantic ballets place heterosexuality centre stage. Both the narratives and form of ballet reinforce what Sally Banes has described as the 'marriage plot' (1998, p.5). The marriage institution is central to heterosexist frames of life-giving sexuality and is a powerful part of the continuing hegemony of heterosexual systems. The heterosexual matrix positions homosexuality as taboo, as sterile and as deviant, in contrast to fertile heterosexual practices. As Sue Ellen Case (1991) points out, from a heterosexist perspective homosexual sex is other-than-natural as what is natural is associated with giving life, or practising life-giving sexuality.
Banes suggests that the origins and context of ballet in the Renaissance court as part of events such as weddings became embodied within the ballet itself. The analysis undertaken by Banes considers the marriage plot within the double frame of re-reading the narrative and form of the marriage plot and considering the way it is part of a bourgeois social imperative. Whilst she points out that reading narrative alongside a choreographic analysis reveals views other than those of dominant patriarchy, overall the nineteenth-century ballet offers 'the most splendid celebration in the Western dance canon of the wedding theme' (Banes, 1998, p.42).

Banes argues that (1998, p.60) Act II of The Nutcracker (1892) suggests, a metaphorical wedding feast for Clara. It is a wedding feast within which Clara is a docile observer, passively watching the dancing of others, crowned by the grand pas de deux of the Sugar Plum Fairy and her consort. In The Hard Nut this pas de deux is replaced by a dance for the whole company who lift and support the central couple - Marie and the transformed Nutcracker. Throughout the adagio section of the dance they do not so much as dance together as be danced by the rest of the troupe. In opposite corners Marie and the Nutcracker are lifted into horizontal star-shaped positions, they are turned in the air as other dancer's circle around them. Continuing the symmetry, the groups curve through space, enter and exit, turn and pose. Then, in the final coda section of the pas de deux, the central pair disappears altogether. The highly virtuosic steps and lifts normally associated with the coda, are therefore performed not by the central couple but by twelve couples. They ironically echo and eschew tradition as on the last strokes of the music they take up two of the most typical postures within the duet vocabulary: the fish dive and the shoulder sit.

Both Acocella and Morris point out that Mark Morris only rarely uses the duet form and that when he does it can usually be found within an ensemble context. Gay Morris suggests that dethroning the duet and locating stability within the group, rather than the couple, is one of Morris's greatest challenges to heterosexual regulation (1996, p.155). Whilst this may be the case The Hard Nut maintains the narrative of the 'marriage plot'. That we do not actually see a marriage does not take away from the overall thrust of the work – the pairing of Marie and the Nutcracker.
Whilst Bourne deals with homosexuality more explicitly than Morris, placing the (gay) relationship between two males (Prince and Swan) at the centre of the dance, the other-than-natural possibilities of this *Swan Lake* are also thwarted, this time by both the signifying images in the dance and the publicity surrounding it. I have already noted (see above) the ways in which the male swans may be remythologised as androgynous creatures and suggested a plausible interpretation by Foster who senses a homophobic thrust within the dance (2001, p.198). These heteronormative features in the dance are also echoed in the publicity surrounding the production. The homosexual aspects of the work have been strangely closeted, ignored or covered over by critics and Bourne himself. For example Debra Crane comments, 'to brand this a “gay *Swan Lake*” is to do Bourne an injustice' (1996, p.1161). She continues however to write that ‘there is no denying the gay sensibility of the surface love story’ (1996, p.1161). She then immediately offers a more transcendent reading, stating that ‘his *Swan Lake* is ultimately about the death of idealism, and the death of dreams’ (1996, p1161). Whilst Clement Crisp more directly writes that ‘theirs [Swan and Prince] is not, thanks to Bourne’s controlled imagery and Cooper’s rare artistry, a homosexual relationship’ (1996, p.1162). These reviews are riddled with homophobic tendencies which Bourne does little to dispelled.

Overall, and problematically, both of these dances maintain a close link to the structural form of the ballet for as Ramsey Burt points out, ‘in giving new life to hegemonic dance traditions there is a danger of domestification’ (1995, p.187). The reusing of the approaches of the ‘good old fashioned dance’ (Burt, 1995, p.187) may mean that the new dance is too easy to view from the dominant position which may neutralise any transgressive representations of gender present. This view emulates the now famous dictum by Audre Lorde. She states *the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house*. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change’ (italics in original, Lorde, 1984, p.112). A reworking does not guarantee an oppositional or discordant impulse. Whether a reworking exceeds the containing and constraining properties of the source, or whether a dance remains held within a frame of mainstream cultural concepts can not be assumed, but requires detailed attention to the specifics of each dance and its context. I would argue that some reworkings, at least in the moment of
performance, could encourage viewers to unmoor their expectations. These dances exceed and fracture the authority of the texts that they address, a strategy which involves not just ‘fiddling’ with the canon, but cutting at it with a knife.

Venezuelan dancer Javier de Frutos has consistently probed at the normative status of the heterosexual matrix, often depicting raw and uncompromising images of homosexuality on stage. In his work he continually explores personal and intense experiences of gay sexuality. As Emilyn Claid notes de Frutos, like other self-identified gay/queer dance artists Nigel Charnock, Lloyd Newson and Michael Clark ‘engage[s] the audience through their play with conflict of masculine and feminine desire. They consciously counteract notions of union and transcendence from sexual desire’ (Claid, 1998, p.32). In The Hypochondriac Bird (1998) de Frutos presents a very ‘real’, non-transcendent sexuality. I suggest that de Frutos queers Swan Lake, for as Burt notes, ‘queerness is characterized by a determined resistance to regimes of the normal’ (Burt, 2001, p.215).

The dance, performed by de Frutos and Jamie Watton, was commissioned for Expo’98 in Lisbon and followed on from the success of the highly sexually charged and dark Grass (1997). Unlike the other dances discussed so far in this chapter de Frutos does not follow a conventional narrative form. Swan Lake is evoked as an obligatory intertext via the use of sections of the Tchaikovsky music and small gestures. The Swan Lake score is used for approximately half of the dance and is juxtaposed and layered with vintage Hawaiian music and sound effects, assembled and edited by Eric Hines. The music operates as an extended and obligatory reference, yet there is no attempt to use the music in a linear manner. The sound score flits between different scenes from the ballet. For example, the music goes from Odette and Siegfried’s pas de deux from Act II (played as if heard through a telephone), to Odile’s famous thirty-two fouetté en tournant solo from Act III (played at speed and with repeats), and then, following a short burst of Hawaiian folk music, the ballet’s final sections of music are directly followed by Siegfried’s second entrance and a refrain of the pas de deux in Act II. Interestingly, the dance has not been discussed (unlike the dances of Bourne, Morris and Ek) as a reworking and little attention has been paid to the Swan Lake references. One commentator who does note the musical references writes:
Tchaikovsky's music – interpolated with sound effects and folk songs – confers an intriguing special tint on the entire work, lifting the apparent crudeness of the subject matter to a higher and at times, almost lyrical level.

(Poesio, 1998)

Whilst I concur that the music adds an 'intriguing' and 'special tint', this review problematically reinforces the canonical status of music. The *Swan Lake* music, the review implies, confers its transcendental status upon the work and improves what might otherwise be only crude sex. I would argue that de Frutos uses the signification of *Swan Lake* for his own ends, not to lift an otherwise vulgar work, but to insert queer sexuality into what is otherwise a heterosexual dance. Challenging and destabilising the ballet this work evokes queer sex and suggests that the ballet's representation of sexuality *per se*, and unitary heterosexuality specifically, is a fiction.

While de Frutos and Watton come to resemble the Swan and the Prince the relationship developed by them is not sentimental or selfless, rather it is unambiguously and explicitly erotic. De Frutos, naked under a long pale blue and white flowered skirt, has a fluid, flamboyant and significantly otherworldly quality. Watton, dressed in a white suit and blue ruffled shirt, uses small and agitated gestures, and generally holds himself in a more everyday fashion. Through the work their relationship shifts from the tender to the violent. Like Petipa and Ivanov's heterosexual partners *The Hypochondriac Bird* evokes a fragile couple exploring their (homo)sexuality. Similarly the relationship does not always go smoothly. However this relationship is not from the realms of fantasy nor is it coded as escapism. De Frutos and Watton dance out a homoerotic discourse of instability and disintegration. As the dancers manipulate and are manipulated by each other de Frutos, I suggest, presents conflict and non-conformity in such a way that the provisional and plural nature of sexual identities are acknowledged. This emphasis upon manipulation and plurality is parallel to the manipulation of the ballet, and *Swan Lake* is similarly revealed as provisional and open to contestation.

The dancers start on the stage as the lights go up. Lying on the floor, upstage left, they enact a barely stylised representation of intercourse. Timing pelvis thrusts with
the Hawaiian folk music and pressing hard into each others’ bodies this initial sequence leaves little to the imagination whilst invoking the romance and passion of a paradise setting. De Frutos comments, this dance is ‘an autobiographical page’ and, further, that within it he is ‘defending his right [as a gay man] to have sex’ (Shaw, 1999, see videography). Within this first section are small gestures that are suggestive of the Swan Lake references that will follow. De Frutos, lying behind Watton, sends rippling waves through his raised arm. The action is immediately recognisable as a swan gesture, but it is also so much a part of the luscious movement developed by de Frutos that this gesture does not appear as a quotation as such. Rather, the reference is inserted as part of a collection of images to do with pleasure, sexuality, water and fluidity.

In the next section the Swan Lake references become more overt. Dancing to the evocative and dramatic music from the end of Swan Lake Act II, the dancer’s heads and torsos twitch and undulate, and whilst not the delicate swans of convention the actions are clearly bird-like and they resonate with the music. De Frutos also incorporates a small shaking action of his foot forming another direct connection to the ballet. Like Odette’s famous quivering beats in front of her ankle de Frutos lifts up his knee and with his foot pointed, sends a repeated pulse through to his foot. These movement references are rare however and in the main de Frutos follows his own agenda which I suggest is not so much ‘about’ Swan Lake, but rather a representation of his own sexuality. For example dancing to Odette and Siegfried’s pas de deux music in Act II, de Frutos choreographs a dance of kisses. In time with the music de Frutos starts to kiss Watton on the neck. Like small pecks these kisses travel down Watton’s arm, becoming quick caresses at his fingers. This dance, de Frutos says, validates kissing as a movement of the same value as a lift of a leg or any other movement from more traditional dance vocabularies (Shaw, 1999, see videography). Of course, whilst watching his dance of kisses the music reminds the viewer of the stylised romance of the ballet. De Frutos’ dance whilst very different is no less seductive or delicate.

In what can be seen as the second half of The Hypochondriac Bird the main sequence is an extended lovemaking dance. De Frutos and Watton dance to the layered sounds
of the ocean crashing against the shore, breath bubbles escaping a diver’s mask, and
the wind gusting interspersed with folk songs and the strains of Tchaikovsky. The
lighting is low and ripples like water flicker across the stage floor. The whole dance
takes place on the floor as they tumble and roll, lift and fall. This dance is both
erotically beautiful and manipulatively violent. The sexuality presented I suggest does
not refer to women or to heterosexuality. De Frutos, in this section, asserts instead a
gay sexuality that destabilises normative associations. Burt writes that this is a
potential feature of gay male dance.

Gay male dancing bodies signify the possibility that men can dissolve in
pleasure within the leaky boundaries not of women but of other men. This
blurring of masculine subjects and objects destabilizes notions of male
objectivity and rationality that, within Enlightenment thought, guaranteed the
disinterestedness of the rational unitary subject.

(Burt, 2001, p.211)

This work does not follow the logical and progressive form of conventional versions
rather the work operates as an associative series of images. The work can be seen to
transgress, whilst also inserting, the normative classical ballet for de Frutos, I suggest,
disputes the conventional articulation of disembodied aesthetic ideals, replacing these
with an embodied and highly personal perspective. Dance reviewer Ismene Brown (in
Shaw, 1999, see videography) criticises this work for its overly realistic portrayal of
homosexuality which, she says, is alienating to her as a heterosexual women. She
seems to desire a vision of sexuality that is transcendent – somehow lifted above the
everyday. I would posit however that it is just this non-transcendence, the very
specificity of the homosexuality displayed, that brings about the radical re-
configuration of the ballet. The work constitutes a site of resistance against the dead
weight of conformity to normative heterosexuality. Reworking the ballet, without
asserting its transcendent properties, de Frutos explores the body’s capacity for
pleasure anew.

De Frutos’ approach suggests a starting point not of ‘what shall I do with Swan Lake?’
but rather ‘how can this material be useful to me?’ So although the dance clearly still
works with the pleasure of the recognition and distance from the ballet, de Frutos
undermines the idea that working with a canonical text requires a production to offer
another (closed) reading of the ballet. *The Hypochondriac Bird* focuses on how *Swan Lake* as an intertext might be embodied, and what it might mean in this new context. Holding the ballet at a greater distance, than say Ek or Bourne's approach, the audience is provided with fewer references on which to base their response and this permits space from multiple readings. What is not altogether clear however is the extent to which reworkings such as *The Hypochondriac Bird* ironically, and somewhat paradoxically, might require an audience to be more familiar with the source text in order to recognise the appropriate signs at all. As a more open text it may well be that readers are required to bring more of their own knowledge to the work in order to make an interpretation of it.

2.5 Intercultural exchange, reworking imperialism and intertextuality
If de Frutos opens up homosexuality for detailed and unromantic inspection, Japanese Butoh artist Masaki Iwana embraces, like other Butoh dancers, 'the entire spectrum of life, the evil, ugly and dark' (Leask, 1995, p.69). His version of *Giselle* (1995) dislocates the ballet from its usual context and form in a search for an ultimate freedom 'beyond oneself and beyond one's cultural, social and physical ego-bound identity' (Leask, 1995, p.64). Iwana's reworking of *Giselle* was performed at Chisenhale Dance Space as part of the East Winds Festival of new Butoh (1995). This festival included workshops, performances and speakers, of whom Iwana was one. Iwana runs a school in France and works to develop the Butoh form focusing upon changing and dynamic work (Leask, 1995, p.67).

Butoh is not easily 'read' in Western terms for the form has few features that are typical of Western concepts of dance. The form is not concerned with the development of choreographic ideas through a vocabulary of co-ordinated movement, rather it focuses upon internal 'imaging' to give rise to improvisation which energises a space to create an 'architecture' that interacts with the viewers (Leask, 1995, p.67). The form uses weight and gravity, exists independently from music and is theatrical and emotional. Often evoking grotesque imagery and dark themes, dancers work to 'access the dance in the body' (Leask, 1995, p.69). Iwana states that, 'the body is not a slave of society and order (*Shintai*) but should be an alive and changing sculpture.
fashioned by life itself (Nikutai) and the life is that which has encompassed individual history and experience' (cited in Leask, 1995, p.64).

Similar to Sunrise, an earlier reworking of Giselle created in 1979 by Fergus Early (see Chapter One), Iwana uses almost no direct references to the ballet Giselle beyond the title. Like Early's dance this one occurs in the gaps of the ballet, creating another tale - aspects of the 'tale' that goes unseen or unsaid in the ballet. Iwana's expressive yet minimal dance might be seen to trace Giselle's inner 'madness', death, rising and return to the grave. Entering the stage dressed in a long black coat Iwana stands in a central circle of warm yellow light. He begins to move painfully slowly, stepping forward and rising on to the balls of his feet. He draws his arms in towards his body and his shoulders rise. Lowering onto his back foot he leans backwards. A sudden pulse through the body leads to a drop downward of the pelvis and causes the outwardly rotated knees to bend. Shuddering, an arm reaches up overhead. The tension in the body is discernible, even palpable. As the dance progresses the movement continues to be internally focused - Iwana only glances towards the audience at a couple of points during the whole dance. The atmosphere is charged as his knees buckle and arms flare out, swinging from the shoulders in response to his collapsing knees and pelvis.

Pulling his coat open from the chest down, his naked, white painted body is revealed. He stands with heels raised and feet apart. The body is exposed and vulnerable. Following another period of erupting, fragmenting and stumbling movement, as Iwana shifts between precarious balances and loss of balance, he pulls at and eventually removes the white roll of paper attached to his shaved pubic bone. Placing this false penis in his mouth he slowly lowers himself to the floor. The body for the first time appears relaxed, its weight released into the floor. Lying in darkness and in silence for over two minutes, then he slowly rolls towards the back of the stage and brings himself to standing. The false penis is still in his mouth as he crouches down to fully remove his coat. Standing naked it becomes clear that his genitals are not visible - they are tucked away, leaving his body strangely de-sexed. The final images are of Iwana walking backwards towards the back wall, the stage bathed in blood red light. Then he raises his heels and stands with his right foot on top of his left and allows his arms to drift overhead, the light changes to green and he stands in this difficult pose with his
body wavering. As Iwana maintains this difficult pose the lights fade and the piece ends.

A parallel reading of this *Giselle* to the conventional narrative is only very tentatively suggested in the dance and such a reading only encompasses a small part of Iwana’s *Giselle*. So whilst the work can be seen to suggest Giselle’s metamorphosis from her physical body, through death, to what could be seen as her spiritual body as a Wili, this reading does not take into account the form and approach of Butoh. Rather than explicitly representing the character of Giselle he works from inside himself. As Kozel and Rotie note Iwana has an ability ‘to metamorphose, to blur the distinction between ‘being’ and ‘other’, and in the process to gain access to a mythic, archetypal realm mediated through images’ (1996, p.35). Echoing a common form in Butoh this dance evokes the life/death cycle. From the perspective embodied in Butoh there is no death as such in this cycle, only regeneration. His gradual and difficult lowering to the floor and eventual stillness, notes Leask, is a retreat into a ‘death state’ or into ‘nothingness’ (Leask, 1995, p.69). So whilst structurally Iwana appears to parallel Giselle’s decent into madness and death, in Butoh the ‘death state’ conveys the value of doing nothing and clearing thoughts so that a meditative silence is evoked. This is a place where the breaths in the body can become eloquent. In this present-centred aesthetic, ‘consciousness has the opportunity to shift from its forward orientation to experience relief. Moments empty of thought and habit as we let go the compulsion to act or even think upon them’ (Fraleigh, 1999, p.203).

This *Giselle* also continues the integration of gender in reworkings. His naked, hairless body and his hidden genitals revise the ethereal, feminine body of the Wilis. Again drawing on Butoh traditions Iwana blurs the masculine and the feminine. The markings of his sex are removed, first by the removal of the white paper roll – his false penis, and then by the hiding of his genitals. Becoming feminised (through lack) he evokes neither a fully male nor female presence – he suggests instead an androgynous, yielding and transformative gender bending.

Viewing Butoh in a British context it is likely that the form will seem particularly Japanese and exotic but the form is actually a multicultural one. Developing in its
current form after World War II and influenced by both German expressive modern
dance and the traditional Japanese theatre arts, 'butoh artists negotiate the minefield of
split cultural subjectivities, building their own worlds out of the cultural rubbish of
Eastern and Western superpowers' (Dils & Albright, 2001, p.373). Recently Butoh
has mutated in various ways as the form has spread to other cultures and while this
Giselle exemplifies features typical of Butoh in the use and visual representation of the
body, it also diverges from traditional forms. Iwana’s face remains impassive
throughout, unlike his predecessors who used their faces as a full part of the dance
expression. The dance is also more dynamic, shifting between different states more
often than traditional forms do, which tend to focus for longer on qualities of stillness
and the shifts in smaller more isolated body parts. He presents a fluid body that is
liberated from both the cultural imperatives of traditional Butoh and the colonialisation
of the body embedded in conventional representations of Giselle.

Performing a European canonical text in a (new) Butoh form radically alters, and
creates dissonance within, the conventional Western understanding of the ballet. This
appropriation brings the cultural specificity of Giselle to the fore and also re-figures
gender. Whereas Giselle conventionally reflects the reinforcement of the proper order
of class and gender, which Ek’s version reiterates, Iwana attempts to strip the social
body and tap into the subconscious. Revealing the slippage between the lived body and
its cultural representation Iwana takes up the challenge of bodies and cultures. Rather
than a fixed identity the work implies an interactive and changing concept of cultural
location.

Aurora (1994) by Australian dancer and choreographer Meryl Tankard may seem,
from a European perspective at least, less overt in its cultural appropriation, however I
suggest that it is nevertheless still radical in its questioning of the Imperial drive of
ballet. Aurora is a reworking of the Petipa ballet The Sleeping Beauty (1890). The
dance has been described as 'uncompromisingly contemporary and inflected in ways
that are recognisably located within a newer tradition of Australian carnivalesque post-
colonialism' (Kierennder, 1995, p.5). The choice to rework The Sleeping Beauty
Tankard says was perhaps due in part to all the press attention surrounding the royal
family and Lady Diana in particular (in Hallet, 1994). The ballet is inextricably linked
to traditions of monarchy and fairy tales and embodies a thoroughly European ideology. In an Australian context, which continues to have politically charged debates about monarchy and republicanism, in particular the place of the British Royal family, the links between this reworking and republicanism are unavoidable. Adrian Kiernander notes:

While Tankard's piece does not intervene directly or polemically in the debate, its concerns are woven through this currently contentious area of national life, and many features of the work conspire to link the concept of monarchy with that of classical ballet, both of them conservatizing forces within the community.

(Kiernander, 1995, p.5)

Further this dance not only points to current debates about republicanism through its specific use of *The Sleeping Beauty*, but also points to ballet in general as a tool of imperial colonialism. As noted in Chapter One, ballet has spread across the globe and come to appear universal. This reworking, like others such as those by Iwana and Shakti (see Chapter Five), re-envision ballet from a particular cultural perspective, these works highlight the cultural specificity of the form whilst also risking re-inscribing the ballet as a universal signifier.

Tankard trained initially as a ballet dancer and performed with the Australian Ballet. In 1978 Tankard joined Wuppertal Tanztheater under the directionship of Pina Bausch. Tankard remained with Bausch's company until 1983 and created a number of significant roles in works such as *Café Muller, Kontakthof, Arien, Konscheitslegende, 1980, Walzer* and *Bandoneon*. Her roles at Wuppertal are particularly noted for their brash and irreverent humour, as much as they are for her dancing. This humour is also evident in *Aurora*. In 1989 Tankard became Artistic Director of her own company and has created over sixteen works.

The theatre programme for *Aurora* suggests that this contemporary version of the ballet does not scorn, mimic or ridicule a style. Rather, Shirley Scott Despoja writes, 'what *Aurora* is about is disturbance – of our expectations, most obviously of a ballet about Aurora, the *Sleeping Beauty*; but also of other things, among them, scale, political correctness, and what we take as a dance presentation's "natural"
progression' (Despoja, 1994, np). Reworking the ballet in two acts and nineteen scenes *Aurora* incorporates images that are playful and discontinuous. The choreography makes use of an eclectic range of dance styles happily mixing traditionally disparate elements. The dance starts for example with a solo for Aurora, dressed in a bell-shaped skirt and fitted bodice in pastel colours; she is reminiscent of a typical fairytale princess. In the very next scene however troupes of limping gardeners push wheelbarrows, toss their caps and tumble about the stage. When the fairies enter this playful approach continues. Dressed in puffball versions of tutus and wearing tap shoes, these male and female fairies carry Chinese lanterns and perform hybridised movement styles from classical ballet and tap.

These impish potentially violent fairies enter in savaged, short tutus, the men leaping barefoot and the women wearing tap shoes. Their tap routines are wild, anarchic and noisy, nothing like 42nd Street. (Kiernander, 1995, p.7)

Their routines are also nothing like the serene, harmonious ones of Petipa's fairies. These tap dancing fairies perform steps akin to ballet in their tap shoes and use earthy freely flung movements. Rather than decorating the stage in circular groupings and commanding attention through their decorous dancing, Tankard's fairies are boisterous and claim attention through their loud rather farcical behaviour. These carnivalesque bodies are then starkly contrasted by a total change in style and scale. Contrasting the colour and carnival of Act I, Act II opens with an extended series of large shadows. This is Aurora's sleep sequence, which passes not in passive slumber, but through traumatic dreams. The dancers' movements, which become fluid and full-bodied, are performed behind screens that cover the whole height and width of the stage and are strongly backlit. The emphasis, as the dancers fall, run and turn, is on shifting scales and surreal contrasts. Pulling away and toward each other couples dance out difficult and painful relationships.

Later in the dance, when Aurora wakes up, Tankard shifts the style again, this time via an array of circus acts. These acts include juggling, conjuring tricks and flying acrobatics. The incorporation of elements from a different field of performance such as circus opens up the work even further. By mixing not only different dance styles
but also different performance forms Tankard disrupts any sense of a unified body. The work presents multiple bodies in such a way that the ‘vernacular’ body (of tap and circus) collides with the ‘elitist’ body (of ballet). Neither physical form is given precedence and, in this way, the dance defies the divisions of high and low art and presents a plural, poly-vocal dance.

Although Petipa’s ballet is also eclectic in that it incorporates movement forms derived from the classical canon, social dance and various ‘national dances’, the ballet’s geometry of form codifies this eclecticism and holds it within a unified approach. The body is a singular one that conforms to a standardised technique and strives to comply in order to establish the ideal of uniformity. The overall thrust of Petipa’s work is univocal, as Sally Banes notes: ‘the music, the costumes, the scenery, the pantomime, as well as the dance steps, all told the same story’ (1994, p.284). In contrast Aurora is fragmented and hybrid. This dance questions the benchmark of audience’s expectations and assumptions about a received interpretation of the ballet replacing the codification of ballet not with another still single set of assumptions and skills but multiple and fragmented ones. This work opposes the ‘purity’ of imperialism and authenticity.

Tankard’s use of a number of different forms demonstrates a love of the perverse, the everyday, the vestigial and the messy, reflecting the thrust within postmodernism towards eclecticism. The particular mix of forms in Aurora is not however arbitrarily eclectic but incites intertextual readings, opening up the dance to a wide range of aesthetic and cultural concerns. References to the frog prince in Act I, scene 6, echo Petipa’s inclusion of multiple fairy tale characters. Whilst the references to feet in Act I, scene 9, indicate both the tale of Cinderella and a more contemporary Royal incident in the form of the then Duchess of York’s (Sarah Ferguson) infamous ‘toe sucking’ saga. She also incorporates elements and styles that form intertexts with an Australian sensibility and theatre heritage. Kiernander notes that the references to circus techniques, Chinese performance styles and physical disability resonate with the carnivalesque and multicultural influences in contemporary Australian theatre (1995, p.7). For example, the gardeners in Act I, scene 2, who, with wheelbarrows, brown clothing and cloth caps of various descriptions, grin and wheel themselves around the
stage with exaggerated limps, reflect the post-colonialist approach of other Australian artists. Kiernander states:

It is paradoxical that in a country whose stereotype is the physically perfect and near-nude surf lifesaver on a beach, many Australian artists and playwrights have focused on images of the grotesque or distorted as a way of writing back against European myths of classical perfection, sometimes as a response to the perceived inferiority of a marginal outpost relative to the metropolitan center.

(Kiernander, 1995, p.7)

This reworking represents *The Sleeping Beauty* in keeping with its new cultural context. Taking up the global cultural awareness of the ballet Tankard represents a specifically Australian experience. Like other Australian artists Tankard’s dance speaks back to Imperialism. The work is both implicitly critical and overtly carnivalesque, between Brechtian and Bakhtinian. Tankard’s unruly overturning of received assumptions and her incorporation of disparate and fragmented elements, which belie the expectation of logical progression, evoke a radical approach purposefully obscured by the ostensibly fun and excessive performance. Following a dream logic Tankard evokes unfinished and disparate bodies effectively decolonialising the hierarchical corpus of imperial culture.

**Conclusion**

This overview of seven dances demonstrates how reworkings, each in different ways, can be seen to test the boundaries of canonical ballet’s value and authority, fracturing and entering from insurgent, and sometimes marginal, positions. The multiplicity of reworkings discussed here bring to the fore the fact that classics are not authentic or hegemonic objects as the canon seeks to imbue them – rather they are specific representations of moments of cultural and artistic production. Reworkings have however been shown to evoke a problematic double gaze as they always risk, if not fetishising, at least recapitulating, the ballets at their source. Tampering with the canon is clearly a dangerous ploy. In a different context Judith Butler elucidates this problem in her analysis of the political signifier as the sedimentation of prior signifiers, drawing the phantasmatic promise of those prior signifiers, reworking them into the production and promise of ‘the new’, a ‘new’ that is itself only established through recourse to those embedded conventions, past conventions,
that have conventionally been invested with the political power to signify the future.

(Butler, 1993, p.220)

However, the dangers of being held within the status quo notwithstanding (for surely some seepage is bound to occur), choreographers have found innovative and radical means through which to rework nineteenth-century canonical ballets. Questioning, resisting and on occasion subverting the weight of their source texts these dances provoke different ways of thinking about performances of the past and current practices. Methods include recontextualising the dance, reformulating the choreography and the movement vocabulary, restructuring in order to form an eclectic juxtaposition of dance styles and theatre forms and working within the gaps to play out previously unseen perspectives. These dances encompass anti-canonical, homosexual and postcolonial perspectives.

This overview reveals some different ways in which dancers' bodies have been re-shaped, re-gendered and re-sexed - queering and querying tradition. These dances have been shown to embody the potential for liberation and transformation, creating unstable identities and radically revising established discourse. As such these reworkings, through the strategic re-figuring of dancing bodies, have been shown to challenge the traditional representations of gender, sexuality and ethnicity within the canon.

Whilst the works discussed in this chapter can been seen as exemplifiers of reworkings they also problematically reflect the tendency of reworkings to reveal a (gay) male bias. Indeed as I look back over the chapter Tankard stands as a lone female voice. Whilst other females have reworked the ballet - for example; Jacky Lansley (co-choreographer of I, Giselle as discussed in Chapter One); Maguy Marin (whose version of Coppélia is mentioned in the Introduction); and Birgit Scherzer, Susan Foster, Shakti and me, (whose reworkings of Swan Lake are discussed in Part Two) - the domination of male choreographers is very evident. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that Jane Feuer, following a discussion of Bourne's Swan Lake, suggests that a female, specifically lesbian reworking remains unmade. She states that 'we await the great feminist choreographer who will realize this vision. Or will it always be the
case that a ballet master can be homosexual but the ballet mistress can never be master?" (2001, p.389). A few of the female choreographers who have taken up this challenge become my focus in Part Two. I turn now to consider three solo reworkings of *Swan Lake* by female dancers and reflect on the special relationships between reworkings, postfeminism and the refiguring of the female body.
Banes (1994) discusses the shift from the 'pure dance' works of the 1960s/70s, that repudiated expression and narrative, to a fascination with narrative in the 1980s/90s. Whilst choreographers such as Rainer and Brown experimented with telling stories in the later 1970's Banes writes that 'the generation of choreographers that emerged in the eighties has outstripped the earlier postmoderns in its insatiable appetite for narratives of all kinds: autobiography, biography, fiction, political document, interview, the use of sign language and other emblematic gesture systems' (Banes, 1994, p.281). Similar arguments have also been also been expressed by Noël Carroll (1984) and Deborah Jowitt (1984).

Banes (1994) quotes Roger Abraham's who suggests that similarly folklorists are in a postmodern or poststructuralist period and that this is evident '...insofar as we seek to add both historical and ethnographic specificity to the way in which we present out collections' (cited in Banes, 1994, p.381).

Choreography by Lev Ivanov.

Whilst Coppélia was first premiered in 1870 (ch. Arthur Saint-Leon), it should be noted that most current productions stem from Marius Petipa's 1884 version.

Choreography by Jean Coralli and Jules Perrot. However the versions of Giselle most commonly seen today are based Marius Petipa's 1884 choreography.

Filippo Taglioni's Paris production of 1832 was the basis of August Bouronville's 1836 version.

Bourne is currently (December 2002) touring a revised and expanded version of this dance throughout the UK.

For example in Pierre Lacotte's 1972 historical reconstruction a silk scarf is used by James to capture the Sylph. The scarf operates as a dual signifier of embracing and smothering, love and death. In contrast Bourne's more direct gardening shears are overtly dangerous and James' action becomes less ambiguous in intent.

By cross casting I am referring to the placing of men into normally female roles (or visa versa). In cross casting the performer retains their own gender identity and does not attempt to take one the characteristics (in costume or overt gestures) of the opposite sex. In cross-dressing the performance is costumed across normative gender lines. For example a male dancer wears a tutu. This type of cross-dressing is evident in Swan Lake by Mats Ek, Coppélia by Maguy Marin and The Hard Nut by Mark Morris – the work that is used to exemplify this strategy here.

It is somewhat slippery but useful to attempt to distinguish between cross-dressing and drag. Drag I posit, following Butler (1990), involves the performing the signs of gender such that there is a dissonance between sex, gender and gender performance. Whereas in cross-dressing the visual signs of the opposite gender may be presented (for example via costume) but the performative signs of that gender are not necessarily embodied. Crossing the Stage: Controversies on cross-dressing (1993), edited by Lesley Ferris, provides a collection of illuminating examples of cross-dress / drag and a range of perspectives on these debates. Interestingly in this book she suggests that contemporary drag (as opposed to the simpler cross-dressing) 'answers to a viable gay aesthetic' (1993, p.9).

Jann Parry was one of the few critics who did mention the homosexual aspects of the work. She writes that 'with William Kemp as the swan to Ben Wright's prince, the love affair is homoerotic ... they are complementary halves of a whole, finally united in the ballet's apotheosis as the curtain closes' (1996, p. 1163).

In August of 1992 the tabloid press widely published photographs of the Duchess of York, commonly referred to as 'Fergie', topless and having her feet kissed by her formal financial advisor John Bryan.
Part 2

RADICAL REWORKINGS, POSTFEMINISM
AND SWAN LAKE
Chapter 3

REWORKING SWAN LAKE: REFIGURING THE BODY

Re-vision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction – is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves.


I found myself in the classic situation of women who, at one time or another, feel that it is not they who have produced culture... Culture was there, but it was a barrier forbidding me to enter, whereas of course, from the depths of my body, I had a desire for the objects of culture. I therefore found myself obliged to steal them... So that in a sense [culture] is always there [in the work], but it is always there in a displaced, diverted, reversed way. I have always used it in a totally ironic way.

(Cixous, in Suleiman, 1985, p.18)

Her [Lubaina Himid] practice engages in highly articulate and self-conscious work with and on the canon of Western art .... One of the striking results of this playing with museum that is canonical art history is the explicit revelation that there is, embedded in its significant moments .. a discourse as much on race as on gender. No feminist interrogation of canonicity can claim historical pertinence unless it confronts ‘gender and the colour of art history’.

(Pollock, 1999, p.172)

3.1 Reworking the ballet and feminism

These three quotations from Rich, Cixous and Pollock reveal the ways in which commentary upon, and reappropriation of, dominate cultural productions by means of disruptive rereadings and rewritings have become integral to ‘feminine’ poetics. Given the importance for women in particular of rewriting history and deconstructing the canon I turn, throughout Part Two, to focus on three radical reworkings by female choreographers. The dances are **Lac de Signes** (1996) by Susan Foster, **Swan Lake** (1998/9) by Shakti, and my own dance **O (a set of footnotes to ‘Swan Lake’)** (2002). These pieces rework the ballet **Swan Lake** (Marius Petipa / Lev Ivanov 1895) and continue to reflect the general features of reworkings (see Chapter One) but are arguably also politicised by their choreographers through feminism.
In order to provide a framework for the analysis of these reworkings the theoretical discourse of the counter canon and myth introduced in Chapter One, and the choreographic strategies of re-gendering discussed in Chapter Two, will here be interrelated and extended in order to focus specifically upon feminism and reworkings. I suggest that the three specific reworkings under scrutiny participate in current postfeminist debates in dance, refusing to cast all ballet as 'bad' or to create fixed monolithic presentations of woman. Central to these works and the following analysis is the re-conceptualisation of the ballerina's body and the female body per se. Representing the body for current contexts I argue that these dances re-appropriate the female body and the erotic as a force for women, and, in doing so, challenge conventional audience/performer relationships.

In this chapter I introduce two key subjects that form the basis of Part Two. Firstly, in Reworking 'Swan Lake', I briefly explain my decision to focus upon reworkings of Swan Lake and provide an overview of some of the different reworkings of Swan Lake that have been choreographed in order to contextualise the more detailed analysis that follows. The second subject, which forms the majority of this chapter, is the relationship between feminism and reworkings. This subject is split into three main sections; Feminism/postfeminism - refiguring the female body, Erotic bodies: (re)claiming the erotic in dance reworkings, and finally Viewing the body - (re)viewing the ballerina. Each of these sections offers an overview of the theorists and concepts that have formed the discourses of feminism/postfeminism. I interweave this discussion with a review of the ways in which reworkings of ballets have reflected and participated in these changing concepts. This chapter thereby provides the theoretical basis for the more detailed analyses undertaken in Chapters Four, Five and Six.

Modern and postmodern dance has often reflected changing feminist debates as dance writers such as Christy Adair (1992), Roger Copeland (1990 & 1993), Susan Manning (1997), Jane Desmond (1999), and Alexandra Carter (1999 & 2001) have shown. In Founding Mothers (1990), Copeland traces the relationships between modern dance, postmodern dance and sexual politics. He discusses the work of Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, Yvonne Rainer and briefly Twyla Tharp, concluding:
Feminism is one of the many influences exerted on, and reflected in, these works. But the fact remains that modern and post-modern dance are probably the only art forms in which various stages of feminist thinking are literally embodied.

(Copeland, 1990, p.29)

The reworkings by Shakti, Foster and I embody aspects of the current feminist debate. Reflecting the recent shifts towards a postfeminist mode of analysis in dance scholarship none of these works is singularly critical or naively celebratory in its re-representations of the ballet and women. Dance scholar Sally Banes, for example, has attempted to employ a more pluralistic and open agenda in her book *Dancing Women* (1998). In her analysis she usefully demonstrates an approach that is neither held within a monolithic gaze nor fixed by a single political agenda. Banes writes,

> if one starts neither with an assumption that all women are victims nor with the idea that they are all heroines, and neither the idea that images of women are all negative nor that they are all positive, but rather, looks closely at the evidence of the works themselves, one finds a much more complex range of representations than has previously been suggested.

(Banes, 1998, p.3)

However Banes, in some senses problematically, continues to evoke a universalised feminism in that, whilst she notes in her introduction that she uses an historical and materialist approach to close readings of performances, it is almost only in passing. She does not acknowledge the particulars of her feminist positions (however pluralistic they might be). Alexandra Carter argues that through postfeminist perspectives, which have problematised previously universalising tendencies of feminist analysis, ‘we can now site ourselves within a web of identity which can accommodate conflicting personal responses, for we are not imprisoned by a unitary feminist ideology’ (2001, p.14). Further she states that ‘the ballerina does not always have to be a passive sylph or seductive siren any more, for sylphs can be powerful and sirens deeply moral’ (Carter, 2001, p.14). Complexities such as these are, I suggest, explicitly and self-consciously brought to the foreground in the reworkings that are the focus of Part Two.
3.2 Reworking *Swan Lake*

Reworkings of *Swan Lake* have been selected for this case study for a number of reasons. The ballet *Swan Lake* is arguably one of the most well known classical ballets which has captured the popular imagination and has come to stand as the epitome of all things balletic. Christy Adair similarly writes:

*Swan Lake* has become synonymous with ballet. The major companies’ productions of this ballet are performed to packed audiences and little-known ballet companies attract audiences when *Swan Lake* is in their programmes. For many people, the virginal Odette and the whorish Odile are the essence of ballet.

(Adair, 1992, p.105)

*Swan Lake* represents the pinnacle of the classical canon and, possibly because of this status, it has been restaged and reworked somewhat more than most ballets. In 1988 Valerie Briginshaw noted over seventy different ballet restagings since its 1895 premiere. ‘Almost all’, she writes, ‘are based on the choreography by Petipa and Ivanov (1895) and some versions ... are hybrids of former versions or productions’ (Briginshaw, 1988, p.124). Of reworkings, which purposefully and explicitly change the character and meanings of *Swan Lake*, I have gathered a list of ten dances, dating from 1976 to 2002. Whilst in general I have focused my research on reworkings made since 1980, one of these reworkings – *Swan Lake* by Jacky Lansley – was made before this period but is included as it is particularly pertinent to this study. As almost half of these dances are small scale or little known works and only two were premiered before 1995, I am quite sure that others exist that have evaded my searches. Nevertheless these ten examples already encompass a wide range of choreographic approaches to the task of reworking – re-imagining the ballet in different and imaginative ways.

I am particularly interested in magical and transformational representations of women and a common theme in the analysis of conventional versions of *Swan Lake* is the dual role of Odette/Odile; this has also given rise to feminist speculation. Adair writes, ‘both roles are controlled and determined by men and lack autonomy’ (1992, p.107). Valerie Rimmer, using Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, makes a related point when she comments that:
In *Swan Lake* the aesthetic space is conceptualised in terms of sexual difference and versions of femininity are placed within that as fantasies that articulate the male castration anxiety. The fundamental drama that ... splits the image of femininity in two becoming both its guarantee (via the white swan) and its threat (figured by the black swan), becomes one and the same mystification of an identity that is constructed for the female in relation to phallocentrism.

(Rimmer, 1993, p.214)

However, Banes writes that, while it presents conventional (for the nineteenth-century context) representations of women as ‘fragile and dependent on men’, it still presents ‘alternative visions of female authority’ (1998, p.59). Odette she suggests ‘seems submissively resigned to her fate.... the melting texture of her steps, torso, and pointework – with her footwork constantly broken up by *bourrées, changements*, and shifts of level – as well as her fluttering arms and volatile, silky style, her self-touching, and her downcast gaze, all create an illusion of feminine fragility’ (Banes, 1998, p.61). Alternatively the two other female figures on stage, the mother and especially Odile, are more powerful women. Odile, Banes suggests, is authoritative and assertive: ‘... those consecutive thirty-two *fouetté* turns on pointe (a step that few ballerinas had then mastered), done entirely without male support’ marks her as ‘mesmerizing and threatening’ (1998, p.61). This seductive woman is held however ‘within the canon of female beauty’ (Banes, 1998, p.61).

This view of Odile is supported by other commentators who have suggested that the subversive potential of such roles is often thwarted by the codified vocabulary of ballet (especially as choreographed for leading dancers) which maintains a limited range of possibilities for the female body (for example see Foster, 1996a). This also applies to Odette, for whilst her dance in this ballet context is passive and essentially submissive she also has the potential for a far less accommodating vision of femininity. As a hybrid swan/woman she embodies a powerful and deviant otherness. Like her counterpart Odile however this deviancy is given little chance to flourish. The potential of Odette’s bird/human hybridity is discussed later in this chapter and extensively in Chapter Six.

Reworkings of *Swan Lake* have exploited and critiqued features of the ballet in diverse and inspired ways. The dances by Bourne (1995), de Frutos (1998) and Ek (1987),
were discussed in Chapter Two, and here I am particularly interested in the ways in these dances, and others, re-present women. Bourne’s reworking for Adventures in Motion Pictures I suggested queered the ballet by replacing the traditionally female swans with men creating vibrant and touching images of homosexuality, which nudge at, but do not displace, homophobic boundaries. The images of women offered by this dance are also I suggest far less radical than might at first be supposed. The female characters that remain are the cold distant mother (dancing a role limited to cameo), the bimbo girlfriend, and the sexually promiscuous and stereotyped princesses. Arguably these roles leave even less room for a positive portrayal of women than is evident in conventional versions. De Frutos, in The Hypochondriac Bird, significantly reconfigures identities and suggests the potential for a homoerotic gaze that does not refer to heterosexuality or to women. However in this dance which usefully opens up binaries and evokes sexuality that is non-normative the female characters are not only pushed to the margins but are off stage all together. Ek’s reworking of Swan Lake, rather than avoid or marginalise women, maintains the ballerinas traditional roles but shifts the characters so that they become heterogeneous, fleshy and unruly. He re-choreographs the female roles so that Odette, Odile, and the mother, all take on new characteristics. Full of suggestive hip thrusting, bottom wiggling movements, and open crotched leg actions, these characters assert themselves sexually. The dance continues however to be driven by the narrative of Siegfried and the roles of Odette/Odile remain dualistic.

Other reworkings of Swan Lake include those by Örjan Andersson (1999), Birgit Scherzer (1998) and Philippe Talard and Jose Luis Sultan (1997). Andersson’s work entitled ... and then the lake engulfed them, takes place after conventional versions have finished – following Siegfried and Odette into another world. This version also retains a male focus, starting and ending with insights into Siegfried’s experience, reducing Odette to a half formed creature, that is when she isn’t (metaphorically) dragged around by her neck – for Siegfried carries a large stuffed swan. Scherzer’s version emphasises the hybrid nature of the swans. Her Swan Lake, similar to Ek and Bourne, follows the general narrative structure of the ballet and retains the Tchaikovsky music while she re-choreographs the ballet in a modern idiom. In the second act the male and female half-human, half-animal swans are costumed in unisex
vermilion bodies with feathered plumage on the arms. When the swans appear, breaking through a glistening surface, they seem lost in the depths of an abyss. Whilst recognisable as male and female they shift between sexualities and genders; their identities are confused. In Schwanengesange by Talard and Sultan the references are obscure. Swan Lake exists in this work via tangential references, for example the use of a knee high pool of water in which the whole piece takes place, and via a ‘few pantomimic asides’ (Wesemann, 1997, p.62). In this dance Swan Lake as the obligatory intertext is so obscure that it may not be possible to classify it as a reworking at all.

Jacky Lansley’s Swan Lake is an early example of an explicitly feminist revision. Her version of Swan Lake, presented in 1976, was the first in a series of reworkings of ballet created by Lansley and Fergus Early. As an example of a feminist reworking, or more broadly a reworking that can be read as feminist, it is one of a limited sample for they are less common than I expected. Given the number of versions of Shakespeare plays that reflect a feminist perspective for example (see Bennett 1996), the number of parallel revisions of Swan Lake, or the nineteenth-century ballets per se is limited. This should perhaps not be a surprise however given that reworkings in dance are generally much less common than they are in the theatre (see Introduction).

The piece by Lansley reworked the second act of Swan Lake and used the traditional music score. Early recalls Swan Lake in the following way:

Mary Prestige as a sort of gymnastic flying swan, Jacky [Lansley] and Emilyn [Claid] as big fast swans, Maedée [Duprés] and myself in the Odette/Siegfried duet: all of us in baggy beige tropical suits.

(Mackrell, 1992, p.26)

Following her ballet training and performance experience with The Royal Ballet Lansley left the company and went to study at The Place. In 1975 Lansley became a founding member of the X6 Collective, along with Fergus Early, Maedée Duprés, Mary Prestidge and Emilyn Claid. The collective took charge of dance management and funding applications, producing New Dance Magazine (1977-87) and organising activist pressure groups for dancers. Claid notes that the collective encouraged and
explored non-hierarchical devising methods and pioneered ‘liberating ways to make, perform and construct a dancer’ (Claid, 2002, p.44).

Lansley was committed to finding new choreographic processes and states; ‘the biggest thing that influenced me was feminism. I was ready for the big explosion of feminist thought in the early 1970s and I really got into it. One of the central themes in all the work I did was looking at roles and images of women’ (in Mackrell, 1992, p.12). This interest in the representation of women is evident in her reworked Swan Lake.

Significantly each of the reworkings of Swan Lake by Foster, Shakti and myself, the focus of the following chapters, is a solo dance made and performed by a female dancer/choreographer. Working through their own bodies these dancer/choreographers engage with Swan Lake through a personal embodiment, questioning the representations of women that are evident in the ballet. The employment of their own bodies (rather than making ‘on’ another dancer) is an important feature of these dances. Each dance is quite individual to its maker and each reflects the maker’s own dance/academic background and implicitly extols the principles of the personal within the political. Thereby these dances reflect a parallel approach to that of Hélène Cixous who suggests that women should write their own bodies. She argues that ‘by writing herself, woman will return to that body that has been more than confiscated from her’ (Cixous, in Suleiman, 1985, p.17). The women’s bodies that are written in these three workings are not essentialist or ‘natural’ bodies however (as early modern dancers have been criticised for being). Rather the writings that these bodies make are conditional and circumstantial. For ‘the body, and by extension, “the feminine,” in postmodern dance is unstable, fleeting, flickering, transient – a subject of multiple representations’ (Dempster, 1995, p.33).

Swan Lake offers an enticing case study therefore due to the ballet’s canonical status; the potentially problematic representation of women evident in the ballet; the wealth and complexity of different reworkings; and the existence of three comparable and interesting reworkings of this ballet by women. The similarities between these three dances allow me to consider in detail the implications of reworkings in terms of
feminist/postfeminist perspectives. Therefore in order to establish the frame for the analysis of these works I am now going to focus on the theoretical re-configurations of the female body that have taken place within recent feminist and postfeminist debates.

3.3 Feminism / postfeminism: refiguring the female body
Ann Brooks introduces her book *Postfeminisms: feminism, cultural theory and cultural forms* (1997) by explaining that postfeminism, ‘once seen, somewhat crudely as ‘anti-feminist’, has developed into a ‘confident body of theory and politics’ (1997, p.1). Postfeminism, Brooks continues, has followed the examples set by the second feminist wave and has negotiated and developed a productive relationship with postmodernism, poststructuralism and postcolonialism. Brooks draws on the work of gender theorists Michèle Barrett, Judith Butler, Rosi Braidotti and Luce Irigaray alongside Trinh T. Minh-ha, Chandra Taplande Mohanty, Laura Mulvey and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. She suggests these writers, amongst others, have assisted feminist debates and provided the conceptual frames through which postfeminists can reconsider difference and identity via deconstruction.

Postfeminism presents a pluralistic epistemology that disrupts universalising patterns and the emphasis of postfeminism, argues Brooks, is a commitment to process and to resisting closure of definition, rather than making statements of origin or producing manifestos (1997, p.5). Postfeminist debates continue to interrogate the ways in which the category of ‘woman’ is constructed and draws upon deconstructive methodologies to establish theories of difference and identity. Seeking to go beyond the binaries of man/woman, self/other postfeminism has sought to question the ideological processes by which ‘man’ and ‘woman’ are constructed and placed into oppositional categories. Susan Bordo describes this as a ‘gender-scepticism’, arguing that current feminisms are developing a new direction, ‘a new scepticism about the use of gender as an analytical category’ (1994, p.459). Through such areas of debate postfeminists are involved in deconstructing previous feminisms as well as the phallocentric narratives of patriarchy. Price and Shildrick write:

As the certainties of biology become increasingly conttested, mirroring in substance the deconstruction of postEnlightenment epistemology and ontology,
feminist theory has pulled together the interconnected leakiness of bodies of matter and bodies of knowledge (Shildrick, 1997). Just as postmodernist theory destabilises the foundational claims and grand narratives of western discourse, so too postmodern empiricism throws into doubt the substantive nature of flesh and blood itself.

(Price and Shildrick, 1999, p.10)

The rise of a corporeal feminism in postfeminism continues the traditional feminist interest in the female body and the ways it has been celebrated, disciplined, invaded, altered, classified, sexed and talked about. A tracing of some key concepts of postfeminisms reconceptualisation of the body reveals a reclaiming of the marginalised female/feminine body without restating it as a closed or universal body. As Elizabeth Grosz suggests, ‘if feminists are to resuscitate a concept of the body for their own purposes, it must be extricated from the biological and pseudo-naturalist appropriations from which it has historically suffered’ (1994, p.20). The body is understood thereby in postfeminism through a range of discourses that conceive of it as fluid, plural, unruly and unfinished. Far from being a pre-scribed or pre-existing entity the body becomes a performative surface upon which events are inscribed. Within current theorisations female bodies are conceived of as differentiated and unpredictable, the body is opened up and it becomes possible to write it differently and to read it against the grain of expectations.

3.3.1 Performative bodies - unstable identities and parodies of gender

Luce Irigaray in This Sex Which Is Not One writes:

One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it.... To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself... 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.

(Irigaray, 1985b, p.76) (first published 1977)

By parodic exploitation of ‘the feminine’ Irigaray suggests that it is possible to break out of a patriarchal mould and find modes that are not shaped by the duality of
male/female. Such a mimetic strategy Irigaray considers as being more effective than a direct challenge.

This strategy is extended in the influential work of Judith Butler in her text *Gender Trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity* (1990). She draws on the work of de Beauvoir, Foucault, Wittig and Riviere, to argue that gender is a performative act and as such is more fluid than is usually presumed. Far from being innate Butler makes clear that gender roles are performances marked on the surface of the body. Butler asks the question:

Does being female constitute a ‘natural fact’ or a ‘cultural performance’ or is ‘naturalness’ constituted through discursively constrained performative acts that produce the body through and within the categories of sex? (Butler, 1990, p.viii)

She answers this question through an analysis of concepts of identity and via a challenge to the assumption within much feminist theory that there is such a thing as the category ‘women.’ The construction of the subject ‘woman,’ is, she argues, a subject formed ‘by the law’. Following Foucault's notions of juridical systems, which form and shape categories, Butler makes it clear that categories, such as the category ‘women’, are false and only appear natural and thereby become to seem neutral and immobile.

Sex/gender distinctions, which claim a distance between biological sex and a culturally positioned gender suggests to Butler a radical discontinuity. She argues that, taken to its logical extreme, gender becomes a free-floating artifice. The consequence of this argument is that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and women and feminine a male body as easily as a female one (Butler, 1990, p.6). She goes on to state that ‘there is no gender identity beyond the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results’ (1990, p.25).

The construction of male and female sex is established, according to Butler, within the heterosexual matrix that as a normative matrix consolidates sex/gender binaries.
However, homosexuality, she asserts, opens up these binaries (1990, p.19). The ambiguity and incoherence within homosexual and bisexual practices operate as sites for intervention, exposure and displacement of the reification of masculine and feminine binaries. Butler argues that 'butch' and 'femme' identities within homosexual contexts cannot be explained as simply the chimerical representation of originally heterosexual identities. The replication of these normally heterosexual constructs within non-heterosexual frames brings into relief the utterly constructed status of the so-called heterosexual original. Thus gay is to straight not as copy as to original, but, rather, as copy is to copy.

The concept of 'the copy' leads Butler to a consideration of parody. This concept intersects with notions of intertextual parody, discussed in Chapter One, and the critique of drag as a parody of gender, discussed in Chapter Two. Butler suggests, as noted in Chapter Two, that parody is a potentially subversive mode that exposes the performative nature of gender. Butler argues that the parody of gender serves to destabilise distinctions between notions of the natural and the artificial, depth and surface, and inner and outer through which discourses of gender almost always operate (1990, p.vii). The parodic repetition of 'the original' reveals the original to be nothing other than a parody of the idea of the natural and the original (Butler, 1990, p.31). The parody thereby not only reveals gender and sexuality as fluid and unstable but also exposes the very source of the parody; that is, heterosexual male/female constructs as copies themselves. Parody thereby can reveal the 'original' as a failed effort to 'copy' a phantasmic ideal that cannot be copied without failure (Butler, 1990, p.157). Gender is shown through parody to be a set of repeated acts within a rigid frame that over time gives the appearance of being natural and substantive.

In order to 'trouble' gender Butler suggests that the task is not whether to repeat (as according to her we clearly do repeat), but how to repeat in order to displace the very gender norms that enable the repetition itself (1990, p.148). Parody she suggests is one such form of repetition, one way of 'troubling' gender categories that support gender hierarchies and compulsory heterosexuality.
Gay Morris (1996) uses these concepts in order to illuminate *The Hard Nut* (1991) and *Dido and Aeneas* (1989) by Mark Morris, as discussed in Chapter Two. Morris argues that in *The Hard Nut* Mark Morris is at play with gender signification. For example, describing the drag role of the Housekeeper, he writes that 'here is Butler's concept of gender as a set of repeated actions that come to signify "femininity"' (1996, p.151). Interestingly, following an analysis of the central characters and dance sequences, Morris concludes that *The Hard Nut* 'takes another step that Butler would probably have no interest in doing. He shows that all these varied individuals are capable of love, and all love counts equally' (1996, p.155). However whilst Mark Morris, in line with Butler, effectively demonstrates that gender is performative and cannot be reduced to two categories, he does little to promote a plurality of images of women – except those that are played by men. The emphasis is on the opening up and acceptance of male homosexuality within a homo-social context, whilst this is important it does little to further feminist or postfeminist debates. What might then a postfeminist parody look like?

*Lac de Signes* by Susan Foster, I suggest, goes some way towards answering this question as I will discuss in Chapter Four. In this work Foster performs ballerina roles via parody, evoking Odette and Giselle, by copying their movements and giving voice to their narratives. In doing so, I argue, she presents a feminist parody in a layer of copies that echoes Butler’s concepts of performativity and parody. Arguably the female body in *Lac de Signes* is, as Butler suggests, a free-floating artifice that has no recourse to a fixed origin.

### 3.3.2 Material bodies: the fluid, grotesque and unruly

Butler's assertion of a fluidity of gender identities resonates implicitly with the earlier but similarly highly influential project of Luce Irigaray. Indeed, Brooks writes that Irigaray and 'French' feminism has been 'the major influence in the development of feminist critical strategy' (1997, p.84).

Irigaray asserts a bodily feminism in which women’s bodies are imagined as fluid volumes. Her project of rewriting, rooted in poststructuralist feminism and French philosophy, seeks to re-value the ways in which femininity is inscribed on the body.
Beyond binary definitions of masculine and feminine she asserts a discourse of multiple forms of female embodiment, such that the physicality of the body is valued in contrast to a masculine culture which values disembodiment.

In *Speculum of the Other Woman* Irigaray suggests that the female body is uncontainable and never 'one':

**Woman is neither open nor closed. She is indefinite, in-finite, form is never complete in her.** She is not infinite but neither is she a unit(y), such as letter, number, figure in a series, proper noun, unique object (in a) world of senses, simple ideality in a intelligible whole, entity of a foundation, etc. This incompleteness in her form, her morphology, allows her continually to become something else, though this is not to say that she is ever univocally nothing. No metaphor completes her. Never is she this, then that, this and that... But she is becoming that expansion that she neither is nor will be at any moment as definable universe.

(Irigaray, 1985a, p.229)(italics in original).

Irigaray, along with other, so called, ‘French’ feminist theorists Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva, draws on the psychoanalytic work of Jacques Lacan. For Lacan a child enters culture, the ‘Symbolic Order’, through firstly the mirror stage, in which it identifies with its own mirror image and secondly via the acquisition of language. The Symbolic Order, argues Lacan, is patriarchal and it operates by the Law of the Father and its signifier the Phallus. Irigaray attempts to establish an oppositional stance to the logic of phallic discourse in order to reclaim the female body. The body conceived by Irigaray is not conceived of as ‘lack’ (a castrated subject), nor is it waiting to be penetrated. The lack of a single sexual organ is replaced in Irigaray’s writing by a multiple and fluid sexuality which encompasses labia, vagina, breasts and mouths. Made up of fluids this body exists through its own material morphology and resists being fixed or constrained. As Irigaray so poetically phrases it:

**Erection is no business of ours: we are at home on the flatlands. We have so much open space to share. Our horizons will never stop expanding; we are always open. Stretching out, never ceasing to unfold ourselves, we have so many voices to invent in order to express all of us everywhere, even in our gaps, that all the time there is will not be enough.**
And further:

You are moving. You never stay still. You never stay. You never ‘are’. How can I say ‘you’, when you are always other? How can I speak to you? You remain in flux, never congealing or solidifying. ..... These streams are without fixed banks, this body is without fixed boundaries.

(Irigaray, 1999, p.87-88) (first published 1980)

Irigaray has been criticised for her focus on the biological body and for ignoring the ways in which the body is ‘a socially inscribed, historically marked, psychically and interpersonally significant product’ (Gross, in Wolff, 1997, p.92). However she importantly asserts the primacy of the body and its essential role in understanding social production, oppression and resistance. Whilst labelled a ‘labial politics’, for Irigaray’s work evokes the fleshy body and the touching of lips, Price and Shildrick argue that Irigaray describes not so much a ‘real’ body but a feminine morphological ‘imaginary’ (1999, p.6). Refusing the position of outsider Irigaray attempts to resist from within. Using strategies of parody and mimicry she writes the female body into the gaps of men’s lines (LeBihan, 2001, p.135). Similarly Rosi Braidotti reveals how Irigaray positions the feminine in a ‘double movement that combines denunciation and creation’ (1994, p.63). Further Braidotti writes that Irigaray ‘unveils the masculine character of discourse, whilst positing a new female feminist subject’ (1994, p.63).

O (a set of footnotes to Swan Lake), as I shall argue in Chapter Six, sits interestingly in relation to this concept of the body proposed by Irigaray. Irigaray establishes a broad and sweeping re-conceptualisation of the body and attempts to demystify the concept and representation of women. O (a set of footnotes to Swan Lake) seeks to destabilise and dislocate meaning in dance, even more specifically in relation to the ballet Swan Lake. I suggest that through the presence of multiple bodies – video bodies, shadow bodies, dancing bodies and functional bodies –the work echoes the plurality of Irigaray’s project. Further the dancing body in O (a set of footnotes to Swan Lake) moves with fluidity; one movement seeping out of the another, such that it becomes difficult to locate phrases, or to find an external logic to the movement patterns. The movement follows the internal logic of the body, as opposed to an externally shaped form. Shifting, meandering and continually re-defining itself the body is like a volume of fluids; ‘never congealing or solidifying’ (Irigaray, 1999, p.88).
These visceral and fluid bodies have much in common with the dangerous power of the female grotesque as described by Julia Kristeva (1982) and Mary Russo (1995), both of whom explicitly look back to Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* (1968) and the anthropological work of Mary Douglas (1966). In *Purity and Danger* Douglas discusses the ways in which female bodies exist in an ambivalent space between outside and inside, and are socially controlled for leakages. Both the fluid body and the grotesque body are boundless, changing, and irregular.

The grotesque body of carnival eats, excretes and menstruates. This grotesque body, which has orifices and leaks, is the opposite of the classical body. The classical body is like a classical statue and, accordingly, has no orifices, nor does it engage in bodily functions. The classical body is parallel to Foucault’s (1977) concept of the docile body and the recognition that the body has been denied and marginalised in Western culture. The potential of the grotesque body to be a transgressive body is suggested by Russo who argues that the grotesque body is an excessive, unruly body which ‘might be used affirmatively to destabilise the idealisations of female beauty’ (Russo, cited in Wolff, 1990, p.129).

An example of an unruly body that borders on the grotesque is found in Act 1 of *The Hard Nut*. Mark Morris in a drunken parody of masculinity uses toilet humour as he walks across the stage with toilet paper hanging from his trouser leg. This emphasis on the body’s functions serves to stress its ‘realness’ and destabilises the image of the dancer’s body as untouchable and ethereal. Ek’s reworking of ‘The dance of the cygnets’, as suggested in chapter two, also focuses on the neither regions of the body. The dancers move with a low centre of gravity so they appear to be weighted and earth bound whilst enacting bump and grind sex movements and ‘farts’. These cygnets are individual and indiscreet, representing a more foul form of wild waterfowl. They are however, like their classical ballet counterparts, still maintained within a limited and ordered physicality. In the end the grotesque potential of Ek’s cygnets is limited by the reliance on the principles of ballet used by the dancers and the choreographer (however modern or altered in form).
The nineteenth-century ballet perpetuates, and can be seen as the paragon of, the classical body. Janet Wolff suggests that through classical ballet's commitment to line, weightlessness, lift, extension and the creation of an ethereal rather than real presence it has 'colluded in a discourse which constructs... a strangely disembodied female' (Wolff, 1990, p. 136). This strange disembodiment and persistent restriction on and of the female body is perpetuated through dancers' training and the roles they portray on stage, (Princesses, Sylphs and Swans), can be seen to resist the real, the fleshy and the grotesque.

There are roles such as Madge in La Sylphide (1832), La Cachucha in Le Diable Boiteux (1836), and to a certain extent Odile in Swan Lake (1895), which offer more sexual, earthy and uncanny images of the dancing body. The transgressive and grotesque potentials of these images are restricted however by the vocabulary of ballet. Ballet's geometry of form mediates all differences into particular bodily geometries and renders these images accessible and acceptable (Foster, 1996a, p.210). Indeed the potentialities of the female roles in the ballet repertoire are manifold but as already alluded to in relation to Swan Lake this potential is rarely explored or made manifest.\[x\]

I argue in Chapter Five that the grotesque possibilities of Odette/Odile are explored in Swan Lake by Shakti. In this dance Odette/Odile are transformed into a silver swan. Appearing towards the end of the dance this silver swan seems to be wild and untamed. Shakti performs with a trance like abandon as she writhes and flails about the stage. Her long hair is tossed in all direction, her very voluptuous body hits the floor, folds and wobbles, sweat flies off her and she holds her mouth open in a grimace. Shakti's physicality contrasts the order of the ballet body. She is excessive. Against established norms her body is too old to be dancing in a bikini, too fleshy to be held in check by the order of technique. Her actions are too large, too uncontrolled, and too sexually graphic to be rendered safe. Arguably through this physicality and her spontaneous dance Shakti suggests a self-definition in defiance of the controlled bodily geometries of Western and Indian dance.\[x\]

The visceral and boundless body of the grotesque has much in common with the ribald excess of the unruly women of comedy (Carson, 2001, p.125). Feminist theorists like
Kathleen Rowe have pointed to the subversive potential of comedy. Laughter and excess is one of the characteristic features of the carnivalesque and women performers of comedy have consistently represented women that exceed conventional boundaries. Rowe suggests that comedy, parallel to Douglas’s notion of “danger”, uses ‘radical negation, imposture and masquerade, and is therefore “dangerous”’ (in Carson, 2001, p.125). Examples of comic bodies are found in the reworkings of Meryl Tankard and Susan Foster.

Meryl Tankard’s reworking Aurora (1994) (see Chapter Two) re-presents the fairies from The Sleeping Beauty (1890). Her fairies, dressed in tap shoes and brightly coloured bell shaped dresses with braces, cross the spectacle of circus with the slapstick of clowning, whilst dancing a loud, raucous and unashamedly unruly tap routine. As is the case in reworkings generally much of the pleasure in these sequences is generated by the unexpected twist from the norm. However Tankard’s fairies go beyond intertextual pleasure as they joyfully celebrate badly behaved women who refuse to be contained.

Foster’s use of comedy in Lac de Signes, whilst unruly, is less like the spontaneous excessive laughter of carnival. Foster stages theory and an intellectual comedy. Her comedy is that of a staged dialogic laughter - the laughter of intertext and multiple identification. Through her comic use of parody she creates a critical distance between representation and meaning. Her masquerade of femininity is so clearly posed, the humour is so full of ridicule that, as is often the case in comedy, it hides the transgressive potential waiting to burst free (see Chapter Four).

3.3.3 Plural bodies – hybrid bodies – becoming bodies

The 1970s phase of feminist activity was particularly problematic in its blindness concerning race. During this period the emphasis of the Women’s Liberation Movement was on the union of women into a single sisterhood (Aston, 1995, p.78). This approach disenfranchised ‘difference’, sweeping over the historical and cultural conditions of gender, race and class. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, in her foundational critique of Western feminisms – ‘Under Western Eyes’ (1995) (first published 1984) - suggests that Western feminisms naturalise differentiated experiences of patriarchal
oppression under a European model. In this model the monolithic 'average third world woman' of Western feminist imagination,

leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and being 'third world' (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc.).

(Mohanty, 1995, p.261)

This image is contrasted against the implicit self-construction of the 'Western woman' as an educated and modern woman who has freedom over her own body. Western feminism's construction of the 'third world woman' appropriates and colonises the 'third world woman' as fully as imperial colonialisers did. The 'third world woman' has become the object of Western feminist speculation, a gaze that has been already coloured by the gaze of orientalism. Through such critiques of Western feminisms it is clear that the complexities that characterise women's lives have been problematically constituted as a homogenous group 'on the basis of secondary socio-logical and anthropological universals' (Mohanty, 1995, p.262).

As early as 1981 bell hooks noted the importance of recognising difference and the impossibility of a transcendent feminism when she wrote that the black women working as slaves were simultaneously regarded as masculine and sub-human and also as the embodiment of lust and female evil (1981, p.33). In order to undo this homogenising, and at times racist, thought feminism has to 'confront its own heterosexist and racist hegemonies' (Brooker et al, 1997, p.237). In recent years theories of embodiment that take account of not only sexual difference (for example Butler and Irigaray - see above) but also differences due to race, class, sexuality and disability have emerged (see for example essays collected by Price and Shildrick (eds) 1999, Barrett and Phillips (eds) 1992).

These perspectives seek to recognise the specific and the contextual materiality of the body. As Elizabeth Grosz succinctly phrases it:

The specificity of bodies must be understood in its historical rather than simply biological concreteness. Indeed, there is no body as such: there are only bodies
- male or female, black, brown, white, large or small - and the gradations in between.

(Grosz, 1994, p.19)

In her language - ‘gradations in between’ – Grosz evokes a hybrid place, the space in-between fixed identities, a space which in the body is neither one nor the Other. In the hybrid body a link between the plural body and the grotesque body is found. The hybrid body is plural, in that it embodies more than one, and grotesque, in that it is often a disruptive and excessive body. Arguably out of all the concepts of the body outlined here it is this hybrid body which resonates most commonly within reworkings. Taking more or less transgressive forms the hybrid body can be seen an embodiment of the textually hybrid nature of reworkings per se (see Chapter One).

In the postcolonial writing of Homi Bhabha the hybrid resists the binary oppositions of racial and cultural difference. Bhabha’s construction of hybridity is useful here as it a fluid and changing one – rather than hybrid but fixed. Bhabha (1991, p.211) characterises hybridity as a space ‘in-between’ - a space in which ‘new areas of negotiation of meaning and representation’ evolve. Bhabha explains that the in-between space of hybridity is a ‘cultural space for opening up new forms of identification that…. confuse the continuity of historical temporalities, confound the ordering cultural symbols, traumatize tradition’ (1994, p.179). Elements of Bhabha’s concept are also evident in Rosi Braidotti’s explicitly feminist theory of nomadic subjectivity. She describes “nomadic subjects” as referring to ‘the kind of critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behavior’ (1994, p.5). She suggests that through the nomadic she is able to construct ‘new forms of interrelatedness’, this ‘interconnectedness’ is ‘neither reproduction nor imitation but rather emphatic proximity, intensive interconnectedness’ (Braidotti, 1994, p.5). Importantly she emphasises the ability to flow from one set of experiences to another and the empowering female subjectivity that the hybrid gives rise to.

Shakti embodies a cultural hybridity - her father is Indian, her mother Japanese. She was brought up in Japan, whilst being trained in classical Indian dance styles, and she received her post-graduate education in the States. Her dance operates in-between
Indian dance, Western modern dance, yoga and freeform popular dance. Within her own body and as evident in her dance she inhabits a hybrid, nomadic subjectivity which affirms her as a dynamic contemporary, urban and Asian woman (see Chapter Five).

The hybrid body constructed in Donna Haraway's (1992) 'cyberfeminism' is a speculative and ironic hybrid figure which is half organic, half-machine. This body disperses the normative body as 'the distinctions between human and machine, between male and female, between actual and virtual, lose currency' (Price and Shildrick, 1999, p.11). Morphing between states these cyberbodies create new and uncategorisable forms. Going beyond the rhetoric of disembodied cyberspace Haraway's writing evokes a queering of nature and problematises the categories of female and of human.

The deviant potential of the hybrid is not new however for, as Marina Warner (1995) notes in her book From the Beast to the Blonde, bird/human hybrids have recurred in folklore and mythology. These hybrids have often had unusual and potent characteristics. For example the deathly sirens were in the classical tradition bird bodied. They had bird features such as webbed feet and long beaks and these features denoted female power and deviancy. Warner also comments that birds have often had sexual associations, for example Aphrodite rode upon a goose. More explicitly 'goose', in sixteenth century England, was a term for venereal disease.

This hybrid theme is taken up in Chapter Six as the hybrid woman/bird evoked by O (a set of footnotes to Swan Lake) is discussed. The animal/human hybrid in the dance, like Haraway's cyberbodies, problematises the distinctiveness of human and animal. The work suggests that the body, like the bodies evoked by Haraway, Braidotti, and Bhabha, is never static, never whole, never resting. Here however the hybridity is not technological (Haraway), nor is it geographic or cultural (Bhabha and Braidotti), rather this hybrid emphasises the incompleteness of form, of women, through the reference to Odette as a swan woman. I argue that in this dance the half bird, half woman body evoked through improvisation has the potential to be defiantly erotic and importantly is in a constant state of becoming.
This becoming body, like the bodies described by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1988), is never complete, never finished. Whilst Deleuze and Guattari have by no means been accepted wholesale into feminist debates (postfeminist or otherwise) I include them here as they have deconstructed notions of identity, evoking instead becomings and multiplicities, that go beyond that discussed thus far. Their concepts, particularly as selectively read by Grosz (1994), offer important insights for postfeminism. As Grosz writes, 'they problematize our most common assumptions regarding identity, relations between subject and object, substance, matter, corporeality', whilst at times, she goes on, 'their procedures and methods do not actively affirm or support a feminist agenda' (1994, p.164).

Deleuze and Guattari go beyond any view of the body as a unitary structure in which organs are interrelated and hierarchically organised. For them the body is not singularly bound or even hybrid, but is deterritorialised and becoming. They write that: 'Becoming is certainly not imitating, or identifying with something. Becoming is a verb with a consistency all of its own: it does not reduce, or lead back to, 'appearing', 'being', 'equalling' or 'producing' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p.239). These becomings are not simply a matter of choice, they 'always involve a substantial remaking of the subject' (Grosz, 1994, p.174). Special attention is paid to “becoming woman” through which all other becomings are possible. “Becoming woman” describes the processes of breaking down the divisions between sexes, ‘identities, and definite sexual positions as the prevailing social order defines them’ (Grosz, 1994, p.177). Grosz writes:

Becoming-woman means going beyond identity and subjectivity, fragmenting and freeing up lines of fight, “liberating” multiplicities, corporeal and otherwise that identity subsumes under the one. Woman’s becoming-woman is a movement for and of all subjects insofar as it the putting into play of a series of microfemininities, impulses, wills, in all subjects: her becoming-woman carries all humanity’s, in a striking reversal (but exact replication) of phallocentrism. (Grosz, 1994, p.177)

The above bodily concepts are manifold and diverse. What holds them altogether is an awareness of the impossibility of a unified body, for the unity of the body has been shattered by the choreography of multiplicity. However the body has perhaps become
so conceptualised, so metaphoric, that the actual body and the experiences of and through the body risk being lost all together. Susan Bordo (1994, p.568) points to this dilemma when she asks: 'What sort of body is it that is free to change its shape and location at will, that can become anyone and travel anywhere?' This ‘loss’ of the body presents a danger for postfeminism; a counter to this loss, this becoming multiplicity, is discussed in Chapter Six in relation to O (a set a footnotes to Swan Lake). Similarly problematic within feminist/postfeminist discourse is the conflict of perspectives towards the representation of female pleasure. I argue in this chapter and in more detail in the subsequent chapters, that the works of Foster, Shakti and I go some way towards re-claiming and re-presenting the body as an erotic body. It is to this contested area that I now turn.

3.4 Erotic bodies: (re)claiming the erotic in dance reworkings

Given that historically the female body of the ballerina has been eroticised by viewers and choreographers, the rewriting and reclaiming of the erotic for women, is, it seems to me, an important feature of feminist reworkings. The ways in which the erotic might best be reclaimed for women in reworkings are by no means straightforward or clear-cut. The problem is that women’s bodies generally, and ballerina’s bodies specifically, are saturated with sex, but conversely women have often been distanced from an erotic life. Women’s sexuality has been deeply constrained by the discourses and practices of patriarchy and the representation of female eroticism has been a contested area. As Gayle Rubin (2000) (first published 1993) makes clear the erotic live of women and its representation is a political issue. Reclaiming the erotic body as a source of creativity, which has all too often been repressed and marginalised, can be a resistive act. Whilst different feminisms have taken contradictory stances towards the erotic and the sexual Rubin has argued that it is time ‘to encourage erotic creativity’ (2000, p.354).

Nudity in visual and performance art has been a particularly contested area. One of the most enduring idealisations of the female body is the high art convention of the painted or sculpted nude. Lynda Nead, in her book *The Female Nude*, argues that in Western culture ‘one of the principal goals of the nude has been the containment and regulation of the female sexual body’ (Nead, 1992, p.565). Artists informed by feminism cannot
ignore these prior representations but in various ways artists have attempted to reclaim the sexual female body. Early female performance artists, of the 1970s onward, for example, used the explicit body as a political tool. Participating in cultural feminism artists made work based on shared experiences and the nude body became the literal and metaphorical site of women’s unification (Dolan, 1988). However these exposed bodies risked being caught within dominant culture which re-commodifies bodies within normative standards of sexual display. Dolan notes, ‘rather than stripping the performer of her socially constructed gender role, her nudity relegates her to subservient status as “woman”’ (1988, p.63). Wolff echoes these concerns, noting that the naked body may too easily be commodified and its efficacy neutralised when its pre-existing meanings, ‘as sex object’ and ‘as object of the male gaze’ prevail. Despite the intentions of the woman herself the body always risks re-appropriation (Wolff, 1997, p.82).

Jeanie Forte (1992, p.256) expresses a parallel problem in relation to performance art when she asks: ‘How might it be possible for a feminist performer to express “female” pleasure, especially in terms of the female body, without resorting to essentialist categories?’ Forte makes a useful and convincing argument when she suggests that the answer lies in the concept of erotic agency. That is, in women artists manipulating imagery to inscribe themselves in the discourse as erotic or creating an erotic sensibility. In doing so women may be able to transgress the limits of representation and construct a different viewing space, intervening in the cultural construction of woman as fantasy object, replacing it with the ‘subject-performer’ (Forte, 1992). This erotic subject, Forte proposes, may or may not on the surface appear sexual, but expresses her own pleasure in and of her body, rather than referring to the arousal of the viewer (Forte, 1992).

Intersecting with debates about the explicit representation of the body in visual and performance art are the feminist debates around sexual liberalisation and pornography. Within this area problematic and contradictory views are evident. Gayle Rubin discusses two contrasting perspectives in her insightful essay *Thinking Sex*:
Feminism has always been vitally interested in sex. But there have been two strains of feminist thought on the subject. One tendency has criticized the restrictions on women's sexual behavior and denounced the high costs imposed on women for being sexually active. This tradition of feminist sexual thought has called for a sexual liberation that would work for women as well as for men. The second tendency has considered sexual liberalization to be inherently a mere extension of male privilege. This tradition resonates with conservative, anti-sexual discourse. .....

proponents of this viewpoint have condemned virtually every variant of sexual expression as anti-feminist.

(Rubin, 2000, p.338)

These debates have continued in recent discourse as other (second wave) feminists have questioned postfeminists – who tend towards the acceptance of the erotic and the pornographic. The relationship between sex, media and postfeminism has been a particularly problematic area. In popular contexts the term postfeminism has been associated with the Spice Girls and Madonna - women with 'attitude' who claim the right to be sexy and act provocatively. This association has also led to scepticism about the postfeminist label. Feminists, like Faludi (1992) have been wary of whether postfeminism represents a valid movement or a media gloss and have questioned the motivating force for a postfeminist agenda.

Shakti’s work, I argue in Chapter Five, sits interestingly in this context as it crosses the bounds of high art/popular entertainment and the sex industry. Her Swan Lake can be seen to reflect popular postfeminisms, in that she confidently re-claims and presents her sexuality in an open acceptance of eroticism. However, as with female pop stars, her work can be seen to be commodified by media exploitation. As Kaplan notes in her discussion of Madonna, whilst she may well construct herself subversively through different 'masks', she fails to account for or challenge the commodity culture in which her work exists (cited in Brooks, 1997, pp.151-152).

Postfeminism can be seen to embrace a flexible ideology that can be mediated to suit individual needs and desires. In particular the intersections between postfeminism, lesbian and gay studies, and queer theory have blown open discussions about sexual practices and their representation. Sexuality and the erotic, in all its forms, have now come to the front of current debates. This emphasis is also evident in dance scholarship as Jane Desmond’s book Dancing Desires (2001) makes clear. In this edited
collection Desmond suggests that: ‘Just as earlier work in dance studies during the 1980s and 1990s revised dance history by bringing to bear the analytic tools of feminist theory and critical race studies, so too must it be transformed again by making sexuality a central component of critical analyses’ (2001, p.5).

Lesbian perspectives, xvii evident, if only implicitly, in Lac de Signes by Susan Foster xvi (see Chapter Four) have convincingly argued that sexuality (along with class, race and other specifics) needs to be framed in terms of desire, power and pleasure. The public staging of desire and pleasure that exceed normative models might well give rise to transgressive acts as ‘[h]ow one moves, and how one moves in relation to others, constitutes a public enactment of sexuality and gender’ (Desmond, 2001, p.6).

Representations of female desire (particularly lesbian desire), argues Briginshaw (2001), need to shift away from models based on phallic lack. Lacan, as discussed above, suggests that whilst either gender can take up the phallus for no one has the phallus - as for Lacan the phallus is not an organ but a signifier of lack – thereby within the phallocentric symbolic order ‘woman’ is an empty space ready to be written upon. Irigaray, as discussed earlier, has explored how desire based on touching and surfaces can refigure the erotic, challenging the Lacanian model. Irigaray, writing through metaphor, suggests the multiplicity and tactility of women’s sexualities stand in opposition to the singularity and rigidity of the phallus. The body posited by Irigaray is a plastic sexy one that celebrates the erotic. Arguably, Foster (see Chapter Four) shifts between what might be considered an Irigarayan desiring subject and a critical representation of herself as object of desire. This works effectively to assert a feminine model of sexuality and to also bring conventional modes of female sexuality into perspective.

What feminist discussions based in psychoanalytical theory often have overlooked is the discourse of non-Western bodies. Black and Asian bodies have been overloaded with sexual readings. For example Evelynn M. Hammonds notes that during citizenship debates in the United States blacks were ascribed with an ‘unbridled sexuality’ such that they would be unworthy citizens (1999, p.95). Mohanty (1995, p.261) has also pointed out that images of ‘third world women’ have maintained a strange duality in
which they are perceived as on the one hand as highly erotic and on the other as sexually repressed. These criticisms, and others like them, of white representations of non-Western female sexuality have lead postfeminists to reconsider and to recognize that the intersection of race, gender and sexuality should be theorised by all feminists. As Hammond (1999) comments however there is still a scarcity of writing on sexuality by black feminists and whilst this might be seen as a resistive act this silence also reflects a continuing erasure of the experiences of black women.

Interestingly (and dangerously) Shakti’s sexualised dance, as an overtly eroticised version of Swan Lake, may challenge images both of the ballerina as chaste and stereotypical notions of Asian women. As I discuss in Chapter Five it may be that she inscribes herself with potential power by her refusal to be silenced, and her loud proclamation of sex and the erotic as a powerful force. Through this power she may be able to take control of her own image and her own sexuality in a manner that militates against Western colonial tendencies.

As Forte (1992) and Brooks (1997) suggest, rather than the body that wages war against feminine sexualization and objectification, it is perhaps the body that uses erotic agency and sexuality in ways that challenge the stable notion of gender as the edifice of sexual difference that is the most resistant. Through the following chapters I shall suggest that strategies used in the reworkings by Foster, Shakti and I could give rise to an erotic politics in which the female body can be refashioned in the flux of identities that speak in plural styles.

3.5 Viewing the body - (re)viewing the ballerina
The role of the visual in Western culture is very pervasive. It is not only the content of dances, or dancing bodies, that evoke eroticism, but also the audience performer relationship has been conceptualised in gendered and erotic terms. The very process of watching a dance, it has been argued, engenders an objectification and eroticisation of the performer, particularly the female performer. John Berger (1972) articulated this relationship between the viewer and the viewed in gendered terms in his discussion of the ways of seeing visual art. He writes that: ‘Women are depicted in quite a different
way from men — not because the feminine is different from the masculine — but because the ‘ideal’ spectator is always assumed to be male’ (1972, p.64).

In Lacanian theory the experience of seeing oneself separate in the mirror importantly constructs subjects as gendered. Whilst this emphasis on the visual has been criticised by Irigaray, amongst others, this emphasis is still maintained. Irigaray writes that:

Investment in the look is not privileged in women as in men. More than the other senses, the eye objectifies and masters. It sets a distance, maintains that distance. In our culture, the predominance of the look over smell, taste, touch, and hearing has brought about an impoverishment of bodily relations. The moment the look dominates, the body loses its materiality.

(in Owens, 1985, p.70)

Yvonne Rainer railed against the predominance of the visual and the pleasures in the erotic in her pared down and anti-exhibitionist dance Trio A (1966). In this dance she averts her gaze and refuses to acknowledge or to seduce, or be seduced by, the audience. By performing in an everyday manner she hoped to demystify the dance and avoid the objectification of her body. Her aims were articulated in her ‘No manifesto’ in 1965 in which she famously wrote: ‘No to spectacle no to virtuosity no to transformations and magic and make believe ... no to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer no to eccentricity no to moving or being moved’ (in Banes, 1987, p.43). In her later film This is the Story of a Woman Who... (1973) Rainer explored the power of the gaze further. In this work she draws an analogy between the spectator’s relationship to the performer and man’s relationship to woman.

Laura Mulvey in her well known essay ‘Visual pleasure and narrative cinema’ (2001) (first published 1975) wrote one of the most theorised explanations of the operations of the gaze. In this essay Mulvey argues that in realist film the female subject becomes framed in such a way that a woman’s to-be-looked-at-ness is highlighted as she becomes the site of spectacle in a series of predominantly male looks. The male gazes of the camera, director and spectator eroticise the female performer, positioning her, and by extension the female viewer as sexual object. This triad of gazes, it has been suggested, is reflected in a remarkably similar manner in classical ballet. ‘Women ballerinas’ notes Albright, ‘are traditionally placed and displayed by a male partner,
whose gaze reflects that of the (usually male) choreographer and guides that of the audience (who, whether they are male or female, are positioned in the role of the male spectator and/or critic)' (1997, p.14). The co-ordination and presentation of the ballet body also encourages a sexual gaze. For as Copeland has noted, the outward rotation of the limbs and the emphasis upon extended poses in the technique of ballet ‘promote[s] the goal of visibility, opening the body up so that it becomes theatrically “legible” when framed by a proscenium arch’ (Copeland, 1990, p.9).

The model developed by Mulvey has been used and adapted extensively in film, theatre and dance studies but it has also been criticised by writers such as Mary Ann Doane, B.Ruby Rich, and Christine Gledhill (see Thornham, 2001). Doane, extending Mulvey’s model, argues that films which address the female spectator cannot rely on the same psychic mechanisms as those which address a male viewer. Instead Doane suggests that the 1940s ‘woman’s film’ (the subject of her analysis) offer the spectator a masochistic overidentification. Thereby the female viewer is in this construct encouraged to identify with herself as image. Rich argues however that these psychoanalytic viewing structures give women ‘no presence, no specific experience, and no possibility of active intervention at all’ (Thornham, 2001, p.99). Women can, Rich and others argue, ‘read against the grain’, thereby constructing her own readings, which can account for multiple differences among women. Gledhill takes a further step suggesting that film texts may offer not a single position but competing meanings and frames of reference such that more contingent and partial identities may be produced (see Thornham, 2001).

Michèle Barrett reflects these critiques when she writes that in postfeminism the male gaze has been challenged for its unquestioning reliance on psychoanalytic theory and its too simplistic a use of binary positions.

Contemporary western feminism, confident for several years about its ‘sex-gender distinction’, analysis of ‘patriarchy’ or postulation of ‘the male gaze’ has found all these various categories radically undermined by the new ‘deconstructive’ emphasis on fluidity and contingency.

(Barrett, 1992, p.202)
In postfeminist models women are represented in the text, and the feminine spectator constructed by the text, to reflect the multiple socio-historical categories of gender, sexuality, class and race. These contingencies acknowledge that gazes and bodies are differentiated and specific.

Feminist dance scholars have also taken up critiques of the gaze. Whilst the visual is particularly prominent within the ballet genre, and women are undeniably presented in a manner which encourages them to be viewed as spectacle, the construction of the gaze it has been argued leaves little room for a counter dynamic of audience/performer exchange. The gaze as traditionally constructed places women into an impossible position. They must identify themselves with the object of the gaze, as passive victim, or with the dominant male watcher, as oppressor. Feminist dance critic Ann Daly (1992, p.243) has argued that this promotes a ‘no-win situation’ for feminist scholars/choreographers in which the status quo will always be reasserted. For as Susan Manning xvii notes the dance scholars that have applied theories of the voyeuristic gaze (by which she includes theories of the gaze from a range of disciplines) to ballet have ‘reached strikingly similar conclusions. With varying emphases, one scholar after another has demonstrated how candidly the form of ballet positions the spectator as voyeur’ (Manning, 1997, p.154). xviii

Daly notes that:

It has become clear that the logic of binary opposition and its corollaries – the single subject and the male gaze – though they have been crucial in understanding how the present system works, are not terribly useful in expanding beyond the problem.

(Daly, 1992, p.243)

Daly (1992) argues that the insights of Julia Kristeva could account more productively for the multi-sensory (visual, tactile, aural and kinaesthetic) appeal of dance in a way that the visuality of the gaze (whether male, female, heterosexual or homosexual) with its very emphasis on looking, can not. Kristeva’s account of the interaction between the symbolic (logical and linear – social and syntactical) and the semiotic (kinetic, fluid, imprecise – heterogenous and “underground”) suggest to Daly, ‘a potentially
subversive element...even in the most traditional signifying system' (1992, p.245). She argues that dance can be effectively understood using Kristeva’s processual model as it ‘explains art as a process that is intelligible in its unintelligibility’ (1992, p.245). She writes:

This paradox is what the theory of the male gaze cannot accommodate: that what is ineffable, what consequently poses a threat to the ordered realm of the symbolic, can be rendered intelligible without being co-opted by the symbolic, even though the symbolic to some degree is engaged.

(Daly, 1992, p.246)

Albright (1997) and Carter (1999) have also critiqued theories of the gaze arguing that it fixes the dancer, specifically the ballet dancer, and fails to account for the audience’s experience of dance. They have suggested that an experiential model might prove a more useful one. For example Carter argues that ‘the dancing body – the lived experience of the dancer – reaches across and out of the frame to ignite, directly, the lived experience of the viewer’ (1999, p.230).

However as Ramsey Burt has noted, surveillance is implicit in spectatorship and dance performances that derive from the European dance tradition for these are historically embedded with a largely visual way of addressing the audience (Burt, 2001, p.221). Burt writes:

As a spectator at a dance performance I watch dance – in French a dance performance is called un spectacle. While dance performance may induce a bodily response, any such response is mediated through the spectators’ eyes and thereby becomes subject to the protocols of the gaze.

(Burt, 2001, p.221)

However these ‘protocols of the gaze’ do not have to maintain the stifling binary positions and unremitting failure suggested above. As Desmond notes ‘no matter what spectator positionings are idealized on the stage, actual spectatorial practices can always go against the grain’ (2001, p.19).

Recently dancer and dance scholar, Emilyn Claid (2002)xxx has demonstrated that the successful reclaiming of seductive audience/performer relationships by female
performers is possible. Claid argues that ‘female bodies have re-emerged as seductive performers while maintaining their position as subjects of their own work’ (2002, p. 41). Claid argues that seduction occurs in live dance theatre performance between performer and spectator as, importantly, ‘seductiveness in dance theatre performance becomes an interactive, interchangeable, pleasurable play of multiple desires and meanings between performer and spectator’ (Claid, 2002, p.31). In this interaction ‘identifying who is seducing and who is seduced, who begins and who ends, is secondary to playing the game of seduction itself’ (Claid, 2001, p.41).

Seductive strategies she suggests can be ‘liberating tool[s] with disruptive, unfixing potential’ (Claid, 2002, p.41). Key to the strategies for seductive relations is the oscillation between the dancer’s real body and her performed surface, creating an ambiguity. This ambiguity draws the spectator to imagine, interpret and identify meanings (Claid, 2002, p.32) that are continuously deferred. In seductive viewing the body is a teasing, desiring and knowing body that consistently evades capture, to remain fluid and ambiguous. Current manifestations of seductive female bodies are, writes Claid, found in performers such as Kirstie Simson, Gaby Agis, Lea Anderson and Yolande Snaith whose ‘appropriation of (conventionally masculine) power dynamics on the female body’ reinstates a seductive ambiguity. Other examples are found in the works of Pina Bausch and Anna Teresa de Keersmaeker, whose female dancers proffer a ‘postmodern subversive image’(Claid, 2002, p.41). Whereas ‘Eurocrash’ performers exploit ‘the erotic thrill that is evoked between beauty and violence, pleasure and power’ (Claid, 2002, p.41).

Destabilising the norm of viewing expectations derived from the classical ballet the reworkings by Shakti, Foster and I may be able to assert seductive, materially sexual inscriptions that disrupt the gaze. I explore in the following chapters the extent to which these dances offer differing and ambiguous female bodies. In doing so I seek to assess the ways in which these bodies may signify radically revised notions of the female body and its potential for erotic pleasure.
Conclusion

In this chapter I have contextualised and theoretically framed the three reworkings of *Swan Lake* that are the focus of Part Two. The dances by Foster, Shakti and I are studied due to the particulars of both the ballet *Swan Lake* and specifics of these dances as reworkings — for all three in different ways can be seen to embody and problematise feminist/postfeminist discourse. In this chapter I have suggested that there is a special relationship between feminism and reworkings and have outlined the theoretical frame through which the three feminist reworkings discussed through Chapters Four, Five and Six can be analysed.

The particular focus of the refiguring of the body as it relates to reworkings reveals that the unitary categories which previously characterised identity politics are in postfeminism no longer acceptable. Identity (in the singular) has given way to identities and binaries between gay and straight, female and male, and black and white are undermined. Thereby postfeminism evokes performative, plural and fluid bodies, as opposed to a closed or universal body. This increasing fluidity has impacted on both the range and meaning given to representations. Butler hopes the very proliferation and deregulation of representations are part of the process towards the production of a chaotic multiplicity that may undermine the restrictions of the terms of political identity (Bultor, 1990).

Through the following chapters I seek to assess the extent to which the dances by Foster, Shakti and I echo the potential cited by Butler for a deregulation of identity and through proliferation. Discussing each dance in turn I consider the ways in which these dances appropriate and rewrite against the grain of the traditional narratives and embodiments of ballet and I analyse the ways in which these works assert partial identities and different concepts of eroticism.
Notes

i Carter (1999) has noted 'the ways in which the artistic endeavour of thousands of women performers has been relegated to the dustbin by discourse' in feminist dance scholars writings (p.227). She discusses how feminist dance scholars critiqued the ballet in a manner as to cast all women within it as passive and objectified such that the ballet seemed to embody 'the oppressive hegemonies of patriarchy' (p.227).

ii Detailed historical, choreographic and musical analysis of the ballet can be found in Roland Wiley (1985) and Cyril Beaumont (1952). But to give a very brief synopsis the ballet tells the story of Prince Siegfried, who whilst out on a hunting trip encounters Odette, an enchanted swan-woman, and falls in love with her. The only way that the spell that holds Odette can be broken is if Siegfried remains faithful to her. Later, at a ball, Siegfried meets Odile. Odile - the daughter of the evil sorcerer Von Rothbart - is disguised as Odette. She seduces Siegfried, and deceived by appearances, he pledges to marry her and in so doing breaks his vow of fidelity to Odette. Endings of the ballet differ. In some versions Odette and Siegfried plunge into the lake and in others Siegfried battles with the sorcerer to emerge victorious. 'In either case, love triumphs over deception' (Anderson, 1992, p.110).

iii These dances in chronological order are:


iv Since completion of this thesis I have come across another reworking of Swan Lake: Birdbrain (2000) by Garry Stewart of Australian Dance Theatre.

v For feminist analysis of Swan Lake by Petipa and Ivanov see Adair (1992), Banes (1998), and Rimmer (1993).

vi I, Giselle (1980) by Lansley and Early is discussed in chapter one.

vii Butler suggests that Jameson's distinction between parody and pastiche would formulate gay identities as pastiche as within pastiche the possibility of an original is disputed. However she also sees a distance between her parodic position and Jameson's, arguing that whilst in Jameson's view parody in postmodernity has lost its sense of humour her construction of gender parody provokes humour via the loss of the sense of 'the normal,' particularly when the normal is revealed as a copy. Also in Butler's view gender parody clearly takes a critical stance rather than one of complicity and commodification and it is this difference which I feel is key, for in Jameson's formulation postmodern pastiche is placed in an untenable, uncritical position.

viii As noted in chapter two Fritz is the only exception here. As a boy role performed by women there is a possibility of a feminist voice - this is however limited as the role is that of a child.

ix Here I am thinking of examples such as the power of Aurora to select her own husband (see chapter 2) and the potential of the hybrid role of Odette (see chapter 6).

x It is interesting to ponder here as to the extent of Shakti's transgression. Perhaps in the end it is the excessive control of the ballet body that leaves Shakti appearing grotesque, rather than her actually being particularly grotesque. Examples of more overtly grotesque performance can be found, not in the field of dance but circus and in performance art. See Russo (1995) and Schneider (1997).

xi Examples of grotesque and defiant comic bodies are found in Roseanne and Jo Brand. These comedienes are both excessive in their fatness and loudly exceed the boundaries of 'ladylike' speech (Gamble, 2001, p.207).

xii Russo (1995, p.61) notes different types of humour.

xiii Interestingly tales of hybrid swan-maidens recur in various forms not only in mythology but also in both Eastern and Western literature. For example The Tales of the Thousand and One Nights tells the story of bird maidens who take off their feather garments and are transformed into beautiful women. The Slav tale Sweet Mikhail Ivanovitch the Rover begins with the Rover about to shoot the swan and, as the swan lands, she turns into a woman. Other versions appear in Hans Christian Andersen's The Wild Swans and Alexandre Pushkin's Tsar Saltan, as well as Wagner's opera Lohengrin.

xiii The eroticisation of the ballerina was particularly explicit during the Romantic era in the writings of critics such as Théophile Gautier (1811-72). I posit that the image of the ballerina as erotic object has continued through to the present day and is evident in publicity imagery and reviews.
I use the term lesbian as opposed to queer for whilst queer usefully offers 'a more inclusive and more flexible concept of oppositionality' it has also been criticised for 'ignoring the specificities of sexed bodies' (Desmond, 2001, p.9-10). For an extensive discussion of conceptualisations of 'queer' see Michael Warner (1993).

Interestingly the implicit rather than explicit representation of lesbianism in Foster's work reflects the invisibility of lesbians in dance and discourse generally. As Butler writes:

There are a vast number of ways in which lesbianism in particular is understood as precisely that which cannot or dare not be.... Here oppression works through the production of a domain of unthinkability and unnameability. Lesbianism is not explicitly prohibited in part because it has not even made its way into the thinkable, the imaginable... How then to "be" a lesbian in a political context in which the lesbian does not exist?" (cited in Desmond, 2001, p.17)

Manning's (1997) discussion focuses in the main upon the gaze in modern dance traditions.

It should be remembered that Mulvey's aim was to theorise within the frame of narrative cinema. It is thereby not only the model but its 'in-appropriate' appropriation by dance critics that is at fault here.

This essay draws on Claid's doctoral thesis entitled Yes?No! Maybe ... The practice of illusion (1998), and 'Standing Still....Looking at You' (2002) in which she suggests tasks which may assist performers in evoking a seductive presence.
Chapter 4
PARODIC REPRISE AND PHALLIC BALLERINAS IN
SUSAN FOSTER’S LAC DE SIGNES (1996)

‘Maybe I’m not who you thought I was....’
(Susan Foster, Lac de Signes, 1996)

4.1 Lac de Cygnes to Lac de Signes
In this chapter I discuss the subversive connotations of Lac de Signes (1996), a solo
dance by Susan Foster. On the label of a video tape of this dance (kindly given to me
by Foster) the title Lac de Cygnes had been crossed out and the correct one, Lac de
Signes, written underneath. This change amusingly highlighted for me the
ramifications of this interesting title. In French Lac de Cygnes is Swan Lake and
Signes is Sign. Thereby this work is contextualised by an understanding of sign
systems and the conceptual frame of reworkings in that it both deviates from, and
suggests a simultaneous relationship to, the ballet Swan Lake. This clearly connected
but altered title indicates a playful, typically postmodern attitude, and a self-aware
stance.

This radical reworking offers a divergent vision of Swan Lake and Giselle, for whilst
the title focuses upon Swan Lake the dance radically reworks both of these ballets
with a particular emphasis upon the image of the ballerina. Foster does not attempt to
follow the form, style, narrative or aesthetic of either of these ballets. How then is
Lac de Signes a reworking of these ballets? I argue that Foster’s dance is a reworking
in that it is fundamentally based on these pre-existing dances. Her dance exists
because of them and remarks upon them. Whilst she doesn’t attempt to reproduce the
ballets, she does refer to them in the manner of an obligatory intertext, using
characters, choreographic elements and fragments of music from them. The signs of
the ballets Swan Lake and Giselle are incorporated via parody into the very substance
of Lac de Signes, becoming extended trans-contextualised references. Working within
the gaps and excesses of the ballet canon, and reflecting feminist criticisms of the
ballet, Foster reworks elements of Swan Lake and Giselle producing a dance that is
more of a commentary upon ballet than it is a new interpretation of a particular
source. It is via critique that Lac de Signes reinvests Swan Lake and Giselle with new
meanings and re-conceptualises the ballerina’s body.

Following a descriptive overview of the dance I go on to consider, in Susan Leigh Foster: dancer and academic, the relationships between theory and practice established in the work for Lac de Signes is overtly ‘clever’ and ‘knowing’ in tone and content. These potent and powerful properties shift throughout the performance between Foster’s dancing body and speaking body. The shifts between the dancing body and the speaking body frustrate (but also at times problematically reinstate) traditional boundaries between theory/practice, the body/mind, and dance acts/speech acts. I argue that whilst Foster’s dance makes a challenge to traditional binaries there remain unresolved tensions.

The running theme of looking-at-to-be-looked-at-ness\(^\text{\textsuperscript{11}}\) forms the basis of the third section of this chapter. Through the dance the Mulvian male gaze is made explicit, and the viewer is encouraged to look at and question ‘to-be-looked-at-ness’. Exploring this theme of looking Foster makes us aware that the gaze is not innocent or neutral but clearly marked as sexed. I then consider, in Trans-contextualising bodies: postmodern parody and hybridity, the ways in which Foster, through parodic strategies, draws attention to gender as a performative act. The work is overt in its hybridity, quoting from a range of forms, and, through the use of humour, the dance resonates with the carnivalesque. I argue that Foster’s use of parody and unruly humour opens up the possibilities for a feminist critique and challenges the gaze. In the final sections, Homogenous ballerinas and The phallus, the penis, the dildo and the ballerina, I turn my attention more explicitly to the re-gendering of the ballerina evident in this dance. With particular attention to the phallic and penile references presented by Foster I explore the potential of the ballerina-as-phallus image.

4.1.1 The dance

Lac de Signes, as performed live and captured on video in June 1996 at Highways, California, USA, is in three key sections. Each section has a clear identity and each represents a different approach to reworking the ballet. The first section opens with Foster dressed in black knee length leggings, red trainers and a white tutu - held up by braces (see video extract 1). Placed on the stage are a Grecian styled pedestal, (down stage left), and a wooden board, (up stage right). Foster enters the stage and flutters...
her arms in a manner reminiscent of Odette at the moment Siegfried first sees her. ‘Can’t you see I’m trying to tell you something?’ she asks. Clasping her hands together she makes a begging gesture moving from side to side, and then falls sideways to the floor. Then, if we have yet to pick up the references to Act One of Swan Lake, she lifts her head and states: ‘If the Swan Queen ends down stage right then the corps de ballet could come in up stage left and they could circle around her here and she could just get up and disappear.’ Through this first section Foster refers repeatedly to well known sections of Swan Lake via balletically styled sequences and through spoken text and these references are radically transformed.

In the second sectioniii (see video extract 2) Foster enters from upstage right and proceeds to shuffle across the stage in a pas de bourrée couru motion to downstage left. She is dressed in a long sleeved shirt and a knee length tutu. The tutu is made from multiple pairs of pointe shoes, hanging on their ribbons from her waist. She is framed by her own headdress, for attached to her head is a T-shaped bar from which red curtains hang at each end. Displayed between her own curtains Foster makes soft circular gestures with her forearms and announces her unattainability with the words, ‘You want me. You can’t have me.’

In the third section Foster is dressed in a black tunic and trousers (see video extract 3). The stage is now bare and lighting defines the space. The sustained reference is to Giselle. In a fragmentary manner the ballet’s libretto and choreographic form is evoked. Myrtha, Queen of the Wilis, is the central figure; she relates the narrative and comments upon the ballet. In a recurring image Foster strikes an arabesque pose and announces: ‘I’m Myrtha, Queen of the Wilis.’ Gesturing overhead she states: ‘With my wand of rosemary I forced Giselle to dance for Albrecht. She will led him to his death..death...dea...dea...de’

Throughout this section Foster repeatedly cuts between movements that parody the ballet vocabulary performed by Myrtha, Giselle and Albrecht and an idiosyncratic typically postmodern style.iv The movements from ballet, (for example arabesques, développés and balancés), are performed in a high flown, over exaggerated fashion. These movements are whole bodied and extended in contrast to the pedestrian attitude to the body evident in the idiosyncratic vocabulary. These movements emphasise the
articulation of the joints and are small and internally focused. Isolated limbs stay close to the body as Foster performs multiple shifts and rotations in the head, neck, shoulders, elbows, wrists, pelvis, knees and ankles. Foster's dance has similarities to the eclectic work of Twyla Tharp and has at these moments a performance quality akin to that of early Trisha Brown.

Lac de Signes ends with a shift in atmosphere (see video extract 4). The music drones in a low tone and the lighting becomes muted. The mood becomes serious and Foster performs the longest purely movement section of the whole dance. Lasting 7.50 minutes this final section is an extension and development of the articulated, postmodern dance style used previously. Full of actions which refer back to earlier sections of the dance and incorporating awkward balances and repeated gestures, this extended dance sequence, placed at the very end of Lac de Signes, suggests a new reworked vision. Presented at the end of the dance it suggests possibilities for a new ending, for as Foster speaking as Myrtha states: 'I never liked that ending.... I can make another'.

What is it that Foster sets out to achieve via her radical reworking? She appears, I suggest, to have a political and personal investment in her choice to radically rework the ballet. As described above, at the start of Lac de Signes Foster asks: 'Can't you see I'm trying to tell you something?' This question is accompanied by arm gestures akin to the mimetic gestures performed by Odette when she first meets the Prince. The question refers both to the narrative of Swan Lake – evoking Odette's attempts to communicate her humanity, hidden, as it is, by her Swan guise - but also serves to bring to the fore Foster's attempts to communicate with us. What is it she is trying to tell us? What is it, as Foster states shortly after, she wishes she could say/dance? Pushing and tensing in her arms, as if trying to remove something from the centre of her body she says: 'If only I could say it. If only I could dance it.'

It seems to me that one of the things Foster is trying to tell us, (if only she could say it ... if only she could dance it), is that ballet and the ballerina are in need of dismantling. Sally Banes, in line with this proposition, states that Lac de Signes is a 'deconstruction of the Russian classic Swan Lake’ (1994, p.287). In Lac de Signes Foster performs a critical commentary on the ballets Swan Lake and Giselle. She
presents a reading of these ballets which reveals the layers of their construction and makes evident discontinuities that normally remain invisible. Via making explicit directorial comments such as, ‘he could carry her around and leave her stage right’ (Section 1, *Lac de Signes*, 1996), referring to Siegfried carrying Odette, the source texts are revealed to the audience to be manufactured by a particular director’s vision rather than as ‘natural’. Gender roles are also presented as mutable and contingent rather than fixed, for Foster dances both male and female roles and discusses the nature of those roles. Thereby that which is customarily taken for granted and seen as normal is in *Lac de Signes* destabilised and denaturalised.

**4.2 Susan Leigh Foster: dancer and academic**

Foster is a Professor of Dance at the University of California (Riverside and Davis Campuses). She has published widely and has toured concerts of her own dances in the United States and Europe since 1977. The interaction between Foster’s articulations, in written and in movement forms, is of particular interest to this study. Some of the most intriguing aspects of *Lac de Signes* are the ways in which it brings together Foster the academic and Foster the dancer. The work brings to the fore relationships between theory and practice, speaking and dancing - forming both explicit and implicit commentaries upon these acts.

Theory has often, notes Mark Fortier, ‘seemed too contemplative an activity to be more help than hindrance in such a practical pursuit as theatre’ (1997, p.3). However more recent texts, both written and performed, indicate that: ‘Theory can be applied to theatre, but in the other direction, theatre speaks back to theory’ (Fortier, 1997, p.6). Theory and practice reflect and respond to each other, the one not being fruitful without the other. Janet Adshead-Lansdale pointedly seeks to clarify the relationship between theory and practice when she states that, *the dance precedes the theory - theory is validated by the practice* (italics in original, 1999, p.xv). This formulation importantly seeks to instate the primacy of the dance / practice. However beyond this formulation is a concept of *performance/theory* (Fortier, 1997, p.6) in which dances are themselves works of theory.

The interplay between theory and practice is further complicated when the role of the reader is viewed as a mode of performance practice. For, working from a
poststructuralist perspective and following the 'death of the author,' it is the reader/viewer who 'creates' the text. For example Michael Worton describes a series of readings of dances as performances in and of themselves. He states:

These readings, these 'dancing texts' are themselves truly performances; each of them is the staging of an act, of a process of seeing and thinking in a space between cultures and between discourses. Seeing and reading dance from new and different points of view and, constructing their own narratives of interpretation, they move between discourses in order to liberate us and the works they consider from the tyranny of singular concepts of telling, showing, explaining.

(Worton, in Adshead-Lansdale, 1999, p.xi)

Worton’s position, which is based in intertextual theory, suggests that the theorising about a dance, as well as the dance itself, is a creative and performative act. Thereby interpretation becomes an act of choreography and the boundaries between theorising and practising, performing and interpreting, become blurred.

In Lac de Signes Foster is engaged in the processes of reading and interpreting pre-existing texts. She positions herself self-consciously as both reader and author. The reading of these dances are creative, 'staged acts' (to use Worton’s term). The role of the reader however goes beyond even poststructuralist classifications as she does not stop within the role of reader but goes on to take her ‘staged act’ of interpretation into an act of actual choreography. Thereby Foster simultaneously performs and interprets throughout Lac de Signes transgressing traditionally dualistic positions.

The exploration of the interface between theory and practice is evident in several examples of Foster’s work. An example of a performed presentation by Foster is found in ‘Harder, faster, longer, higher - a postmortem inquiry into the ballerina’s making’ (The University of Surrey, Border Tensions Conference in 1995). At this conference Foster read her complex arguments whilst shaving her legs, putting on ballet tights and shoes and lining up plastic ballerinas. The performance elements served to highlight the real and everyday in the ballerina and to break through illusions and fantasies. In the written/spoken text Foster discussed a ballet dancer’s training, eating practices, body image and performance experiences revealing a ‘landscape of sacrifice and accomplishment’ (Foster, 1995a, p112). Both the read
paper and performed images reveal the real behind the illusion; thereby, the performance and the written/spoken elements reiterate each other, albeit in different and not directly obvious ways. ix

Her attempt to find a written means to articulate the interface between the dancing body and the process of writing is evident in Choreographing History. In this text Foster writes:

\begin{quote}
I gesture in the air, a certain tension, speed, and shape flowing through arm, wrist, and hand. I scrutinize this moment and then feel my torso lift and strain as I search for the words that would describe most accurately this gesture’s quality and intent. I repeat the movement, then rock forward insistently, pressing for a conversation of movement into words. A sudden inhalation, I haven’t taken a breath in many seconds. I am a body yearning towards translation.
\end{quote}

(italics in original, Foster, 1995b, p.9)

Elizabeth Dempster finds a photograph of Foster dancing in mid flight, on the cover sleeve of Reading Dancing (1986) an evocative representation of the interplay between writing and dancing. This ‘author-as-dancer’ image brings to the fore the dialogue in Foster’s work between ‘two practices, two unlike bodies’ (Dempster, 1995, p.21). Further Dempster writes: ‘In articulating a vision of the body’s movement as an act of writing, and picturing herself as a dancer, Foster reminds us of the bodily ground of all these acts of reading, writing, dancing, and watching dancing’ (1995, p.21).

Another example is found in Foster’s essay ‘Textual evidences’ (1995c). In this text she treats historical evidence as if it were a dance score and compares two textual forms and ‘foregrounds the places where theory operates, and thus where a translation to choreography (-as-theory) could occur’ (Foster, 1995c, p.235). The comparison of these texts leads Foster to a variety of imagined choreographic realisations and these are presented in the written text as overt intertexts. These intertexts intersect, making evident the choreographic re-creation of history that has taken place. Through her work, danced, written and spoken, Foster intervenes, demanding that the viewer/reader pay attention to the acts of construction taking place through and on the body.
These linkages between theory and practice are also evident in an earlier examination of the ballerina, undertaken by Marianne Goldberg. In 1987-8 Goldberg published ‘Ballerinas and ball passing’ in *Women and Performance: Journal of Feminist Theory*. This essay is formed as a collage of texts; photographic images (of other dances, and of herself as dancer and academic), diagrams (choreographic drawings by Trisha Brown), and historical, analytical, autobiographical, and creative texts. Goldberg called this work a ‘performance piece for print’ (Goldberg, 1997, p.317). This material had initially been presented in a lecture form and then as a lecture-performance, with the spoken text presented at a podium alongside gestural material. Finally the material was presented as a dance work with the lecture material inserted (Goldberg, 1997, p.317). ‘Ballerinas and ball passing’ operates through juxtaposition, questioning binaries between theory and practice, masculine and feminine, logical and emotional, speaking and dancing. Re-reading and deconstructing the image of the ballerina Goldberg sets images of herself dancing in tea-shirt and cropped trousers, next to the following written text:

If the body is to become subversive in gender terms, it must exceed the representational frame of the patriarchal stage: The insistence on binary physical differences – male/female – can give way to a fluid spectrum of oppositions ... Those others, whether male or female, need to allow shifts in the potential meanings of touch / initiation / response / strength / subtlety.  
(Goldberg, 1987-8, p26-27)

Goldberg’s critique and methodology could be seen as a precursor to Foster’s work. In *Lac de Signes* there is reciprocity between theory and practice as these two elements operate at an interface. The two co-exist in the same time and space, playing off each other in the form of dialogue. Within this dialogue there are shifts in position, changes in status, and moments of synergy. The theories that Foster explicates are drawn from a number of discourses/methodologies including deconstruction, feminism, poststructuralism and psychoanalysis. These theoretical positions are embedded and, significantly, embodied in *Lac de Signes’s* form and content.

The use, and abuse, of theoretical discourse is overtly stated in section one. As Foster sits behind the wooden board placed to the back on the stage, with only her head poking over the top, her recorded voice is heard:
What I intend to show here today is that contemporary versions of the ballet continue to rely on the Freudian based assumption that the evil sorcerer and the evil princess, are but two aspects of the enigma within Odette herself.

Foster's recorded voice continues;

My analysis will continue along the line established by poststructuralist and deconstructionist approaches to 'the dream'.

(Foster, *Lac de Signes*, Section 1, 1996)

The references to Freudian, poststructuralist and deconstructionist approaches both locate the viewer within an academic context and suggest some ways of interpreting Foster's reworking. At the same time the tone of voice, and Foster's awkwardly disembodied head, poking over the wooden board, suggest a more playful attitude towards theory as Foster evokes academic readings of *Swan Lake* with an ironic tone.

Throughout the work Foster often uses speech to contextualise the movement. In section one interpolations of speech affirm, locate and at times transform the viewer's reading of sequences of movement. For example with her knees lifted high, elbows out and flapping and emitting squawking sounds Foster performs a 'funky chicken dance.' These movements develop into an oversized step, dig, step, dig pattern reminiscent of 1970s style disco steps. This whole absurd sequence ends with the words: 'As the *pas de quatre* ends...'. With these words Foster brings her danced reference to the 'dance of the cygnets' to the fore and locates our reading of this sequence. The subversion that is taking place in this reworked image is thereby heightened through the knowledge that we have made the appropriate connection - Foster is indeed presenting the usually precise cygnets as decidedly graceless chickens.

At other points, (most prominently in the third section), Foster uses speech to relate and twist the librettro. Foster's feminist reading of *Giselle* is evident in her spoken text when she states:

Ooooh...wait a minute. This guy is claiming to be the victim?!
I mean - he leaves the castle on the hill - goes slumming - seduces some poor
peasant girl and when she finds out the true story - I mean he could offer to marry her - but no - he just stands there and watches while she disintegrates in front of his eyes.

(Foster, *Lac de Signes*, Section 3, 1996)

This telling of the libretto, already a re-telling from a feminist perspective, is performed off centre. Foster makes a marked and deliberate step out of the central spotlight and speaks, literally and metaphorically, from the margins.

At other points in *Lac de Signes* a duet between speaking and dancing is created forming overt theoretical/performative games. Speaking extended passages of dense text Foster simultaneously performs movements that switch between exemplifying the spoken text and contradicting it. Whilst describing the ballerina who ‘never twists or contracts’, who ‘always erect, resembles the penis’ happy mind of its own,’ (Section 2, 1996) Foster ironically dances a twist, shuffles her feet, gyrates her torso and wiggles her fingers. These movements become exaggerated, developing into steps akin to that of a minstrel. Performing danced movements that are opposite to those of the ballerina she describes, Foster playfully undercuts her own spoken text.

In another example Foster, in a reference to *Giselle*, states:

I don’t go out much with them anymore. I prefer to stay home working on a synthesis of Marxism and feminism. We are, after all, a women’s collective.

You probably never thought about what we do after we dance those men to death.

(Foster, *Lac de Signes*, Section 3, 1996)

At the same time as discussing Giselle’s current occupations, Foster performs a series of very internally focused and articulate movements. The emphasis of the movement is in the limbs and in gesture. The movements, in relation to the spoken word, imply that Giselle has changed, grown up perhaps. The movement and the spoken word in this way reinforce each other, whilst it is also more than possible that the performance of ‘postmodern movement’ whilst speaking as Giselle might be considered by some to be incongruous.
In the above example Foster the academic and Giselle the ballet character interestingly coalesce. For a moment the audience is not sure whether Foster is referring to her own life or that of Giselle. The coalescence of the academic and the ballerina subverts stereotypical views of the ballerina as 'just a dancer'. Traditional formulations dispossess the ballerina and suggest that she is split like a Cartesian marionette - her mind is detached from her body.

As Dempster writes:

> The female-identified art of the dance is relegated to the nether regions of an unthought and unthinking body. Dance may be mother of all manner of things but she cannot know or speak of herself. Dance is identified with a body which has been defined as a dependent, contingent object, lacking autonomy, lacking the capacity to speak of or otherwise represent itself and lacking a transcendent symbology and function.

(Dempster, 1995, p.24)

The ballerina has been closely associated with ideals of the feminine and by extension with the illogical and emotional, whereas theory is often associated with logic and rationality. The suggestion that Giselle is ‘working on a synthesis of Marxism and feminism’ (Foster, *Lac de Signes*, Section 3, 1996) contravenes these established associations, empowering Giselle and challenging stereotypical notions of the ballerina.

What happens when the object begins to speak? For in Foster’s work the ballerina - so often positioned as object - does just that. Foster gives the ballerina a voice - literally. The ballerina, who is usually presented as a mute being, in *Lac de Signes*, speaks. In the light of her traditional muteness, this is of itself a transgressive act. With a *pas de bourrée* motion and soft circling arm gestures Foster at the start of section two states:

You want me.
You can’t have me.
You desire me.
It’s futile.
I am a perfect figurine of unattainability...
You like that.
I make you sensitive and caring but give you no obligation.
I make you sensitive and strong, but you don’t have to have to protect me.
I make you rich with all kinds of resources, but I don’t cost a thing
(Foster, *Lac de Signes*, Section 2, 1996)

In the above example the figure of the ballerina is given control of her image. Speaking directly to the audience the ballerina as able to demonstrate knowledge of her construction and challenge the audience, teasing them with the futility of their desires. Breaking the bounds of her muteness she makes overt the viewer’s objectification. Foster asserts an oppositional stance to traditional conceptualisations of the dancer as unknowing and unthinking, presenting instead a self-aware and knowing ballerina.

The interaction and juxtaposition of the speaking and dancing body highlight their relative abilities to be articulate, readable bodies. *Lac de Signes* both reinforces the traditional status of theory and practice and challenges the polarities between them. Whilst there is a dialogue between movement and speech as discussed above, there is also a sense in which the status of theory and practice, particularly when allied to speaking and dancing, values theory over practice, and speaking over dancing. The perception that dance is illiterate and illegible and that spoken language is legible and literate is heightened throughout much of this dance. The location of the theory, which carries with it notions of logic and rationality (and masculinity), in the speaking body, implicitly suggests that the dancing, practising body is insufficient. This is reinforced by the contextualising role of the speaking body, carrying the underlying suggestion that the dance itself is not able to be sufficiently articulate, that it is illogical and irrational (and feminine).

However in the third section a more challenging interaction between the dancing body and the theoretician’s body is found. Here, in the last 7.50 minutes of the dance, Foster begins to shift the dance away from a dialogue between the speaking / dancing body and brings to the fore an articulate questing body. This articulate body is a hybrid one, a dancing body that is entrusted to be its own theory. The potency of the dancing body - a body that can make its own meanings and that ‘speaks’ for itself is brought to our attention. This dancing body embodies an awareness of its cultural production and formulates, through physicality, a new construct. It is this final,
articulate body which foregrounds the dance as a site of meaning making. This hybrid body, whilst silent, is not mute, for the material body becomes the site of mastery and is able to communicate its own 'mind'.

Foster starts this final dance by encouraging the viewer to pay attention to detail, for she states: 'If you look closely you can see.' The movement in this final extended sequence, as described previously, continues the postmodern movement style established within section three. Also in a typically postmodern fashion the movements reference images previously presented in the dance such as shadow boxing, pelvic rocks, shooting guns and arabesques, mixing high and low art forms in an eclectic fashion.

The body is held with an everyday, pedestrian attitude as it performs its multi-coded elements. Whilst challenging the highly constructed ballet body, Foster’s dancing does 'not wax nostalgically of an unfettered or liberated dance' (Albright, 1997, p.7). Rather Foster asserts a reflexivity and awareness of presence. Foster’s postmodern dance is in continual transformation. This runs parallel to Elizabeth Dempster's analysis of the postmodern body for as she suggests:

The development of what might be termed the postmodern body is in some sense a deconstructive process, involving a period of detraining of the dancer’s habitual structures and patterns of movement. The dancer brings intelligence to bear on the physical alignment and physiological and perceptual processes. Through this process the dancer reconstructs a physical articulation based on an understanding of what is common to all bodies and what is unique to her/his own..... The postmodern body is not a fixed, immutable entity, but a living structure which continually adapts and transforms itself.  

(Dempster, 1995, pp.32-33)

Foster’s movement in this final section of the dance is overtly ‘mindful’ and thoughtful in its articulacy which sits interestingly, to use Kristeva’s theory of representation (see Chapter Three), between and across the symbolic and semiotic. The dance here is not lacking, nor is it in need of contextualisation, rather it is a mode of action that cannot be reduced to Cartesian dualisms. This movement, which is not fixed and which continually transforms itself, can be seen as an interesting metaphor for the whole process of reworking. The multi-coded, deconstructive body parallels the conceptual frame of the work in general. By drawing together theory and practice
into a hybrid form, which is framed as fluid, Foster asserts in her radical reworking a challenge to traditional epistemologies and histories, suggesting mutability and transformation instead of stasis.

4.3 Looking-at-to-be-looked-at-ness: performance and spectacle
Central to the imagery in *Lac de Signes* is the theme of looking-at-to-be-looked-at-ness and Foster, like other feminist performers, demonstrates an interest in finding ways of evading and subverting the disciplining gaze. Foster explicitly makes the audience’s gaze evident and engages us in a critique of the gaze. *Lac de Signes* alienates the way the ballerina is objectified and de-automatises the spectator’s response to the viewing construct. To achieve this Foster uses a range of critical distancing techniques, making explicit the act of looking through the strategies of framing, fragmentation and parody. Foster draws attention to the gaze and refuses objectification. She also, in her construction of the ballerina-as-phallus (discussed later), offers an alternative and potentially subversive way of looking at the ballerina.

The relationship between the audience and the ballerina cited by feminist dance scholars following Mulvey (see Chapter Three), is challenged by Foster. In order to bring to the viewer’s attention, and to dismantle, the gaze Foster echoes the deconstructive devices of Brechtian theatre. There is potential in this method for as Elin Diamond notes, Brechtian theory can offer ‘a female body in representation that resists fetishization and a viable position for the female spectator’ (2001, p.79) (first published 1988). Using contradictory signs in movement, spoken text, music and costume Foster alienates gender and the figure of the ballerina and enables the viewer to see gender as ideologically constructed.

One example of Brechtian strategy is found in section two of the dance as the way in which the dancer is visually framed by the proscenium arch stage for the audience’s pleasure is brought to the fore. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Foster literally frames herself between a pair of curtains which are attached to her via a headdress. Whilst wearing this headdress and travelling down stage in a *bouffée* Foster teases the viewer speaking the words: ‘You want me. You can’t have me. You desire me. It’s futile.’ This image demonstrates the objectification of the ballerina whilst at the same time gives voice to the ballerina’s power. By presenting the ballerina as site/sight in
this way Foster transforms the body from the site of looking to the speaking subject of looking-at-to-be-look-at-ness.

The framed image of the ballerina is reiterated when Foster places a plastic ballerina doll within a miniature set of curtains. Spotlit by torchlight, this plastic object is placed centre stage. This repeated image makes explicit the pictorial aesthetic of the ballet genre and makes reference to the ballerina as an object of display. As an added twist the ballerina doll is strapped to Foster’s pubis as a phallus/penis (the focus of our desires?). The image ‘over-displays’ (Aston, 1995, p.95) the ballerina showing the way in which the female body has been constructed as spectacle for male consumption.

Feminists have highlighted the ways in which ‘the male gaze’ places women into an impossible position. Rather than falling into a ‘no-win situation’ in which the status quo will always be asserted (Daly, 1992, p.243), Foster asserts a more empowering form of female performance/spectatorship in which she is both subject and object deconstructing the binary model evident in Mulvey. In an attempt to reach beyond the boundaries of the stage Foster asks us to meet her. Standing close to the front of the stage, she looks directly at the audience and says; ‘Look at me. No. Me. Meet me.’ In this moment the audience is reminded by Foster that we are looking at her, we are challenged not to look at her as object, but as subject. We are asked to meet Foster, the person, rather than gaze upon her body. This objectification of the body is highlighted further when Foster for the second time says ‘meet me’, for this time she also bends her knee up to her chest and taps her calf. The calf muscle wobbles and, in a play on words, we meet her body as meat. The suggestion is that in gazing upon her we are treating her like meat, a piece of desirable flesh.

The ballerina’s traditional object status is also made explicit in section one as Foster, speaking as choreographer, positions and re-positions the ballerina. Walking around the stage with her arms held up over head, as if holding the ballerina on her shoulder, Foster states: ‘he could carry her around and leave her upstage right’. This external commentary upon the choreography and placing of the ballerina on stage brings to the fore the manipulation of the ballerina. She doesn’t position herself but is positioned by the choreographer and that choreographer is presented as male, for Foster plays the
male dancer’s role as she carries the ballerina into the required spot. The directing of
the ballerina’s actions also however suggests that the choreography could be
otherwise. Through presenting the stage directions as possibilities, that is, ‘he could’,
rather than ‘he does’, Foster leaves room for us to imagine the choreography
differently. Thereby Swan Lake and the ballerina, which are usually imagined to be
fixed, become open to change and are revealed as potentially ever changing.

Foster challenges to the audience, disrupting their viewing pleasures and, in doing so,
brings to the fore the very construction of the gaze. Shifting their gaze she establishes
a de-eroticised image and reclaims the audience viewer relationship to conceive a new
language of desire. This language of desire is not based in ‘scopophilia’, xiii in which
the process of looking arouses sexual stimulation and objectifies the person looked at;
rather Foster evokes a fluid and unruly female image. Foster’s direct engagement
with the audience and her critique of the norm embodies the pleasures of resistance
for Foster presents a view of the ballerina that is against the grain.

4.4 Trans-contextualising bodies: postmodern parody and hybridity
Another way in which Foster undermines the operation of the gaze is to refuse the
viewer’s identification with any extended narrative structure; rather she cuts, slices
and fragments images together making overt intertextual references. The ways in
which fragmented elements of Swan Lake are used and inverted in Lac de Signes
reflect the discursive possibilities of parodic methodology (see Chapter One). Foster
references and uses fragments of Swan Lake, such as sections of the conventional
Tchaikovsky music score, recognisable ballet positions, and the libretto, trans­
contextualising these elements by positioning them within a new location. Foster also
re-plays cultural and critical analyses of the ballet, particularly analyses established in
feminist writings. These trans-contextualisations function so as to reveal the
underlying agendas of the ballet form and to make evident the otherwise hidden
constructions of the ballerina. Lac de Signes involves the viewer in a process of
decoding, as old meanings are shifted and new meanings are generated. As Rose
writes:

the work to be parodied is ‘decoded’ by the parodist and offered again (or
encoded) in a ‘distorted’ or changed form to another decoder, the reader of the
parody, whose expectations of the original of the parodied work may also be played upon and evoked and then transformed by the parodist as part of the parody of the work.

(Rose, 1993, p.39)

The ballet movements Foster incorporates via parody are performed with different qualities as Foster’s movements are not extended and taut in the way that ballet is usually performed; her style is more relaxed. These parodic ballet steps are juxtaposed with movements from other contexts such as shadow boxing, tap and everyday gestures. Foster also cuts into the norm of the presented ballet vocabulary by juxtaposing spoken text. Her opening section, for example, incorporates a balletically styled movement sequence that uses arabesque penché, développé écarté and pas de bourrée couru. Completing this sequence Foster states: ‘We can’t go on like this!’ Following the parodic performance of ballet steps, these words further dismantle the illusory appeal of the form. The implication is that we can not continue to repeat the same movement patterns, we need another vocabulary with which to speak. At the same time Foster also is cleverly referring to and subverting the narrative of Swan Lake for the ballet sequence is presented as a reference to a pas de deux by Odette and Siegfried; as such Foster is double coding her words for they could also refer to those that a modern Odette might say to her lover.

In another example Foster mimics the movements that Odette usually dances at the start of the grand pas de deux in Act One. This balletic vocabulary, (including recognisable floor positions such as the arms crossed over head and the body bent over towards the knee), soon gets undercut as she starts to flex her feet and add movements such as jogging, tap shuffles, and shadow boxing. Through such strategies (juxtaposing references in movement to the ballet with spoken text and contrasting movement styles) the coherence of the source texts is challenged and new associations are made. So in the above example the usually highly romantic and emotional image becomes instead linked to effort, fitness and competition. Images from Swan Lake are fragmented as moments are taken out of their original balletic context and placed into a new hybrid and inclusive text. This hybrid text, through its very hybridity, suggests a provisional stance.

Whilst, as discussed in Chapter One, to some extent all reworkings operate as hybrid
forms, *Lac de Signes* is very overt in its hybridity, cutting across forms and making explicit references to both the ballets at its source and other intertexts. This parodic hybrid approach is usefully contextualised in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin who argues that parody is 'an intentional, dialogized, hybrid. Within it languages and styles actively and mutually illuminate one another' (Bakhtin, 1981, p.110). Foster's double-voiced text is not an imitation or 'monologic' mastery of other discourses, but in content, form and structure *Lac de Signes* represents a dialogic meeting with the discourse of others.

As discussed in Chapter One, Hutcheon argues that parody is a means of mastering and superseding influential predecessors and is thereby one way of coping with 'the anxiety of influence' (Hutcheon, 1985, p.96). Hutcheon writes:

> Intertextual parody of canonical American and European classics is one mode of appropriating and reformulating – with significant change – the dominant white, male, middle class, heterosexual, Eurocentric culture.

(Hutcheon, 1988, p.130)

Foster's work, in its critique of preconceived norms, allows her and the audience to surpass the power of the balletic canon by revealing its construction. Reading against the grain of 'master-works' of Western culture Foster offers new readings of these works, readings that are more acceptable to a feminist politic. Also, via the reflection back on the 'master-work,' Foster reveals the ideologies embedded within *Swan Lake* and *Giselle* which hitherto were hidden from view. The mythic nature of such works is thereby challenged. They are revealed as specific and contextualised as opposed to neutral and ahistorical. Through parody the passive consumption of the so-called 'master-works' can be challenged as the viewer is made aware of the status and implications of the 'master-work'.

However as discussed in Chapter One parody operates paradoxically and here the ballet *Swan Lake* can be seen to become in *Lac de Signes* simultaneously insignificant and highly important. The ballet is insignificant, in that it becomes trivialised, and highly important in that *Swan Lake* is the source text, the very basis of Foster's work. This duality is part of the structure of parodic manifestations – for parody operates in a place in between the re-playing of past images and the critiquing of those images.
That which is parodied in *Lac de Signes* is not completely divorced from its original but the images are placed in surprising new contexts and combinations. Each sign becoming another sign but not altogether losing its particular history and integrity, the juxtaposition of different discourses manipulating old signs and incorporating them with a new logic. As Hutcheon argues in *The Politics of Postmodernism* parody does not wrest past art from its original historical context and reassemble it into some sort of spectacle. Instead, through a double process of installing and ironising, parody signals how present representations come from past ones and what ideological consequences derive from both continuity and difference (1989, p.93). *Lac de Signes* deconstructs the structures of authority within theatricality and exposes its ideological underpinnings without presenting an alternative ‘truth’ via an overt entering into of a purposeful intertextual discourse.

Pierre Bourdieu (1993) in his discussion of current artistic practices, suggests that there is no room for naivety as every act, gesture and event is a sort of nudge and wink between accomplices. Through this ‘game’, argues Bourdieu, silent and hidden references to past and present artists are included in the works as silent traces which confirm a complicitous relationship in their interrelations and interactions. This game, it could be argued, is an elitist one – a game that can only be appreciated by ‘those in the know’. In many ways all reworkings rely on the audience’s prior knowledge as, arguably, much of the pleasure in these dances is generated by the awareness of the ways in which the source text is being reworked. However if they rely only on the ‘in joke’ the efficacy of these works will be limited, alienating the general viewer. Foster’s dance at times certainly feels this way as knowledge of source texts is needed in order to appreciate the humour. Also, at other points, explicit ‘in jokes’ which relate to her specific audience are made. Bursting with laughter and grasping her sides Foster integrates references to the ballet libretto and a reference to teaching staff at the university to which she is associated:

Tell me... what happened next?  
I know he married the princess....  
He got a job - teaching ballet - at UCLA!  

He has a new show opening... In Orange County!  
(Foster, Section 3, *Lac de Signes*, 1996)
This elicits a wave of laughter amongst the ‘in’ audience excluding part of her audience. This interweaving of personal ‘in jokes’ with dance references highlights the nature of the parodic game. It requires an informed audience to appreciate the parody and its resultant humour. An elitist position perhaps, but one that announces the provisional and context specific nature of her dance in opposition to the seemingly universalist stance of the ballets at Lac de Signes’ source.

4.4.1 Parodic comedy and the performativity of gender

In Lac de Signes much of the parody results in comedy. In section three, for example, the parodic reprise of Myrtha, Queen of the Wilis, is performed in an overly exaggerated manner, the arabesque positions are not held or performed with customary care; rather Foster throws her leg and arms into something approximating an arabesque. Whilst performing these poses she speaks with a stereotypically operatic intonation. Foster is unruly, her movement and language are too loud, too large, and too absurd to be taken seriously.

Foster’s parodic comedy is also evident in the ways in which she shifts the audience’s expectations via juxtaposition. Dancing to the rock and roll song (You’re the) Devil in Disguise (1963) by Elvis Presley, Foster transforms movements from the ballet lexicon into movements more akin to popular dance. Conflicting conventions are crossed and juxtaposed in a combination of traditional ballet steps and release based movement, boxing and tap, rock and roll, jazz and Indian dance, causing the viewer to reconsider what should be considered high art dance. Foster’s disruption of the boundaries between forms alongside the incongruity of the rock and roll music surprises the audience and generates laughter.

The lyrics in the music are also amusingly transformed. In the context of a reworking of Swan Lake, Elvis’ song becomes a reference to the disguise of Odile, the Black Swan, as she pretends to be Odette and deceives Siegfried. For as the lyrics state:

You look like an angel
Walk like an angel
Talk like an angel
But I got wise
You’re the devil in disguise
Oh yes you are
The devil in disguise
(Presley, 1963)

The audience enjoys other unexpected twists; for example having performed a bourrée across the stage as 'the perfect figure of unattainability' (Foster, Section 2, *Lac de Signes*, 1996), Foster pauses for a moment and then lifts her arms to reveal strands of fabric dangling from under her armpit. She brushes her hand under each armpit and turns to face the audience with a knowing smile. This image touches at boundaries of the grotesque body as the fabric, representing armpit hair, is in the classical body removed, whilst here Foster takes pleasure in the presence of her overly long and wild armpit hair and so presents the audience with the opposite of their expectations.

Whilst commonly associated with parody, comedy has been denigrated as a limited and limiting view of the effect of parody. This negative attitude towards the comic in parody has been especially evident within postmodern descriptions. Linda Hutcheon (1985 & 1988) is one such postmodern critic. She seeks to distance parody from comedy in order to highlight the metafictional and critical nature of parody. The perceived relationship with comedy, argues Hutcheon, limits the function and purpose of parody, reducing it to a frivolous technique. However Margaret Rose (1993) argues that postmodern parody is at its most complex when it is considered to be both metafictional and comic.

Whatever the definitions of parody the use of comedy by a female performer can present, I argue, a subversive stance (see Chapter Three). Women, and especially women in dance, are rarely associated with comedy. It seems to me that a female performer, in a dance that speaks of the ballet form, using comedy, is a wonderful inversion of expectations. Foster refuses to take seriously the supposedly serious matter of the cultural object to which she refers - that is - the ballet. She applies strategies of humour and the absurd making explicit her refusal to take ballet too seriously.

Using parodic comedy to re-present past representations of women Foster imbues
Odette and Giselle with a strength and ‘attitude’ that their traditional counterparts do not have, and extends the underdeveloped potential of Odile and Myrtha. Through strategies of excess, irony and fragmentation past representations are trans-contextualised and disrupted. This confrontation with the dominant representations of women in ballet reveals these representations to have particular political resonances as opposed to operating as ‘true’ or ‘real’; the traditional image of women is uncovered as only a partial or even a mis-representation.

The difficulty of the comic effect of parody, that Hutcheon points to, is however also evident in *Lac de Signes*. The high flown parodic imitation of the ballet lexicon may also be seen to propound a stance of ridicule. This sense of ridicule trivialises the ballet and undermines Foster’s potentially efficacious commentary. Overall however I propose that Foster uses the comic effect of parody to stress the critical, for whilst playful this playfulness does not exclude a seriousness of purpose.

The parodic approach used by Foster to rework the ballet enables gender to be presented as a learned performative act encoded by the gendered vocabulary of ballet. Via the parodic and comic performance of both male and female roles Foster highlights the gendered nature of ballet. For example, Foster performing the male dancer’s role, walks in a direct fashion around the space, stands still whilst holding his imaginary partner’s waist and performs a series of angular gestures which cut and dissect space. Whereas when taking the female dancer’s role Foster curves through space, hops in an arabesque and sways side to side in a bourrée. As the male dancer Foster ‘discovers,’ ‘supports’ and ‘promenades’. As the female dancer she is ‘fragile,’ ‘sexy,’ and repeatedly ‘effortless’, ‘effortless’, ‘effortless.’ (Foster, Section 2, *Lac de Signes*, 1996). As she interweaves these gendered vocabularies, forming a seamless dialogue between the two, Foster asserts a continual shifting of identities. The two languages are, Foster implies, self consciously posed, not fixed but existing only on the surface, and open to contestation and change. Gender roles, insists *Lac de Signes*, are only performative and as such the codes of each can be altered, mixed or discarded.

Foster’s representation of gender as performative relates her work to that of Judith Butler (1990 & 1993) as discussed in Chapter Three. Gender as ‘performance’ places
a question mark over the 'authenticity' of what which is offered, for performance is conventionally something constructed. Butler's concept of performativity uses this distinction between what is authentic and what is constructed in a specific way through the nuanced term 'performativity'. Performativity, as a performance of identity, operates in an everyday sphere and problematises authenticity, identity and origins. Butler is careful to distinguish her concept from conventional concepts of performance and she writes; 'performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate "act", but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names' (1993, p.1). For Butler everyday and repetitive performativity of gender is unconscious and produces a body that is either masculine or feminine as though gender identities were inevitable products of anatomy.

In her discussion of parody Butler writes that, parody 'reveals the original to be nothing other than a parody of the idea of the natural and the original' (1990, p.31). Thereby using this concept it is possible to conceive of Foster's parody of the ballerina as a copy, of a copy, of a copy, leaving no 'original' at the source. This is a dance, like Baudrillard's simulacra (1993), of incomplete copies. Foster presents the ballerina image is an overt over-display of what it is to be female and reveals that what it is to be female is itself already of parody of a non-existent original. For through Butler's concept of performativity and parody, it is possible to consider femininity itself as a parodic. By adopting one parodic mask after the other Foster exposes the fact that there is no essential feminine but only the performance of it. The public spectacle of a woman's body enacts and stylises an embodied presence of what it is to be female rather than being a core gender identity.

Through series of embodied presences, Foster call into question the idea of any pre-existing authentic self, for, via parody, a distance between Foster and the ballerina as performer and the image appears. As parodies they expose the constructed nature of femininity, as the identity of the performer and the artifice of the performance are collapsed. Thus parody dislocates image and refuses integration thereby; the image becomes open for women to manipulate and interpret - thus allowing women to shift position.
Foster opens spaces and creates fractures eschewing the traditional hermeneuticism of the ballet form and its attendant political ambivalence. Via its use of 'low' and 'high' art forms, comedy, wit and theoretical commentary Foster's deconstructive work is anarchic and counter-canonical. Using parody Foster recycles past images, transforming and inverting them in such a way that the viewer is made aware of the sociological implications of the images. Foster asserts a self-reflexive discourse that is inextricably bound to social discourse, foregrounding the historical, social and ideological context in which ballet existed and continues to exist. Her parodic play gives the viewer the opportunity to see how history is plundered in ironic commentary, not in nostalgic recall.

4.5 Homogeneous ballerinas

Throughout *Lac de Signes* Foster critiques the representations of women in the ballet genre. Foster effectively encourages a more critical engagement with the ballet by audiences. The critique of the audience's gaze, as discussed above, is such that we can no longer indulge unreflexively our own viewing pleasures. However, whilst two specific ballets, *Swan Lake* and *Giselle*, are the subject of her commentary, the specificity of these two dances are nullified, subsumed into Foster's parodic text. The distinctive features of the two source dances are generalised to the extent that they come to represent 'ballet' *per se*.

This generalisation of specific ballets, and the narrative, roles and movement within them, into a homogeneous single image is also evident in Foster's written texts. This limitation has been pointed to, and problematised, by Sally Banes (1998). Banes criticises Foster's discussions of the ballet and suggests that they tend towards 'essentializing generalizations about genre conventions' (1998, p.3). 'For example' writes Banes, 'Susan Foster alleges that in the ballet *pas de deux* the woman is always passively dependent on the man. But there are many classical pas de deux (such as that of Odile - the evil impostor swan - and Siegfried in *Swan Lake* [1895]) in which the woman is depicted as forceful and self-reliant' (1998, p.3).

Banes suggests that Foster’s analysis leaves out the close reading of texts and contexts and therefore fails to acknowledge the multiplicity of images of women evident within specific works. This criticism of Foster is echoed in Alexandra Carter’s
discussion of feminist ballet historiography. Carter argues that much feminist analysis has treated the ballet in an ahistorical manner. Feminists have continually discussed only a small number of ballets, failed to acknowledge the specificity of history to the choreography, and generalised the image and physique of the dancer. Carter writes:

This emphasis on a very limited number of works from ballet's repertoire, and a resultant highly specific conception of the 'ballerina' image, negates the richness of the ballet heritage and the diversity of its incumbents.

(Carter, 1999, p.230/1)

In *Lac de Signes* Foster's representation of the ballet and the ballerina reflects this approach. Foster presents a unified image of the female ballet dancer. There is little evidence of the differences between Odette, Odile, Giselle and Myrtha. All of these female characters become the object of Foster's scrutiny; all four are tarred with the same feminist brush.

Whilst in 1995 Foster writes:

I do not wish to speak for the ballerina as though the poor, deceived creature lacked the analytic skills necessary to apprehend her own victimization. Nor do I aspire to blast ballet as the sadistic site of feminist spectacle.

(Foster, 1995a, p.112)

I suggest that in *Lac de Signes* she, unfortunately, does just that. Throughout the dance Foster is very much the clever, witty, and knowing academic commenting upon the ballerina, pointing out to us her problematic status. So whilst hints of the potential of the ballerina to be knowledgeable, witty, and empowered are seen, overall Foster unfortunately replays stereotypical characterisation of the ballerina as in some way lacking. She lacks the ability to make her own choices, to change her dance, to define herself otherwise. As many other feminist critiques, the ballerina, in *Lac de Signes*, becomes 'a sitting duck' (Carter, 1999, p.227). Alexandra Carter (1999) goes on to note that the tendency of much feminist dance analysis has been to immobilise the ballet as a product of patriarchy. This criticism could also be levelled at *Lac de Signes*, for Foster's approach to the ballerina fixes her as the object of commentary, whilst Foster is herself, positioned fluidly. Carter writes:
The ballerina stood, en pointe, body facing front, a motionless object transfixed by the voyeuristic gaze of the audience. Not only was the ballerina rendered powerless but a whole history of women’s creative endeavour was undermined.

(Carter, 1999, p.228)

The ballerina is objectified in this work. She is objectified under Foster’s feminist gaze as surely as she was objectified under the male gaze. Reflecting traditional feminist discourse, Foster (like other feminist writers and dance makers of the mid 1980s-90s), traps the ballet, labelling it a product of patriarchy and straitjacketing the form (Carter, 1999, p.228). So whilst through feminist analysis Foster makes us aware of the passive role at times enforced on the female ballet dancer she also reinforces this very passivity. *Lac de Signes* brings to the fore, thereby, a feminist construction of the ballerina without helping to reconstruct her in contingent or specific guises.

4.6 The phallus, the penis, the dildo and the ballerina

The middle section of *Lac de Signes* is particularly problematic in its homogenised representation of the ballerina but it is also the most interesting in its challenge to the way the ballerina is perceived. This middle section, initially performed in 1995 under the title *The Ballerina’s Phallic Pointe*, asserts a reconceptualisation of the female dancer – in this vision the ballerina is, ‘in a word, the phallus’ (Foster, 1996a, p.3). Foster discusses the ballerina-as-phallus in a written essay also entitled *The Ballerina’s Phallic Pointe* (1996a).

Foster’s definition of the ballerina-as-phallus follows a Lacanian thesis. Lacan, as outlined in Chapter Three, sees the phallus as signifier of the law that divides the symbolic from the imaginary. The imaginary is conceptualised as the period during childhood before a sense of self emerges. As a child distinguishes itself from others and develops a sense of self, becoming subject, it enters into the world of the symbolic. This is the world of culture and language systems and through these systems the child begins the process of socialisation, with its prohibitions and restraints. The phallus, as central to the symbolic, anchors the free-floating signifiers of the unconscious. Representing the law of the father, and underlining the patriarchal
nature of the symbolic system, the phallus is the centre of order and control, limiting play and fixing meanings. According to Lacan no one, men nor women, has the phallus, for while it seems to represent masculine access to social power, it in fact represents absence or lack. The phallus is a cultural construction which holds symbolic power, and whilst men have a penis, this does not mean that they possess the phallus. It is only through another’s desire that man can feel he has the phallus (Brooker et al 1997, Barry 1995 and Freedman 1990).

In *Lac de Signes* the ballerina-as-phallus is visually represented in a variety of ways. Foster wears a plastic ballerina and a pointe shoe as a phallus; she uses phallic terminology; describes the vocabulary of ballet in phallic terms; and rubs and rhythmically pumps a pointe shoe, as if a phallus. The pointe shoe provides a clear visual representation of a phallus as the symbolic sign of the penis. With its length and breadth, smooth pink surface, hardened form and slightly bulbous end the pointe shoe is perhaps a model phallic object.

Foster wears her pointe shoes, not on her feet, but on her hands and also has a shoe tied around her waist so that it hangs on her pubic bone. She performs exercises such as *pliés* and *développés*, whilst stating: ‘Try harder, hold it longer, do it faster, get it higher’. She proceeds then to push her pelvis forward and rub at the pointe shoe hanging at her pubis, simulating masturbation. This ends with Foster repeatedly and aggressively punching a pointe shoe into the ground. In a frustrated tone she repeatedly shouts ‘harder, faster, longer, higher, harder, faster, longer, higher.’ Through the combination of the pointe shoe as phallus and exercises from a typical ballet class, the repressive phallus is linked to the control and, as Foster perceives it, constant violations of the dancer’s body in ballet. As Foster writes, the ballet dancer must ‘learn to do more and more — harder sequences, faster steps, longer balances, higher legs — with less and less body’ (Foster, 1995a, p.111). The pointe shoe, and the ballerina’s geometric body as phallus, become the symbols of repression.

The ballerina’s lifted, aerial, and upright thrust, is, Foster’s danced and written texts suggest, the foundation of the conceptualisation of the ballerina-as-phallus. The movement vocabulary of ballet is referred to throughout *Lac de Signes* in phallic terms. Movements are ‘hard’, ‘long’, ‘extended’, and ‘inflated’. The ballerina
demonstratively embodies the hardened and extended phallus. As if standing at a barre taking a ballet class, Foster extends her leg out to the side a la seconde and says 'hard,' the leg is then bent up at the knee and Foster, touching her relaxed calf muscle, says 'soft'. This is in one sense descriptive of the muscle tone required for each action but it also makes reference to the phallus – the extended leg becomes a literal image of the phallus. The movement continues as Foster performs port de bras, développés, retiré and grand battement bringing the audience's attention to the shape of these actions with her spoken text, 'circle', 'line', 'triangle', 'angle' etc.

These images reflect the potency of Foster's concept and significantly give rise to a phallic identity that is much more than a simple metaphor. It is through the coded, and ordered form of ballet that the ballerina 'gives figure to signification. In her, the chaos of body transmutes into rational form. The years of bodily disciplining have refigured fleshy curves and masses as lines and circles,' (1996a, p.14) writes Foster. Further she states: 'Via this geometry her movements turn mess into symbol' (1996a, p.14)

As symbol however the ballerina-as-phallus paradoxically resists phallocentric cultural symbolisations. Rather than operating as a veiled phallus, the ballerina-as-phallus makes her status within the symbolic system overt and thereby her position is revealed. This revealing occurs via making manifest her theatrical construction. The ballerina is disrobed (literally as Foster removes her curtain head-dress and skirt), the movement training that forms her body is made visible and her body is located in discourse.

As a form of post-Freudian theatre, Foster asserts a challenge to the construction of the subject. Elizabeth Wright, in her essay 'Psychoanalysis and the theatrical: analysing performance', puts it this way:

Post-Freudian theatre, in the wake of Lacan, reveals theatricality as a necessary element in the construction of the subject. Its effect is to make the subject (artist and spectator) experience the gap between the body as a discursive construct and its felt embodiment in experience, between the representational and the real, and to expose it to continual risk of re-definition. (Wright, 1996, p.189)
Foster uses and abuses the imagery of the symbolic order and turns it on itself. There is also a sense in which Foster asserts a desire to exit from the symbolic order. She regally and ironically exits from the symbolic frame — picking up her curtain head dress, her very own proscenium arch stage, and waving, or perhaps wafting her wing, she steps behind the curtain, and so leaves the stifling frame.

Foster (1996a) argues that the ballerina can be considered a phallus due to the classical routing of the viewer’s gaze. Foster suggests that imagining the ballerina-as-phallus promotes an examination into the ‘female viewer’s attention’ (1996a, p.3). This inquiry emphasises that the female viewer must look through the eyes of the male dancer at his partner or that she must empathise with the ballerina as an object of male desire (Foster, 1996a, p.3). As phallus she takes on the power of the symbolic rather than continuing to exist as ‘lack’. If she is the phallus, remembering that the phallus is possessed by no one, she cannot be ‘had’, cannot be ‘owned’, for whilst she may be desired she is an illusion. For those who see her illusion her cultural construction is revealed and the delusion of the phallus as power is broken.

Like Butler’s rewriting of woman and the Lacanian phallus, the ballerina-as-phallus is a masquerade. Butler argues that if ‘being’ the phallus is masquerade, for women cannot have the phallus but through the appearance of being phallus, then the phallus has no being of its own. It is always a mask, a surface. She argues that if this is the case, like the parodic copy, ‘then it would appear to reduce all being to a form of appearing, the appearance of being, with the consequences that all gender ontology is reducible to the play of appearances’ (1990, p.47). Significantly however, she also suggest that another reading of phallic masquerade is possible, stating that,

> there is a ‘being’ or ontological specification of femininity prior to the masquerade, a feminine desire or demand that is masked and capable of disclosure, that, indeed might promise an eventual disruption and displacement of the phallogocentric signifying economy.

(Butler, 1990, p.47)

This releases woman from the Lacanian model based on lack and indicates a masked desire — a desire that can thereby be reclaimed. Foster, extending her concept of the ballerina-as-phallus, suggests that it has the potential which ‘all monsters afford, to
forge from the cataclysmic energy of their aberrant parts a new identity that meets the political and the aesthetic exigencies of the moment' (1996a, p.3). Foster proposes that:

Perhaps, via the ballerina-as-phallus, her power can reconfigure so as to sustain her charisma even as she begins to determine her own fate. Perhaps the ballerina-as-phallus can even reclaim for ballet, long viewed as a neutral parade of geometrized forms, a certain sensual and even sexual potency.

(Foster, 1996a, p.3)

To what extent then does Foster's vision of the ballerina in *Lac de Signes* – her representation of her as phallus – proffer a more sensual or sexual potency? To what extent does the ballerina’s new guise resist symbolisation, resist fixity, and thereby give rise to a reconfigured, self-determined fate? The phallic ballerina is certainly a more sexually overt one than her traditional counterpart – for this is a woman who is confidant in her sexuality and who brings the sexual connotations of the ballet to the fore. However as she masturbates the pointe shoe tied to her pubis she grimaces and pushes her pelvis forward, pleased with her own grotesque mannerisms. These images remind me of more subversive possibilities than those of the phallus. The references here, I suggest, are to the penis and to the dildo.

This image of masturbating the pointe shoe and later, the strapping on of the plastic ballerina doll to her pubis, suggest connections to the dildo and its harness. The image of the dildo and its associations with lesbian sexuality further opens up and problematises the construction of the ballerina by placing non-normative sexuality into the context of *Swan Lake* and *Giselle* both of which are intertwined with compulsory heterosexuality. As Banes notes, *Swan Lake* perpetuates a deeply romantic notion of a transcendent love match whilst Giselle ‘is pro-marriage, asserting that one must have a partner’ (1998, p.35), and that partner is of the opposite sex. Inserting same-sex eroticism via reference to the dildo into this context, Foster questions the nature of desire. She asserts that bodies do not always line up into expected categories as sexual practices proliferate.

Foster enjoys the material fleshiness of her own body. She brings our attention to her fleshy calves, repeatedly tapping them whilst arching her head back and moaning in
an orgasmic fashion, finally pressing her calves together, like Irigaray's labial lips, in a 'kiss'. In thinking beyond desire based on lack, Foster, like Wittig, represents a rejection of male-dominated definitions of woman and calls the whole gender system into question. 'In other words', writes Braidotti, 'she is neither "nonman", nor "nonwoman", but, rather, radically other' (Braidotti, 1994, p.271). Foster's reference to lesbian sexuality can be said to go beyond identity as based on the phallus to suggest instead a female eroticism that threatens normative bipolarised sexuality.

Sexual references continue throughout *Lac de Signes*. Towards the end of the middle section Foster performs a parodic series of movements akin to the extensions and linking steps of ballet. Foster accompanies these steps with the words 'inflate', 'deflate', 'inflate', 'deflate', spoken in high-flown tones. These terms relate the vocabulary of ballet to the image of the phallus but also suggest the more mobile penis, shifting between its erect and flaccid states. Foster extends this language of the penis to parodically evoke the interaction between the male and female dancer. He inflates, deflates and supports; she is fragile, delicate and sexy.

The image of the penis genders and problematises the symbolic construct of the phallus. Foster's representation of the penile phallus intersects with feminist revisions of the phallus. Feminists have argued that the phallus, when constructed as gender neutral and as unconnected to the male penis, perpetuates patriarchal inequalities (Bernheimer, 1992). Feminist revisionists have thereby sought to unveil the phallus in a gesture which 'reveals the fallacy of the phallus.' (Bernheimer, 1992, p.117) Charles Bernheimer (1992) usefully reinstates the place of the penis within Lacanian phallic theory and argues that:

> The most evident effect of penile reference on the transcendental phallus is the onslaught of temporality and the consequent variability of the penis between its rigid and limp states.

(Bernheimer, 1992, p.119)

As a phallus the ballerina, it could be argued is, 'inert, insensible, unresponsive to variations in context and circumstance. The phallic penis is impersonal and unchanging, always erect, impervious to differences in desire – whether the other's or one's own' (Bernheimer, 1992, p.120). However when the phallus is connected to the
materiality of the penis it can be imagined as a changeable, mutable form. Thereby
the ballerina-as-penis may have a little more room for manoeuvre. This is not to
conflate the penis and the phallus, for as Heather Findlay writes in her discussion of
lesbian dildo debates, the collapsing of the difference between a symbol (the phallus)
and a real body organ (the penis) is one of the assertions of patriarchy (1999, p.470).
What I am arguing here is that whilst the ballerina-as-phallus suggests a powerful
reclaiming of feminine desire via masquerade she is still fixed by the rigidity of the
phallus. As penis however she becomes a more material body, a body that is
imperfect and leaky.

The ballerina, like the phallus, encompasses the illusion of universality and
transcendence. Locked into the symbolic system the ballerina-as-phallus refers to no
particular body. Whereas imagining the phallus, and the ballerina, as penis removes
the transcendental illusion and insists on an awareness of gender and specificity. The
penis, unlike the phallus, has a bodily experience and belongs to a specific body - a
body that has a race, class and sexual orientation (Bernheimer, 1992, p.118).
Problematically this body is male, and the penile phallus (whether used in symbolic,
metaphorical or ‘real’ way) is still highly gendered, as is the theory, however this
conception of the ballerina could give rise to differentiated bodies. Perhaps the
ballerina-as-penis could construct an indecipherable and shifting dance – one in which
her subjectivity, her race, history, and gender are represented fluidly. A dance in
which, whilst not whole or essentialist, she is not constructed as lacking.

Conclusion
This is a deconstructive work that explores the ballerina’s construction through
references to Swan Lake and Giselle. In the shift from Lac de Cygnes to Lac de
Signes Foster creates an interrogative dance in which the use of exterior texts is overt.
She suggests an unfixing of the subject and a destabilising of meaning. In her work
each element becomes a coded fragment of culture, a piece of a puzzle that may never
be resolved since its various parts shift places and meanings. Working through
narratives and movement from the ballet genre Foster re-contextualises and critiques
ballet creating a hybrid text that is an explicit example of the shift in art towards the
self-referential and reflects postmodern attitudes towards the past. Foster unwraps
Swan Lake and Giselle to reveal layers of meaning in such a fashion that the ballet’s
previously seemingly fixed identities are presented as relative and indeterminate.

Foster sketches various intersecting bodies. Participating in changing concepts of the body these bodies are, through parody, overtly performative. Foster evokes the academic and the dancer, and through parody she embodies other roles - those of Myrtha, Giselle, Albrecht, Odette and Odile. The bodies evoked by Foster are unruly - humorously critiquing the ballet and the frames through which the ballet is observed and analysed.

Foster's most innovative allusion in *Lac de Signes* is that the ballerina conceived of as phallus might give rise to a more fluid body in which the erotic is reclaimed. In this construction the ballerina becomes an unstable subject who challenges the symbolic order. Foster indicates the body's materiality (soft fleshy and wobbling calves) and threatens the boundaries of the body (extending it via the attachment of the phallic ballerina). The phallic extension of the body is not fleshy but plastic, a dildo. This gives rise to the possibilities of a lesbian reading that threatens normative sexuality. Reclaiming her own sexuality, rather than becoming object of a male sexual gaze, Foster offers ownership of the phallus to the ballerina. The ballerina is, this dance suggests, a sexual, desired, and phallic, if still frustrated creature, for this reworking is perhaps somewhat limited by Foster's homogeneous approach to the reinterpretation of the ballet.
Notes

1 The elements of _Swan Lake_ and _Giselle_ most overtly used on stage are: sections of libretto; movement sequences and positions (such as Odette's distinctive arm gestures and Giselle and Albrecht's _pas de deux_); costume (in the first section Foster wears a traditional short classical tutu); and fragments of music ('The dance of the cygnets' and Odette and Siegfried's _grande pas de deux_ from the end of Act 1 are both played whole).


3 Foster first performed this middle section of _Lac de Signes_ in 1995, under the title _The Ballerina's Phallic Pointe_. The relationships between this section of _Lac de Signes_ and a written text by Foster, also entitled title 'The ballerina's phallic pointe' (1996a), are discussed latter in this chapter.

4 Whilst I use the notion of a 'postmodern dance style' here, there is not of course a single or easily defined movement style that characterises postmodern dance. Rather I use this term to indicate the attitude towards the body that is evident in 'softer' techniques, such as release based practices, as well as more individual, idiosyncratic ways of moving that have become associated with postmodern choreography.

5 Interestingly this description by Sally Banes is given in the context of an essay that describes a trend in postmodern dance toward the retelling of fairy tales. In this essay Foster's work is listed alongside that of Bausch (Bluebeard); Gillerman (The Princess Story) and Zollar (who takes her inspiration from African and Afro-American folktales) (Banes, 1994, p.287).

6 Foster is editor of _Choreographing History_ (1995b) and _Corporealities: Dancing, Knowledge, Culture and Power_ (1996a) as well as the author of _Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary America_ (1986) and _Choreography and Narrative: Ballet's Staging of Story and Desire_ (1996b). Foster has also published numerous essays/papers including: 'The Ballerina's Phallic Pointe' (1996a); 'Harder, Faster, Longer, Higher - A postmortem Inquiry into the Ballerina's Making' (1995a); 'Dancing Bodies' (1997) and recently 'Closets Full of Dances: Modern Dance's Performance of Masculinity and Sexuality' (2001), which contains an analysis of Matthew Bourne's reworking of _Swan Lake_. Foster's dance training is in ballet and modern dance and includes study with Graham, Limon and Cunningham.

7 The current interest in approaches to dance making of this kind was reflected in the 1999 conference _Exploding Perceptions, Performing Theory: Theorising Performance_. The works discussed at this conference are demonstrative of sites 'where theory and practice not only co-existed but also reciprocally informed each other' (Briginshaw, 1999, p.3).

8 This does not mean of course that we can no longer tell the difference between dancing and theorising; rather, I think usefully, it indicates the potential playful relationships that can be established between dance/theory and also suggests that dance can be its own theory and theory may dance.

9 Interestingly, and probably typically, only the spoken part of this presentation was published in the conference proceedings as these are in a traditional written form. In this written text no mention is made of the performed elements.

10 _Lac de Signes_, as a practical/theoretical enquiry, challenges traditional modes of operation for in this dance Foster sanctions embodied knowledge and performed experience as a prime method of critical inquiry. Also as an academic, who performs in academic and non-academic contexts, her work gives rise to questions surrounding the acceptance (or not) of performance as an alternative and equal form of 'publishing' research.

11 See for example the work of Yvonne Rainer (USA) and current British choreographer/dancers such as Emilyn Claid, Liz Aggiss, Wendy Houston and Carol Brown (UK/ NZ), who have explored different strategies for establishing alternative performer/audience relationships.

12 It is worth noting that whilst Foster presents alternative viewing possibilities in this dance she has been one of a number of feminist dance critics that have reinforced Mulvey's model, applying it to ballet in order to reveal the way in which she perceives the ballerina to be positioned as object by the gaze (see Foster 1996a as an example).

13 Mulvey (2001)(first published 1975) argues that scopophilia, the drive towards visual pleasure, as explored in Freud's work is one of the central features of the cinematic experience.

14 This image makes reference to Odette but also suggests other iconic roles such as _The Dying Swan_ (1907, ch. Fokine)

15 The phrase 'anxiety of influence' used by Hutcheon refers to the book _The Anxiety of Influence_ by Harold Bloom (1997) (first published 1973). In this book, as well as in more recent texts such as _The Western Canon_ (1995), Bloom suggests that all literary texts are a misreading of those that precede...
them. (See Chapter One for a discussion of reworkings and the ‘anxiety of influence’).

Whilst I have begun here to consider the relationship between comedy and reworkings a more
detailed analysis of the use of parodic comedy and ridicule within reworkings and dance *per se* remains
to be done. As discussed in Chapter Three the excessive laughter of carnival can be transgressive and
this may potentially be especially so in the supposedly serious context of ballet.

This title is taken from Goldberg (1997). Whilst I don’t pursue it here I suggest that the
problematic homogenisation of all female ballet roles that, I argue, Foster demonstrates is also evident
in Goldberg.

In her endnotes to ‘The ballerina’s phallic pointe’ Foster states that her definition of the ballerina­
as-phallus follows the ideas established by: Lacan, de Lauretis, Bernheimer and Taussig (1996a, p.23,
n.33).

Foster notes that the gazes of men are also brought to our attention, problematising men’s
identification with the male dancer on stage. Foster writes that,

his point of identification on-stage is an effeminate man, a man in tights, through whom he
must pass on is way to the object of his fascination, or on whom he can focus within a
homosexual counter-reading of the performance (Foster, 1996a, p.3).
Chapter 5
ENTER THE SILVER SWAN - HYBRIDITY, EXOTICISM AND THE EROTIC.

Is it pole dancing or is it art?
Think Playboy not Bolshoi.
(Stewart, 1999, p.46)

5.1 Shakti – an intercultural performance artist
In this chapter I discuss Shakti’s representation of the swan woman, tracing the multifaceted arguments that unfold when an Indo-Japanese woman appears on stage dressed like a g-string diva from a strip club and proceeds to dance perhaps the most prized roles from the classical ballet repertoire. Shakti’s reworking, entitled Swan Lake (1998/9), is positioned as a site of conflicting discourses. As an intercultural performance/performance artist, marked by the operations of Orientalism, Shakti crosses boundaries between the Occident/Orient and popular/high art contexts. Within these already complex frames Shakti presents a highly sexualized image which both reinforces and challenges the viewer’s objectification of the performer. Her work is, perhaps, refreshingly free of political correctness and conservative feminist doctrine as she enjoys the power and pleasure of her sexuality. However her image of woman may also be dangerously stereotypical and too easily consumable. I present a pendulous position which swings precariously between celebrating with Shakti her new image of a swan woman and questioning the extent to which this new swan woman is in any way ‘new’ at all - a different object of desire maybe, but still an object. This dance, and Shakti’s particular dancing body, I argue, operate as a site of resistance but only tenuously.

Shakti trained in a range of classical Indian dance forms, yoga (including the Tantra) and American modern dance. Her training was initially with her mother (Yae Chakravarty) who, states Shakti, ‘was the first Japanese to bring the true form of Indian dance to Japan’ (Shakti, 1999a).¹ Her mother is the founder of the VasantaMala Indian Dance Institute in Tokyo and artistic director of the company. Shakti has also studied under various gurus of Indian dance: Guru Elappa (Bharata Natyam), Guru C.
Archayalu (Kuchipudi), Guru Kelucharan Mahapatra (Odissi), and Swami Bua (Yoga). She attempts in her dance to create a new form that is a blending of the techniques of classical Indian dance and the breathing (prana) and control of yoga (Shakti, 1999a).

Shakti’s Indian father, her programme states (1999a), was a professor in English at the Kyoto University of Foreign Studies and founder of the Gandhi Institute - a cultural organization teaching Indian Philosophy, culture and language. Shakti followed her father’s interests receiving an M.A. in Indian Philosophy from Columbia University in New York. It was whilst studying in America that Shakti trained in the American modern dance systems established by Graham and Ailey, and in jazz dance with Luigi (Shakti, 1999a). Her dances explore and expand Indian philosophy in movement and aims to have a ‘freedom and energy that speaks to people today’ (Shakti, 1999a).

The company repertoire ranges from classical Indian dance pieces to Shakti’s own brand of intercultural performance. She has been performing her own work since the early 1980s. The subjects of her dances are often female figures from myth, which Shakti presents as strong and sexual beings. This subject matter is indicated by her performance titles, for example: Salome; Eros of Love and Destruction; The Tibetan Book of the Dead; The Woman in the Dunes and, most recently The Pillow Book. Speaking about Eros of Love and Destruction Shakti states, that it is ‘about a woman’s descent or ascent into herself and realizing all the potentials within. It’s an exultation of being a woman and of being alive. It reveals her metamorphosis from self-love to self-destruction, from virgin to a vixen, from exotica to unrelenting erotica’ (Shakti, 2002).

I viewed Shakti’s reworking of Swan Lake when it was presented as part of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival (August 1999). The Garage Theatre venue, managed annually by Shakti, program a range of works under the title ‘The Japan Experience’. In the press coverage of her Swan Lake she received controversial and mixed reviews as demonstrated by the short quotation which starts this chapter. Her dances are structured improvisations and are characterized by their free, energetic quality and unfettered erotic movement. Donald Hutera describes her as ‘the most audacious performer’ at the 1999 Edinburgh Fringe and writes that her Swan Lake is a ‘wild ride’
which ‘risks vulgarity and camp’ (Hutera, 1999b, p.63). In a similar vein Don Morris writes that Shakti’s swan is ‘a shaker and a mover, and with the lusty-thighed Shakti personifying her, there is quite a lot to shake’ (August, 1999).

Whilst Shakti is not unused to mixed reviews the controversy was, I suggest, further heightened because of the subject matter of her dance. For example Morris, in *The Scotsman*, wrote:

> She has ransacked reputable sources such as the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* and the *Kama Sutra* in pursuit of her own gyrating G-string spectacles, but never before has she defiled Tchaikovsky.

(Morris, August 1999)

Whilst reworkings *per se* tend to attract mixed reviews - the traditional ballet critic, and even more so critics from the popular press, still seemingly finding them, at best, curious though lacking - what is it about Shakti’s reworking of *Swan Lake* that leads a critic to state that Tchaikovsky has been ‘defiled’? I suggest in this chapter that Shakti’s intercultural and sexualized dance is difficult to digest specifically because it is a reworking of *Swan Lake*. This *Swan Lake*, as a radical reworking, is in blatant contrast to the classically coded ballet.

Shakti’s *Swan Lake* runs for 44 minutes and is in numerous sections which are defined by costume and music changes. The dance’s structure runs parallel to the conventional ballet libretto and makes use of the most well known sections of the music. The dance starts with Shakti costumed in a black halter-neck dress and sunglasses (see video extract 5). The strains of Tchaikovsky’s opening sequence play, but rather than Prince Siegfried drinking with his friends in the forest, Shakti walks confidently around the stage and performs a series of poses using gestures reminiscent of Indian dance traditions. She pays particular attention to the hands and arms shaping them into *mudras*. Her arms circle over head and then press down in front of her body stopping at waist height, her fingers, that point towards each other, are stretched out with the middle three fingers pressing upwards and the thumb and little finger pressing downwards. Stylized gestural actions like these are contrasted by everyday gestures such as standing with her arms folded, and with her hands on her hips. Her body
remains upright and she makes grounded and rhythmic steps. As the piece develops her leg actions become larger and more developed; for example she flicks her leg out to the side from the knee and sharply swivels her pelvis around to the opposite side in order to step forward.

As the music continues a full length revolving mirror is uncovered upstage left. This mirror references both the lake, nightclubs and, as Hutera notes, is ‘a fine metaphor for the self-reflective lake’ (1999b, p.63). It can also be seen as a metaphor for Shakti’s self-conscious reworking of the ballet. Shakti gazes at herself and dancing in front of the mirror rocks her hips from side to side. Her persona has the strength and control of someone ‘in the know’.

In the next section, which uses the ‘vision scene’ music, Shakti starts dressed in a black fur coat that is opened to reveal a white bikini. The poses becomes more sexual in nature as she stands sideways on and pushes the side of her buttock forward and, with one hand touching her hip and holding the coat open and the other at her neck, she arches her head back. She then begins to isolate her pelvis in forward pumping motions. The music changes to that which is usually used in Act II by the corps de ballet leading into a pas de deux by Odette and Siegfried. As this music starts Shakti removes her coat and then performs her version of Odette’s first appearance by the lake. Echoing the rippling chords of the harp Shakti performs deep arches of the back, rocks her hips and rotates her hands as her arm strokes up her torso. As strings of a violin begin Shakti gestures towards the audience folding and circling from her elbows with her thumb and middle finger touching. These circling actions develop as she takes her right middle finger into her left hand and marks enlarged circles with her arms and torso (see video extract 6). In a dramatic change of dynamic Shakti goes on to perform a wild ‘dance of the cygnets’. Crawling forward on her hands and knees her pelvis and rib cage pulsate. Her hands are held tense in a claw like shape, with a contorted snarl her head flicks and twitches and her very long hair flies in all directions. As she stands her whole body oscillates to the thumping rhythm of the music (see video extract 7).
Next, dressed in a full-length black lace costume that hints at a medieval period, Shakti dances what appears to be her reworking of Odile in the ballroom scene. However the music is not from the third act but from the swan scenes in Act IV. Slowly she takes down her hair and removing her choker she suggestively chews upon one end. She repeatedly walks around, and passes through, the revolving mirror. Her back leaning on the mirror she slides down it to the floor, and then rolls through the mirror. As she leaves the stage Shakti sets the mirror spinning. When she returns it is to the music which forms the dramatic climax in traditional versions, as Odette and Siegfried unite in love and death. Rather than a white swan finding freedom in death however Shakti is now dressed in a silver bikini with a glittery black velvet cape hanging over one shoulder. She swirls the cape and frenetically tosses her hair. Slowly she contorts her face into an orgasmic silent scream. Her body undulates and she touches her neck, face and torso.

For the final section of her Swan Lake Shakti performs as a silver clad swan to music played by Vanessa Mae, for the first time using music other than Tchaikovsky. Her movement is manic as isolated pulses pump through her hips, ribs, shoulders and head. Her whole body ripples and shakes. Throwing herself forwards and backwards her hair flies dramatically. The work ends with Shakti in an intense state; on her knees she leans back, her face twisted and hands held like claws at her throat.

Drawing out the different features of this reworking I first consider, in Reworking Swan Lake: interculturalism and hybridity, the ways in which her radical and sexualized reworking of Swan Lake can be contextualised by the work of other contemporary choreographers who have sought to alter traditional Indian dance forms. I suggest that Shakti’s dance is an intercultural, specifically hybrid dance, and that this positions the work as a potentially subversive force. Shakti’s hybridity is not achieved via direct parody as Susan Foster's is (see Chapter Four), but via her particular mix of cultural identities and forms. I then go on, in A female postcolonial body and the exotic, to discuss the implications of Orientalism for a reading of this dance. I consider the implications on this work of Western feminisms (as noted in Chapter Three) that have ‘re-doubled’ the colonization of the female Asian body. In the final section of this chapter, Reinscribing gender: the erotic body and the grotesque, I
discuss the deviant features of this dance but also note ways Shakti’s dance may be hindered by her entry into the global economy of sex.

5.2 Reworking *Swan Lake*: interculturalism and hybridity
Shakti’s reworking of *Swan Lake* can usefully be discussed in the light of intercultural theatre practices. Patrice Pavis suggests that intercultural performance can be understood in the relationship between the ‘source culture’ and the ‘target culture’, whereby the ‘source culture’ is made intelligible to audiences from a ‘target culture’ (Pavis, 1992). This is rather too narrow a definition however to account for Shakti’s work, as in her *Swan Lake* what might be considered the source or the target cultures are not straightforward or singularly located. As Rustom Bharucha has noted in his problematisation of Pavis’ concept, interculturalism ‘has to account for different ways of seeing, otherwise it is yet another homogenized practice’ (Bharucha, 1993, p.242). However I find that Pavis’ 1996 description of intercultural theatre is useful:

In the strictest sense, this creates hybrid forms drawing upon more or less conscious and voluntary mixing of performance traditions traceable to distinct cultural areas. The hybridization is very often such that the original forms can no longer be distinguished.

(Pavis, 1996, p.8)\textsuperscript{iii}

Whilst all reworkings of existing historical dances can be said to be intercultural, as they take something from a distinct past culture and consciously alter it to present it in a new culture creating a hybrid, bi-directional text (see Chapter One), Shakti’s particular reworking of *Swan Lake* incorporates a series of exchanges of culture. Shakti transforms a nineteenth-century Russian dance text into a twentieth century Indo-Japanese one, relocating the dance in terms of time and geography. The movement is also intercultural, in that the mix of dance forms evident cannot be placed into a single culture but embody both Indian forms and American forms. Furthermore Shakti’s work breaches boundaries between dance as erotic entertainment and traditionally ‘high art’ forms. These different foci function to complicate the thorny questions of interpretation and evaluation which, because the dance is a reworking of a classical ballet, are already doubly layered. The numerous signification systems, which are founded within myriad historical, geographical and artistic contexts, make this
dance impossible to singularly locate. The dance requires the viewer to negotiate across normal boundaries and ignore established perimeters.

In order to grasp the form and function of intercultural work it is necessary, suggests Pavis, ‘to understand their inscription within contexts and cultures and to appreciate the cultural production that stems from these unexpected transfers’ (Pavis, 1992, p.2). Further, as Bennett (1996) notes, it is important when considering any intercultural reworking, particularly one which uses a Western canonical work like Swan Lake as its source, to take account of the way in which the source is held as marker of Imperialism. It is also important to note the ways in which postcolonial countries, such as India, are lodged with ‘an over determined matrix of submission and resistance’ (Bennett, 1996, p.74). Bharucha argues that to avoid the desire, evident in some intercultural performance practice, for a stable past and present we must first play to ‘historical contradictions’ (1993, p.250). Through the title, the music, and the references to narrative Shakti draws on our knowledge of the traditional Swan Lake, seemingly locating the viewer in a Western, ‘high art’ context. However the movement, costuming and setting shift our perceptions, engaging the audience in a process of reconceptualization of Swan Lake, Indian classical dance, and Shakti as an Asian woman, bringing to the surface social, political and aesthetic issues. The location of the viewer in a Western, ‘high art’ context is thereby estranged and arguably Shakti instead asserts a postcolonial and postfeminist experience.

Shakti’s movement is clearly not from the ballet idiom but neither is it exclusively Indian classical or American modern dance. Shakti’s classical Indian dance background is evident through her use of features which are typical of classical Indian dance, such as: hand gestures (mudras), facial expressions (abhinaya), rhythmic and beating foot movements and her generally earthbound movement quality. However these features are performed in an unfettered manner which suggests a departure or development from classical Indian dance forms. For example, the foot rhythms and hand gestures are not developed as a defining element, as they are in ‘traditional’ dances, but are only part of a full bodied and sinuous movement form. For example Shakti begins with a mudra around the face but then throws her hand backwards and arches her spine; her feet mark out a turn but her head swings rapidly in rotation. Shakti’s movements are
unbound, even messy, in comparison to the codified geometry of classical forms. The exaggerated facial expressions that are a strong feature of Shakti's dance are not conventionally stylized. Rather than a coquettish use of specific eye positions and a generally pleasant smile of Indian classical dance forms, Shakti grimaces and opens her mouth in orgasmic silent screams.

She uses a mix of forms and crosses boundaries between forms to develop a dance style which has been described by critic Mary Brennan as 'classical Indian dance training allied to a kind of free-form Raks Sharki (sic)' (1999). The style could also be described as a postmodern Indian dance or avant-garde Indian dance. Avant-garde Indian classical dance, Ananya Chatterjea writes,

chooses to privilege what has been marginalized, often attends to the differentials enforced by class, caste, and gender inequities, and looks to define its own aesthetics and politics.

(Chatterjea, 1997, p.294)\footnote{vi}

Recent classical dancing in India has begun to break from tradition in terms of structure and content. In order to reflect feminist critiques and to embody a postcolonialist reassessment of power, contemporary female choreographers have reinterpreted traditions and myths by relating their dances to contemporary social realities (Bose, 1998, p.254). This view of change is also voiced by Chatterjea in her essay, 'How can the brown, female, subaltern feminist speak?' (1997). In a parallel process to Shakti's reworking of Swan Lake (although with very different outcomes) Chatterjea describes how, in her work Multitudinous Trio, she attempted to choreograph reinterpretations of the legendary figures from a contemporary feminist perspective - 'reinterpreting myths so as to upset traditional conceptions' (Chatterjea, 1997, p.297).

Shakti's radical, sexualized Swan Lake can be seen as part of this shift in Indian dance. She uses choreographic variations or developments on Indian dance akin to those used by other choreographers.\footnote{vii} Key to these variations is her use of a much less codified movement vocabulary which is plural, rather than 'purist', and suggests dialogues with
different dance forms. Shakti also departs from tradition in terms of music, her form of improvisation and the use of a Western and secular subject matter as her source.

The accompaniment commonly used for Bharata Natyam (a particular form of Indian classical dance) is South Indian classical (Carnatic) music. The form uses spoken syllables, song and instrumental sounds. The association between particular dances and their musical compositions are such that the dances are often identified on the basis of their musical content (Gaston, 1999, p.269). Discussing a traditional concert for example Gaston describes the *Alarippu*, the dance performed first in a traditional concert, as a dance which is to a fixed composition of mnemonic syllables. She goes on to describe a series of dances noting the ways in which they alter rhythmically in accordance with the musical developments. Her account suggests that the dance relates to the music with the spoken mnemonic rhythmic syllables suggesting the movement. ‘Thus hard sounds such as ‘ta’, ‘di’, ‘gi’, ‘na’, ‘tom’, direct percussive movements, while softer sounds, such as ‘longu’, suggest other movements such as turns or jumps’ (Gaston, 1999, p.268). Dances that emphasize *abhinaya* are choreographed to poems set to music. These dances follow the narrative of the songs expressing the moods and predicaments of the young woman at the centre of the tale.

Shakti’s use of Tchiakovsky reflects both a radical departure and maintenance of tradition. Whilst in the style of music Shakti uses – arguably the most canonical of Western classical music – there is an obvious rupture from the norms of Indian classical dance, her way of using the music is less radically different. Shakti maintains a clear rhythmic and dynamic relationship to the score. For example she dances to music from Act II and as the rhythm of the music changes she performs a series of stepping turns around the stage taking the precise length of the phrase of music. As a new phrase starts she stops turning and performs a series of poses followed by soft padding foot patterns, again, all in exact time to the musical patterns. This close relationship to the music reflects her traditional training.

The music also of course provides the viewer with the most direct connection to the ballet and thereby is a very important signifier. Whilst the dance itself may have its own thrust, which could be said to be against the music score, she still uses the music to
remind us of the ballet's narrative. Interestingly, whilst the costuming and movement suggest that Shakti follows the narrative of *Swan Lake*, evoking Odette and Odile respectively before evolving into the transcendent silver swan, close attention to the music leads to another possibility. The music is all taken from Acts I, II and IV, with none from Odile's dances. This could imply that Shakti's dance evokes not two women but one – Odette. This dance could be said to follow her story and her transformations through black, white, black and to silver rather than oppositions in women.

Whilst improvisation in classical Indian dance is not uncommon it is normally only allowed within strict codes of prescribed movements. Shakti's whole dance is a structured improvisation. Whilst her conceptual frame, costume changes and musical structure are set the movement is not. Working through her practices in yoga, Shakti starts the dance 'cold'. She says that her body warms from the inside as she begins to perform (1999b, personal interview). Therefore the dance starts with more recognizable movement and, as she warms-up (in a mental and physical sense), the dance becomes less clearly defined. By the final section Shakti has entered a trance like state. Shakti remarks:

> I start more structured and slowly the structure breaks and there is no structure anymore, you become more free. But you have to have a structure to destroy otherwise you don't get anywhere.

(Shakti, 1999b, personal interview)

The overall structure she uses and ultimately destroys is a Western one - the libretto of *Swan Lake*. The use of a Westernized dance text as subject matter is outside the norm of subject matter for Classical Indian dance. Traditional Indian dances, even as rendered on the concert stage, take religious forms and emphasize the dancer's dedication and love of the deity Krishna, with mythic narratives and personal transformations as common subjects. In traditional *Swan Lakes* comparable themes of love and transformation exist, albeit in a Western and secular form; these subjects have here been translated across cultures. This translation, or perhaps more suitably, appropriation, of a Western dance text is a potentially subversive postcolonialist twist destabilizing the neat binary categories of the Orient and the Occident. ix
This *Swan Lake* intervenes in the broad trans-national, even globalizing, sweep of the ballet genre for the ballet genre has been adopted or imposed (as often the case in colonialist situations) in many non-European countries. The implicit values inherent in the aesthetics and technique of ballet travel with it to these new locations. For example Janet O’Shea notes that in postcolonial India ‘ballet became the legitimizing standard’ (1998, p.54). O’Shea also describes the ballet instruction received by Rukmini Devi (one of ‘two towering figures’ who led the Bharata Natyam form in the early / mid twentieth century (1998, p.46). This ballet instruction, with the famous ballet dancer Anna Pavlova, was retained and incorporated into the 1930s reconstructed form of Bharata Natayam (O’Shea, 1998, p.54).

Shakti’s ownership and ambivalence towards the ballet form marks this reworking as a political site of postcolonialist resistance. Shakti freely makes this European export her own without embodying the inherent history or universalizing aesthetics of the form. This resistance is also directed toward classical Indian dance, for Shakti rejects, or expands, ‘traditional’ Indian forms, which, as noted above, can already be seen as a postcolonial blend of Western and Indian forms.

Shakti (literally) embodies, and her work represents, a complex hybrid site. As noted earlier, she is herself of mixed national and ethnic origin; the dance uses a blend of forms (Indian dance, modern dance and yoga, alongside influences from Japanese styles) and is based upon another form (ballet); whilst the work is performed in yet a different context (in this case Scotland). As the embodiment of hybridity Shakti exists ‘in-between’ positions (as outlined in Chapter Three). Homi Bhabha writes that a hybrid identity involves;

> the regulation and negotiation of those spaces that are continually, contingently, ‘opening out’, remaking the boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of difference - be it class, gender or race ... difference is neither One nor the Other, but something else besides - in-between.

(Bhabha, 1994, p.219)
This concept of hybridity mitigates against any notion of fixity and suggests an ambiguous place in-between differing world views. It becomes possible, through this perspective, to locate Shakti within ‘the gaps’ of cultural markers and forms rather than in a binary position between cultures, in a place in which different cultures collide, transgressing each other’s bounds rather than remaining separate. Such hybrid sites, writes Bhabha, are ‘mutations’ in which ‘the trace of that which is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something different’ (italics in original, 1995, p.34) (first published 1985). So through Bhabha, Shakti’s work might be seen to reveal the ambivalence of traditional discourses on authority. For, as a subversion of that which is authoritative (the ballet), the work ‘turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention’ (Bhabha, 1995, p.35). That is, in reversing colonialism Shakti places centre stage a denied form which estranges, therefore making explicit, the basis of dominant discourse.

To quote Bhabha further:

Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities: it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the ‘pure’ and original identity of authority). Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumptions of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. It unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power.

(Bhabha, 1995, p.34-5)

Shakti’s Swan Lake represents a reverse appropriation of a Western classical ballet from a hybrid position. This hybrid position asserts the transactional nature of the postcolonial world emphasising the mutuality of the colonizing/colonized process. For, as Sara Suleri suggests, the facts ‘frequently fail to cohere around the master-myth that proclaims static lines of demarcation between imperial power and disempowered culture, between colonizer and colonized’ (1995, p.112). She argues that rather than a rigid demarcation between cultures there is what she characterises as a ‘ghostly mobility’ between the colonized and the colonizer (Suleri, 1995, p.112). In many
ways Shakti’s *Swan Lake* represents this shifting, ‘ghostly mobility’, rendering it overt rather than a lingering shadow. In its mobility the dance operates not on a single axis of power, but though a network of relationships. This network suggests a much more discursive field through which Shakti reiterates the narrative of neither the colonizer nor the colonized. Thereby Shakti avoids binary categories and suggests instead an anti-monolithic model of exchange.

It is important to note however that whilst Shakti’s position of hybridity gives her the potential for taking a resistant stance it not does not necessarily position her reworking of *Swan Lake* as resistant. Through her hybrid position it becomes possible to view her reworking of *Swan Lake* as a canonical counter-discourse, unveiling assumptions and un-grounding the perception of *Swan Lake* as ‘universal’. However other aspects of the imagery in *Swan Lake*, such as the exotic and erotic modes of presentation, suggest a much less resistive stance. These problematic aspects of the work are discussed in the following sections of this chapter.

5.3 A female postcolonial body and the exotic

Whilst reworking *Swan Lake* as a counter-canonical discourse in this instance implies an anti-colonialist stance Shakti’s body is still unavoidably bears the impacts of the continuing processes of colonization. Trinh T. Minh-Ha makes the point that;

> the third world representative the modern sophisticated public ideally seeks is the unspoiled African, Asian, or Native American, who remains more preoccupied with her/his image of the real native - the truly different - than with the issues of hegemony, racism, feminism, and social change.

(Trinh T. Minh-Ha, 1995, p.267)

Minh-Ha’s argument suggests that the ‘first world’ fantasy of the ‘authentic’ native envelopes the ‘third world’ in a branding of ‘difference’. This ‘difference’ is marked through ‘Orientalism’, to use Edward Said’s term. Said, in his influential postcolonialist work *Orientalism* (1995) (first published 1978), makes clear that Oriental culture and cultural forms, and I would add, Oriental bodies, have been exoticised due to the operation of Orientalism. Said argues that the long-term images
and stereotypes constructed by Western scholars about the ‘other’ have produced unhelpful myths which repress and exoticise their subjects.

Exoticisation processes can be seen as a ‘cultural cannibalism’ (Root, 1996, p.30). The exotic ‘other’, (that which in the consuming culture is deemed to be ‘different’), is appropriated and constructed by the consuming culture - feeding curiosity and fantasy. It is important to note that this process is not an equal one but one in which cultural differences are abstracted and aestheticized, negating the people or the culture that is the source of the interest, thereby rendering it an exotic spectacle (Root, 1996, p.30). Viewing exoticism as a cannibalistic act makes overt the way in which the ‘West’ takes freely of the ‘East’ in order the satisfy Westerner’s desires and fulfilling romanticized images.

Such cannibalistic appropriations of the exotic ‘other’ have often been presented on the Western stage in ballet and modern dances. As Pallabi Chakravoty (2000/1) notes the popularity of the Eastern girl in Western ballets is one of the obvious examples of the unequal discourse of imperialism. This is evident, she writes, ‘in the cultural appropriation of the “eternal” Orient as the repository of exotic customs and spiritual mysticism’ (Chakravoty, 2000/1, p.110). Whilst I shall not go into detail here, for it is not the focus of this work, the representation in dance of the exotic does influence readings of Shakti’s Swan Lake. Exotic characters from far off lands people many of Petipa’s ballets. For example La Bayadère (1877) is set in a lush and fantastical India and revolves around Nikiya, a scared temple dancer, and The Nutcracker (1892) incorporates dances intended to represent Arabia, China and Spain. In the classical style the required displays of pointework and divertissement mitigate against a ‘realistic’ representation of Eastern dances. These imagined exotic worlds have little relationship to, or pretence of, realism, rather they are modes of colourful decoration and visual spectacle. However, as Deborah Jowitt notes, this did not restrain choreographers as they ‘doled out exoticism in judicious doses’ (1988, p.53). The image of the India reflected and created by these dances is that of ‘a fantastic land of snake charmers, dancing girls, and spiritual mystique – a predominantly Hindu land with little heterogeneity’ (Chakravoty, 2000/1, p.110).
International exhibitions and world fairs at the turn of the nineteenth-century, held in Europe and America, promoted a fascination with all things from the East. Early modern dancers such as American Ruth St. Denis and Canadian Maud Allan also embodied this curiosity. These dancers, like other contemporary artists, sought from the East 'a utopian vision of the past glories of classical civilizations' (Desmond, 1993, p.45). Further the East was cast as 'an antidote to the chaotic urban conditions that threatened the middle and upper classes' (Desmond, 1993, p.45).

Following the fashion in the arts and in sciences for all things 'exotic', Allan and St.Denis invoked a vision of the Oriental in dances such as *Rhada* (St.Denis, 1906) and *The Vision of Salome* (Allan, 1903). Their depiction of the 'Oriental dance' had become so inscribed by the 1920s that Joan Erdman is able to characterize it thus:

> Certain features were perceived as essential: fluid boneless arm and shoulder motion, rhapsodic spirituality, costumes composed of swirling gossamer drapery and opaque veils, elaborate and wondrously vibrant jewelry, and hand movements intended to signal more than graceful positioning.  
> (Erdman, 1996, p.288)\(^{xiii}\)

Erdman emphatically states that "'Oriental dance" was an Occidental invention' (1996, p.288). This inventing of the Orient, as composed of exotic, mysterious, colourful figures, is a typical example of the process of Orientalism in operation. This process is described by Said as 'a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient' (1995, p.3).

The female colonial body is doubly colonized as Orientalist and patriarchal ideologies work in tandem. The non-Western female body is mapped and controlled from within its own culture, and from without by Western Orientalists. Chatterjea states that the subalteran female body,

has been subject to relentless tabooing and reconstruction through the process of colonization, national cultural revivalism and the creation of new national identity through the woman's body.  

(Chatterjea, 1997, p.297)
This process has been particularly evident in its effects upon the subaltern performing female body (Chatterjea, 1997, p.297). In the discourse of Orientalism and due to patriarchal constructs it becomes clear that the stereotypical Oriental female performer is perceived to be at once an excessively sexualised being and a sexually repressed, controlled woman.\textsuperscript{xiv}

The double colonization of the female body has been ‘re-doubled’ by many Western feminisms. As discussed in Chapter Three Western feminisms naturalise differentiated experiences of patriarchal oppression under a European model. This form of feminist colonization is implicitly confronted in Shakti’s work. Shakti’s hybrid performance/body evades and elides the ‘first worlds’ search for a real or authentic ‘third world’ representation. She stands in opposition to (re)produced authenticity, which, as a product of hegemony (as a counterpart of universalism), constitutes a silencing of radical oppression. Shakti is anti-authentic and her work mitigates against universalist readings. She uses what is hers and what is not hers, refusing to be reduced to a single ‘real’ identity. Hence Shakti echoes postfeminist agendas in her assertion of a fluid identity which can not be generalized or essentialised.

One of the ways Shakti challenges assumptions about the Orient (views which are mirrored by Western feminisms) is to refuse to sit safely within the bounds of tradition. By ‘opening up’ the codified language of classical Indian dance, and overtly ‘breaking the rules’ of what has been constructed as a symbol of ‘Indianness’, Shakti calls into question images of India as a tradition centered culture.

As an intercultural performance text \textit{Swan Lake} interrupts the notion of an authentic performance tradition, emphasising instead multiplicity and plurality. So whilst her Edinburgh fringe venue promotes ‘The Japan Experience’, the experiences on offer reflect multiple and complex visions of ‘otherness’. Whilst working against a racist hegemony she simultaneously flaunts and uses her ‘difference’. However her ‘difference’ is founded upon a concept of ‘other’ which is a not singular or ‘pure’ ‘otherness’, but a ‘difference’ which is of a number of locations. As Erdman asks; ‘what is “the other” when one belongs to more than one place?’ (1996, p.291).
Shakti’s *Swan Lake*, as seen by the predominately Western audience at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, is both familiar and foreign, in a place between the Orient and the Occident. So whilst the extent to which any Asian woman, whose body has already been exoticised, can create a more mutable identity is questionable, I suggest that this *Swan Lake*, as an intercultural experience, which operates through a plurality of cultural and artistic signifiers, functions so to as destabilize neat power. Challenging the constricting bounds of exoticism, Shakti constructs a mutable identity that reflects the urban societies (in the ‘East’ and the ‘West’) in which she locates herself. For although the Orient, argues Said, can not be discussed as a ‘free subject of thought or action’ (1995, p.88), in this work Shakti deconstructs typical ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ forms. Through the stripping of context, alteration of subject matter and transformation of form the performance requires an audience to examine how it recognizes cultural forms and what stereotypes are associated with them.

It becomes obvious through this discussion of Shakti’s reworking of *Swan Lake* that the text cannot be imagined autonomously. *Swan Lake*, as any text, can only be read in the light of cultures, contexts and other texts. The non-Western imagery she uses to enact the ballet libretto may seem to be dominant (or at least resonate most strongly to ‘Western’ eyes through their ‘difference’), but there is a constant reminder that this work would not have been possible without the prior incarnations of *Swan Lake*, the classical ballet. The ballet, with all its cultural imperatives, continues to rumble in the background within the new, culturally hybrid, work - even if the ballet is not literally embodied in movement.

As introduced in Chapter One, all reworkings manifest this hybrid, at least bi-directional focus. Whilst, as evident in Chapter Two, a reworking may seek to exceed the colonizing source text, that source remains as an inevitable trace, (or more strongly, essence). This aspect of reworkings is echoed in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s (1995) accounts of postcolonialism. Spivak makes clear that the only things that one really deconstructs are things into which one is deeply mired. For, she argues, deconstructive practices can only speak in the language of the things they criticise. Because of this predicament it becomes necessary to ask the question: To what extent is it possible to rework a privileged discourse, that of the ballet canon,
without reinscribing Western privilege? Or more specifically: Does Shakti manage to ‘speak’ in a language other than the ballet she critiques?

The difficulties of a deconstructive process may limit, but do not negate, the possibilities of a reworking process. Shakti’s Swan Lake, as discussed above, speaks across a number of languages. Whilst the ballet upon which the dance is based is reflected in the work through dance structure, themes, character development and music, fundamental features of the ballet canon have been removed - most importantly the language of ballet itself. The replacing of the codified form of ballet with a deconstructed version of Indian classical dance forces an audience to relocate their perspective. This work is as much, if not more, ‘about’ a reconfiguration of Indian dance forms as it is ‘about’ a reworking of ballet.

In its reconfiguration of Indian dance and ballet Shakti’s Swan Lake presents a current sensibility. However, is it, asks Erdman, like other new Indian choreographies, a form of “new Orientalism”? For Erdman ‘new Orientalism’ is founded upon the ways in which dances combine ‘Western sensibilities, technological sophistication, and international audience appeal with indigenous Indian themes and/or movement’ (Erdman, 1996, p.298).

Following Erdman’s characterization of the ‘new Orientalism’, Shakti’s Swan Lake might well been seen to be deeply mired in the Orientalism it seeks to deconstruct. As a reworking of a Western dance form, that uses a contemporary form of Indian dance, and is performed in an international arts festival, the dance is clearly marketed to an international audience. The publicity images Shakti uses to promote her dance also play into the Orientalist expectations of a Western consumer. For example her use of sheer fabrics and heavy make-up are reminiscent of fantasy representations of women from a harem. Through such images she reinforces the reading of her work as exotic, continuing the over-inscription of the colonial body and limiting the subversive potential of her work.

The complex relationships between colonial/postcolonial and regulated/subversive bodies are noted by Susan Bennett in Performing Nostalgia:
The post-colonial body is constantly susceptible in its gestures, in its languages, of cultural expropriation. It is the body that colludes with postmodernism in a global economy that appropriates and markets exotic practices in a showcase called multiculturalism. Yet it is also the body which holds out the hope of exceeding the regulated performances of the past.

(Bennett, 1996, p.148)

So even though Shakti’s hybrid *Swan Lake* is disruptive precisely because it is a hybrid work which deviates from traditional *Swan Lakes*, one of the regulatory texts of colonialism, it may well be that it is subsumed into the colonizer’s agendas. However this is a very nihilistic stance that leaves little room for the post/anti-colonial to speak. Whilst I would like to be able to argue otherwise, the effects of Orientalism (whether new or latent), and the particular way Shakti presents her work to the Western spectator, means that the work may already have been re-commodified into a colonial system. The sublimation of her work into the colonizer’s agenda is magnified by her entry into the global economy of sex. It is this aspect of her work to which I now turn.

5.4 Reinscribing gender: the erotic body and the grotesque

Brennan writes that she ‘will never see The dance of the little swans in quite the same light thanks to those pelvic shunts’ (1999). Indeed, Shakti’s representation of the Swan is less about a mystical creature full of grace, as evident in traditional versions, and more to do with creatures from a natural world who fight and mate. She says of her ‘dance of the cygnets’:

Do really little swans flitter and flutter around on their toes? No, they are kind of wild. I would think of the ‘dance of the little swans’ as more of a mating dance ... a savage one ... with their webbed feet and strong beaks. The swan is a creature of the wild – it is not tame - they’re proud creatures but free.

(Shakti, 1999b, personal interview)

The Petipa/Ivanov *Swan Lake* is often criticized within feminist dance literature for its representation of women as dualistic and disempowered. For example, Christy Adair writes that in Odette we have “the woman on a pedestal” of male fantasy’ whilst on the other hand, ‘Odile provides the other extreme of fantasy as “a woman to be used”’(1992, p.107). Both of these roles, Adair argues, disempower women by
placing control in the hands of men. Sally Banes, in her more recent text *Dancing Women*, essentially follows this argument stating:

> So in *Swan Lake* there is a binary division that sorts women into the categories of wicked and good, expressed in oppositions between active and passive, assertive and yielding, strong and gentle.

(Banes, 1998, p.61)

And Banes goes on:

> Yet the monster and the angel are wrapped up in a single woman, for one ballerina dances both roles, suggesting an underlying female dualism.

(Banes, 1998, p.61-62)

Shakti considers that in her version the swan woman surpasses the traditional duality of the good Odette and evil Odile. Shakti’s swan is not only performed by one dancer, but is also a single character who transforms as the dance progresses. In this version the white swan evolves through the work into a transcendent, powerful silver swan. This transformation process is marked by a series of costumes that are variously removed and layered throughout the dance. Shakti starts the dance in a black fur coat and then reveals the white G-string bikini beneath it; the white bikini is later covered by a black lace dress, as she transforms into the Black Swan. The white bikini can still be seen through the black lace. The costuming reinforces the interrelationship between the swans. The black swan and the white swan are presented as containing elements of each other – neither is entirely black or white. Indeed as Shakti would have it the black and the white swan are not separate, dualistically opposing women but different aspects of one woman. The final costume change is into a silver bikini. This costume references back to the white bikini but in its glittering fabric and slicker design is clearly a move away from that prior image.

Following the philosophies of Tantric yoga, which Shakti practices, the black and white swans are projections of the inner and opposing forces inside all of us, for yoga is based on a philosophy in which everything is viewed as having two aspects. Following the one living divinity (Brahma) who separates Itself into Him (Shiva) and Her (Shakti), opposites are evident in all aspects of life. Everything has two elements: male and female, now and then, here and there, self and other-than-self and good and
evil. These opposites are in a continuous relationship and are considered essential parts of the divine process.

In the practice of yoga there is an attempt to reach a union and transcendence of these opposites. Shakti’s vision of *Swan Lake* therefore can be usefully illuminated by this philosophy. The opposites of good and evil in the forms of Odette and Odile are brought together and embodied by the Silver Swan – who transcends them both. This transcendent silver swan woman is neither all purity nor all evil, but is woman who embodies both good and evil. This swan woman is free in her desires and enjoys both aspects of her self in a shimmering illusion of silver. Shakti suggests that her Silver Swan has the freedom to be whatever she wants to be and that:

You could be a virgin and a whore. You could be creative and destructive. There is no need to deny one side of you, but I think people have the tendency to deny the black or the white... one is bad or one is good.

(Shakti, 1999b, personal interview)

Further Shakti maintains that:

In a Western context it is a struggle between good and evil. But then in an Eastern context good and evil are one. So what is good and what is evil - you don’t have one without the other - which is also true in the Western *Swan Lake* - we just don’t have the princes and the romance there because it’s all within you.

(Shakti, 1999b, personal interview)

Shakti’s Silver Swan is a very desirous and sexualized swan/woman. Her movements are powerful and dynamic, sexual and demonic. Her body writhes and pulsates as she crawls across the floor and rhythmically thrusts her pelvis and flings her hair. She performs with an abandonment unusual in Western dance and is overt in the sexual nature of her movement images. This overt display of sexuality is at times uncomfortable for the audience and certainly a shift from the carefully hidden and restricted sexuality of the ballet swan woman. xvii

The ballet swan woman may display her crotch and legs, she may arch backwards in a sensuous pose but we are not supposed to notice. The narrative of *Swan Lake* may
well suggest sexual consummation but we are encouraged to politely ignore it. Instead we are to celebrate Odette’s pure, non-sexual love as if sexuality and eroticism would somehow sully the otherwise perfect image. It is Odile who is a sexual temptress and, as Banes has pointed out, her overt and assertive qualities assign her as evil, as dangerous (1998, p.61). Whilst never actually overtly sexual, Odile, due to her ability to seduce the Prince, is branded wicked.

The hiding, or suppression, of sexuality evident within classical ballet is also echoed in the history of classical Indian Dance. As a religious form classical Indian dance expressed an erotic love (sringara rasa) for the divine. Prior to British colonial rule in India these dances were performed by female temple dancers, or devadasis (literally meaning servant of god). These women, commonly from a family line of such women, were dedicated to god and became his brides in particular temples. Devadasis, in comparison to their Hindu female counterparts, were better educated, permitted more freedom and were not required to be chaste, making them somewhat marginal figures (O’Shea, 1998, p.49). Mandakranta Bose writes that devadasis ‘lived wholly under the will of temple priests and royal patrons, a situation that fostered abuse and turned many of these women into courtesans’ (1998, p.252). By the 19th century British influenced reformers ‘came to view the devadasis not as auspicious wives of god but rather as “common prostitutes”’ (O’Shea, 1998, p.50). The associations of the dance with prostitution led to a stigmatization and suppression of the dancers and their dance forms.

In the 1930s, following the attempted eradication of temple dancing by Imperial Britain, interest in dance was revived as part of the celebration of Indian nationalism. The dance in this postcolonial nationalist incarnation was taught to non-devadasis girls and “purified”. This “purification” aimed to remove the sexual associations of the dance. It was performed by upper and middle class girls and the erotic content of the form was hidden. This view is exemplified by Rukmini Devi (a leading teacher of Bharata Naytam) who
held the element of *sringara*, or erotic sentiment, as a symbol of the form's degradation which needed to be replaced with *bhakti* - devotionalism - devoid of sexual referent.

(in O'Shea, 1998, p.47)

As a postcolonial form, a form carrying within it the impact of British colonial rule, sexuality has been replaced by the representation of a non-sexual devotional love. These Indian reformist changes are intermingled with Victorian notions of gender and sexuality and reveal a 'British colonial disdain for all cultural practices not within the realm of Western Protestantism' (O'Shea, 1998, p.50). It is possible to argue thereby that the attitudes towards sexuality evident within ballet and Indian dance (following colonial rule) are both deeply rooted in Western culture which 'generally consider sex to be a dangerous, destructive, negative force. Most Christian tradition, following Paul, holds that sex is inherently sinful' (Rubin, 2000, p.321) (first published 1993).

As discussed in Chapter Three feminism has always been vitally interested in sex but there has been a strand of second wave feminism that consider sexual liberalization as an extension of male privilege (Rubin, 2000, p.338). Shakti is well aware of these views and her gleeful disregard for the politically correct and her obvious pleasure in her own body sits uncomfortably with these feminist perspectives. In its representation of female eroticism and desire, this work brings to the fore the universalizing, and, in terms of erotica, repressive, tendencies of much feminist theory. She argues that it is the portrayal of

sexuality and eroticism that people are always trying to suppress, but it is the basis of life and there is no way to deny that and there is nothing wrong with it. And a woman, or even a swan, is a very sexual creature, we give birth.... To portray desire, to be desirous is totally natural.

(Shakti, 1999b, personal interview)

Further she states:

Everybody is interested in sex. Everybody has a body, and everybody is interested in pleasing the body. Sexual pleasures and sexual desire are not to be suppressed.

(Shakti, 1999b, personal interview)
It might well be that Shakti's representation of sexuality and pleasure in the erotic comes not as a corrective to the feminist doctrines of the West, but rather from the Hindu concept of the goddess Shakti. Within Hinduism Shakti is an active and powerful female energy. The goddess is the focus of tantric practices and is considered the force of liberation and the life energy of the universe (Klostermaier, 1998, p.80). Interestingly, in tantricism, it is the body, rather than spirit, that is central to divinity for Shakti is identified with prakrti (nature/matter). This focus on and within the material body as a place of female power is clearly evident in Swan Lake and Shakti's conceptualization of her own performance practices. In using the positive qualities associated with her namesake as a symbol of woman’s power Shakti draws an interesting link between the esoteric traditions of Shaktism and postfeminism.

The work could also be positioned within the frame of pre-colonial, and pre-nationalist, Indian Dance. These earlier dance forms were, as discussed above, more erotic in style. Whilst Shakti’s dance is a modern incarnation and is in a secular context, her re-admission of explicitly erotic and sexual content sets her work in opposition to the colonial ‘cleansing’ of Indian dance. Shakti revels in the sringara (erotic) and sees no dichotomy between sexuality and spirituality.

Tanjore Balasarawati who is a leading Bharata Natyam teacher from a devadasis family echoes this view. Balasarawati maintains:

Bharatanatyam is a form of yoga ("yoking") grounded in bhakti...and expressed in the erotic idiom of sringara. Sringara is bhakti-in-dance; there is, and can be no dichotomy between bhakti and sringara.

(in O'Shea, 1998, p.48)

Shakti’s perception of the relationship between spirituality and sexuality are evident in a discussion regarding attitudes towards sexual expression within different cultures, when she states:

Christianity and Eastern religion is very different: Christianity has more sin and guilt, whereas Hindu religions don’t have that sin or guilt. You’ve seen those temple sculptures - the joy of the Karma Sutra and everything. It’s all over the
sculptures, it's on the walls of the temple, it's under the sunshine, it's something to be praised as a gift from the gods.

(Shakti, 1999b, personal interview)

Whatever the conceptual basis of the erotic in this Swan Lake, Shakti’s swan woman, in her g-string and with her sexualized display in movement, in many ways resembles a nightclub stripper. The bikini, lace, shiny silver fabric and fur coat worn by Shakti reflect the attire that is traditionally associated with strippers. The continual emphasis upon dress is also reminiscent of a stripper, for stripper’s routines usually focus upon clothing and its removal. So whilst Shakti both removes and layers clothing, the way the costume becomes part of the work links her dance with stripping routines. For example she first enters the stage in a black fur coat and in sunglasses, then dances with the coat hanging draped from her elbows and eventually, after these teasing images, reveals herself dressed in the white g-string bikini. Whilst she does not strip to a fully nude body (and this is not an insignificant difference) she does proffer her almost fully exposed body using sexualized and sexually mimetic movement.

The sexualized movement performed by strippers brings the audience’s attention to the female body and, in particular to the genitals. They arch their backs, spread their legs and protrude their buttocks (Dodds, 1997, p.222). This collection of movements for sexual display is also clearly evident in Shakti’s work. She repeatedly arches backward causing her breasts to protrude directly towards the audience, and to strain at the seams of her bikini top. Her ‘dance of the cygnets’ starts with Shakti on all fours, crawling across the floor repeatedly thrusting with her rib cage and pelvis. In another recurring movement she sits on the floor with her legs spread wide apart and she pushes her pelvis forward and between her legs so her crotch is presented to the viewer.

As Forte notes, a stripper’s function is to give pleasure to another. She writes that,

the stripper or entertainer is also offering up her body as an object of exchange for another's pleasure, with no reference to her own. Her identity, other than that of the performer, is erased in service of providing pleasure, in keeping with her fetishistic function within society.

(Forte, 1990, p.263)
Whilst Shakti, in costume and movement, does appear to be operating at least in a parallel manner to a stripper this fetishistic function is not operating in Shakti's case. In the trance like state she achieves by the end of the performance, Shakti appears to be as much involved in her own fantasy, as she is in offering herself as fantasy for the viewer. Whilst she does display herself, and her body is exposed, her body, whilst clad in the garb of a stripper, is not acted on by the audience in the manner of a stripper. Whilst like a pub stripper, the audience and the performer occupy the same small space with limited lighting to separate them making it difficult for the audience to safely gaze upon the body - Shakti's body is all too fleshy, not at all a perfect illusion or a docile body – this body is unruly. She asserts her own pleasure and sexuality, thereby reclaiming her body through its exposure. In this case the performing woman enters into an active interplay with her audience, as she defines her own image and looks back.\textsuperscript{xviii}

However, the use of an erotic presentational style and movement language is further complicated when the position of eroticism as a trope of the exotic is taken into account. As Root writes:

> One of the most persistent tropes of exoticism is the fascination with the erotic possibilities of the colony, which in effect becomes the eroticization of racial power. Exoticism always seems to pertain to sex in some way .... Exotic images of women have to do with colonial fantasies of power, and the sexual availability of women classified as exotic is for the most part dependent on the ability of the colonist to coerce.

(Root, 1996, p.40)

\textit{Swan Lake} heightens the already sexualized image of the Oriental woman, reinforcing the concept of her as sexually available to the Western male desire. Conversely, however, I also can conceive that Shakti re-appropriates her own sexuality not only from the male gaze but also from the colonizing and eroticising gaze by the very 'overtness' of the display and her powerful stance. Shakti takes control of her sexuality in a manner which mitigates against the 'colonial fantasies of power'.

One of the final images in the dance of the Silver Swan is the performance of a ritual behind a bowl of flames.\textsuperscript{xix} As Shakti sets the flame alight her focus is intense and her
face pulls into exaggerated contortions of pained ecstasy. The flame light cast onto her face and body flickers creating dark shadows, suggesting some inner demon is present further subverting the audience's perceptions. This silver swan woman is dangerous and may just bite back!

In her recuperation of the explicit female body Shakti's work might well be interestingly illuminated by the practices of post 1980s feminist performance art. Performance artists such as Karen Finley, Cindy Sherman and Annie Sprinkle explore female sexuality, imagining it as 'something other than monstrous and something other than phalloobsessive' (Schneider, 1997, p.39). In this work the body, and its explicit presentation, is a site of political action. The body is overtly presented in its materiality foregrounding it specifically as sexed, gendered and sexual. Finley, for example, interrogates social taboos on sexuality rendering her commentary explicit via overt sexual expression and excretory functions (Spackman, 2000, p.14). Feminist performance artists usage and exposure of their own bodies marks a disruption, a refusal to be contained. These are "obscene", "pornographic", "grotesque" bodies.

Like these other female bodies, Shakti's body/body usage is excessive. Her overly curvaceous body folds, her breasts oscillate (only by some miraculous feat remaining within the confines of her top!); her thighs brush against each other and her buttocks are puckered. Her movement is untamed, wild and contorted. Her facial expressions are exaggerated - stretching her face into extreme configurations. In her mid forties Shakti exceeds the bounds of established boundaries and her behaviour is considered "inappropriate". She is "grotesque".

As outlined in Chapter Three, the "grotesque" body is an anathema to the body aesthetics of the classical canon. The classical canon promotes an idealized, contained and controlled body. This body has become in modern times associated with the young, slim, perfect body of films and advertisements. In contrast the "grotesque" body is materialistic, debase, has orifices, genitalia and other protuberances (belly, breasts, buttocks etc.). Shakti, in line with feminist performance artists, attacks the image of the classical body through a celebration of her sexuality and her self-evident confidence and pleasure in her own body.
Reading Shakti’s work in the light of Indian philosophies, as a challenge to conservative, anti-sexual discourse, and as grotesque, brings to the fore the subversive potential of this dance. However it is also possible that the display of the body and the clearly sexualized movement references such as appear in Shakti’s dance may be assimilated into a commercial economy. The reviews of Shakti’s work in the tabloid press which describe her as ‘love Shak’, ‘Sexy Shakti’ and her dances as ‘steamy’ and ‘sizzling’ (Anon, 1999) suggest that this is, at least in part, the case. This assimilation may also have been hastened by Shakti’s own publicity which emphasizes the titillating aspects of her show via images of Shakti in provocative poses and dressed in revealing clothing such as bikinis and sheer fabrics. In her press releases and interviews she has also repeatedly pointed towards the erotic nature of the work, she often highlights the places in which her work has been banned due to its erotic content/imagery. The viewer cannot help but be influenced by the context enacted in the publicity surrounding the performance - indeed the sexual references and images may well be a key factor in an audiences’ attendance – and Shakti work is thereby received, unavoidably, in the context of the commercially sexualized body.

The way sex is used as a selling tool places this dance on the borders of dance as art and erotic dancing. Whether this border matters or not in this postmodern world is debatable. Following the lead of ethnologists it has become possible to discuss all forms equally: disco alongside ballet, and the nightclub entertainer alongside the postmodern artist. Moreover the most postmodern of artists may well be found the nightclub rather than the traditional performance venue. Given that this is the case Shakti’s eroticism is surely no reason to disregard her.

The female appropriation of sexual display in live performance, even within patriarchal norms, acts as a threat to hegemony. Female sexual pleasure, especially self-pleasure, whilst bordering on the structures of pornographic viewing, can be empowering to women. So whilst this performance could be dismissed as simply an erotic display, it is creatively erotic, and operates in such a manner as to challenge the status quo of hegemonic eroticism as it celebrates a woman’s sexuality. Further, she is not only presenting an image of a strong sexualized woman but is in control of the whole event – she is the venue manager, the producer, creator and performer of the work. There is
no male dominated hierarchy in evidence here! In this context Shakti’s sexualized
dance can be seen as an exercise in postfeminist ideology – as she openly expresses her
erotic life and in doing so challenges audiences to examine their preconceptions.

Moreover sexual images formerly regarded as unacceptable are now boldly displayed
and accepted as art and society shifts the once proscribed into the mainstream. Shakti’s ownership of sexuality is an interesting shift as many artists have disassociated
their work from pornography through claims of ‘artistic merit’ (Campbell, 1996, p.272). In this formulation sexual representation, contained within an aestheticised
form, is admissible. For, it is claimed, that if the sexual display has a ‘serious purpose’
then it is acceptable: purposes of gratification are not. In Shakti’s work such
distinctions are hard to qualify as barriers between high and low culture; ‘trashy’ and
‘arty’ are traversed and disregarded.

Conclusion
This Swan Lake is a contemporary work that marries Shakti’s dance training and
philosophical outlook. The dance addresses the here and now and reflects the multi-
cultural, postmodern societies in which she lives. Whilst using two historically rooted
forms (ballet and Indian dance) the dance deconstructs these sources to focus on today
- on the ‘stories’ of modern life. This work exists within the multiple strands of
Orientalism, popular/high culture, artistic/philosophical spiritualism and erotic
performance. The potential of her reworking lies in its complex and hybrid crossing
between cultures for, as a hybrid work, it cannot be decoded from one single,
legitimate, point of view. Her hybrid postcolonial body problematises singular
characterisations of identity and challenges the bounds of exoticism as she constructs a
mutable identity that reflects postfeminist discourse. Shakti controls her own image,
takes pleasure in her own sexuality, and draws interesting links between pre-colonial
forms of Indian dance, Shaktism and postfeminisms,

However Shakti’s representation of the swan women as unproblematically sexual
leaves her open to consumerist tendencies and deeply tainted within Orientalist
structures. Whilst Shakti’s Silver Swan has a very different identity to that presented in
classical ballet versions, Shakti’s Swan is still problematic. Shakti’s erotic performance
falls into the traps of essentialism - in which woman's sexuality is unquestioningly celebrated as liberation. This does not discount however the ways in which this new *Swan Lake* challenges Eurocentric assumptions and brings into focus established notions of *Swan Lake*, Indian dance and eroticism, shifting traditional angles and fields of vision.
Notes

i Shakti uses the term ‘true’ Indian dance. This is highly problematic as shall be discussed later in this chapter. However for my purpose this comment points to Shakti’s pride in her heritage (family and dance). Her comments also perhaps suggests that she has a need to locate herself within an established ‘respected’ form(s) even whilst working in opposition to them.

ii Whilst not the focus of this study, this repertoire – from Classical dance pieces to experimental works – demonstrates two attitudes towards Classical Indian Dance. As a ‘reinvented’ tradition many artists strive to locate the most ‘authentic’ form possible, whilst others are trying to free themselves from the perceived ties of tradition and create dances which express a more current sensibility.

for more extended and very insightful discussions of Interculturalism see Rustom Bharucha (1993 & 2000); Patris Pavis (1992 & 1996) and, specifically in relation to Indian dance forms Pallabi Chakravorty (2000/1)

ix See Iyer (1997) for a discussion of different styles of Indian classical dance.

x Indian Nationalists revived classical Indian dance, following its suppression under British Imperial rule, in the 1930s. In this new context the dances forms and purpose were significantly altered (see O’Shea (1998), Gaston (1999), and Bose (1998)).

xi Chatterjea (1997) suggests that a differentiation needs to be drawn between ‘modern’ dance and avant-garde dance in India. She writes: ‘The avant-garde is often marked by ambiguity: traditional forms and modes are critiqued in their contemporary incarnation. It looks beyond the neo-classical dance celebrated by “modern” or modernizing India and beyond the models of modernity created by the West’ (1997, p.294).

xii Coorlawala (2001) notes several postcolonial choreographers that have divorced their dances from the Hindu religion and questioned the classical norms. She lists: Mrinalini Sarabhai, Kumudini Lakhia, Narendra Sharma, Bharat Sharma and Malika Sarabhai (Coorlawala, 2001, p.401).

xiii Bharata Natyam is one of a number of styles of classical Indian dance. Other styles include: Kathakali, Kathak, Manipuri, Odissi, Kuchipudi and Chaaau (See Iyer, 1997).

xiv The categories of Oriental and Occident are here useful, if problematic constructs. The terms are used by Said (1995) (first published 1978) to denote a culturally constructed distinction, as Said states the ‘Orient’ and the ‘Occident’ are man-made (p.5), they are he argues more to do with imaginative geography than a fact of nature. Said’s analysis of Orientalism has been criticised for its construction of an inescapable dualism between the Orient and the Occident and the failure to locate a place from which the colonized can speak. However he very usefully identifies long-lived and powerful forces of oppression (Brooker et al, 1997, p223-5).

xv The notion of cultural exchange as ‘ghostly mobility’ is developed by Suleri (1995) in a discussion of the historical documentation of English India of the C18th.

xvi The term ‘canonical counter-discourse’ is drawn from Tiffin who discusses the postcolonial use of British canonical literary texts (1995, p.95-98). See also chapter one for a more extended discussion of the relationships between reworkings and canonical counter-discourse.

xvii For case studies of the representation of ‘the exotic’ in ballet and modern dance see for example: Jowitt (1988); Garafola (1998); Erdman (1996); Koritz (1997); and Desmond (1993).

xviii Erdman very interestingly points to the interaction between these Western ‘Oriental dances’ and the regeneration of Indian dance in India. She writes: ‘But it was mainly the interest of Westerners in indigenous Indian dance which encouraged India’s Westernized elite’s to search for their own traditions and reconstruct them for staged public performances’ (1996, p.290).

xix As Elaine Showalter comments ‘the Oriental woman behind the veil of purdah stood as a figure of sexual secrecy and inaccessibility for Victorian men in the 1880s and 1890s.’ She goes on to link the veil to female sexuality and to the veil of the hymen in order to argue that ‘the veil thus represented feminine chastity and modesty; in rituals of the nunnery, marriage, or mourning; it concealed sexuality’ (1992, p. 145).

xx This is a parallel argument to that presented by Linda Hutcheon (1988 & 1989) in her discussion of postmodern deconstructive strategies.

xxi For example in Shakti’s publicity images for Swan Lake Shakti is dressed in a translucent white jacket, which is open at the front revealing a white strapless bikini top. She has a gold choker around her neck and is posed in with her back arched. In the publicity for The Pillow Book Shakti is draped in a silky red fabric and she is lying across a set of steps.

I do not mean to suggest that all Strip shows inevitably present women as fetish. Dodds (1997) maps out the ways in which the female stripper might challenge the dominant male order. She argues that it possible to place the female stripper in a position of power as she 'becomes sexually assertive and takes control of the sexual offer' (p231). However Dodds also notes that 'it is ultimately the women who must offer her body for the purpose of male pleasure' (1997, p.232).

This ritual sequence was part of the Edinburgh Festival performance I attended in August 1999 but does not appear on the earlier 1998 video recording of this dance.
Chapter 6

SOMEWHERE IN THE FOOTNOTES TO

SWAN LAKE: THE OPEN TEXT AND HAPTIC PRESENCE

Swan/Woman/Woman/Swan/Swan/Woman/Woman/Swan
Swan/Woman/Woman/Swan/Swan/Woman/Woman/Swan
Swan/Woman/Woman/Swan/Swan/Woman/Woman/Swan
Swan/Woman/Woman/Swan/Swan/Woman/Woman/Swan

(Midgelow, O (a set of footnotes to Swan Lake), 2002)

6.1 O (a set of footnotes to Swan Lake)

O (a set of footnotes to Swan Lake) (2002) is a video, solo dance and sonic art installation. The space is darkly lit, the atmosphere cool. On translucent screens there is a projected image of feathers falling. A voice is heard; a dancer makes a sharp turn of the head, an isolation of the shoulder ripples out through to the hand; swan, woman, woman, swan states the text projected from a lap top computer.

The choreographic installation footnotes (as I shall refer to the work) is conceived and performed by me, with video editing by Jane Bacon and Robert Daniels, and a sound score by Oliver Ryles. The piece was premiered at University College Northampton, UK, on Sunday 3rd of February, with the audience entering over a two hour duration. footnotes can be seen as the latest in a series of works in which I have explored different modes of reworking. These dances, Awaking Aurora (1995/6), The Original Sylph (1997/8), O (2001), plus aspects of The Collection (1999) (with Mulchrone), progressively depart from their source texts. This departure has involved selectively leaving behind more and more central structural features or invariants (see Chapter One & Suvin, 1988). For example, Awaking Aurora, a reworking of The Sleeping Beauty (1890), used core sections of the Tchaikovsky music score and followed a linear narrative whilst reconceiving the role of Aurora and re-choreographing the movement in order to bringing to the fore the darker and older aspects of the fairy tale. The Original Sylph (as discussed in Chapter One) highlighted the fragmented and provisional nature of history, aligning this with a discordant representation of Giselle
as both exceedingly knowing and rather fray. The dance used small fragments of the Adam music score and made references to the ballet in movement and costume whilst having a non-linear narrative form. *footnotes*, as shall become evident through this chapter, is informed by theoretical concerns and the analysis of other reworkings. The installation incorporates no direct invariants of *Swan Lake* (1895) whilst consistently invoking the ballet through sound, image, text and movement.

Four screens hang in the space. Two large translucent screens (one plastic and one fabric) form a right angle. On these screens are two intersecting video projections. Linking these screens is a four metre square floor covering of plastic. A third smaller screen, placed to the edge and slightly back of the main right angle, has written text projected on to it from a computer. A final long thin screen, mirrored by a floor covering, is to the opposite side of the space. I dance solo in the space, shifting between the screens, floor areas and a stool. The performance is improvised and I form movement around some previously explored, and some totally spontaneous, images. Shifting out of an overtly performative mode into a more functional mode, I come to and from a centrally placed computer. At this computer I am able to select from a list of fragments of text in order to project this text onto the small third screen.

Sound plays continuously throughout. The score contains a collection of fragmented elements and has an insistent tone. Shifting through sections of sound in a seamless manner the music weaves its way through the voices of past and current ballet dancers, derisive laughter and distorted digitised sounds. The sound operates in layers within which partial references to *Swan Lake* are present, for example; Natalia Markarova’s voice is heard telling moments of the libretto, dancers discuss their experiences of performing as cygnets and a child tells of watching the ballet. These elements are hidden, due to the effect of layering. They become part of the total soundscape as the music creates an intense atmosphere.

On the long thin floor covering to the side of the space I take halting steps. My heels are raised as high up as possible and are held up by my hands. I step, lifting each foot into place. On the large plastic screen fragmentary images of me rolling and sliding,
dressed in a white tutu and pointe shoes, are playing. On the fabric screen feathers are falling. “Every story tells a story that has already been told”, states the projected text. These images evoke possible moments and together can be taken to suggest various meanings. However, as the connections between elements, and a particular audience member’s angle of vision to these elements, is in no way fixed or fixable, these descriptions (as the descriptions throughout this chapter) give only a feel for the type, rather than the definitive, collection of images, sounds and movement in the space. The video recording of footnotes that accompanies this chapter can similarly be seen to represent specific moments as presented at particular performances, rather than the definitive work. However the short series of images presented on the video do effectively capture the spirit of the work (see video extract 9).

Discussing and critiquing one’s own work is a hard thing to do. This analysis attempts to frame the work critically, placing it within theory, whilst also remaining open to the recognition of the more problematic aspects of the work. Following the theoretical constructions of the female body evident in the writings of Irigaray, Deleuze and Guattari I discuss footnotes in terms of hybridity, plurality and becoming. In Hybrid body – plural bodies, I suggest that a specific example of becoming is found in the hybrid swan/woman - a mutating creature who embodies both animal and woman. footnotes, I suggest in The specificity of bodies – one body – my body, also problematises these unstable bodies by inserting into this frame a body which is ‘real’. The ‘realness’ of this body, of this person, brings the to the fore the potential risk of postfeminist discourse in which the body might be lost altogether.

I argue in Breaking the gaze – inscribing a haptic presence, that footnotes, in trying to find a mode of operating that is different to the visuality of the gaze, evokes the sense of touch. I find a useful model to describe this in concepts relating to haptic perception. Haptic sense ‘can help to liberate us from the hegemony which sight has for so long exercised over our own culture’s social, intellectual and aesthetic life’ (Howes, 1991, p.4). When linked to Irigaray the haptic can also usefully theorise the erotic images and seductive audience/performer relationships evident in the installation. Whilst I argue that footnotes evokes an erotic woman differently (not one
trapped in the objectification of a normative frame), the dangers versus efficacy of inscribing woman in terms of eroticism are discussed in *Eroticism and the politics of touch*, the final section of this chapter.

I start this analysis of footnotes however by noting the ways in which it might be considered an open performance text. The work is, I argue, inherently unstable and blurs the binaries of seeing and being seen, object and subject, absence and presence. The latter of these binaries is taken up in *Absent presence: transgressing boundaries* as I discuss the implications of *Swan Lake* as an absent presence within this radical reworking. I go on to consider the nature of the work's instability and suggest that through improvisation and the constant shifting of relationships between elements that footnotes can be seen as an enactment of becomings.

6.2 Absent presence: transgressing boundaries

Working through the gaps and silences of the ballet *Swan Lake*, this work kindles a sense or resonance of the ballet but does not embody it within its own substance. Transgressing traditional binaries between absence and presence- a model in which presence is valued over absence - footnotes evokes *Swan Lake* as an absent presence. The sound and images (video, danced and written) in the space are only partial - they are pared down and offer an impressionist representation rather than a detailed retelling. Fragmentary images and sounds provide a trace of half remembered images but the connections between them, and from them back to the ballet, are never fully realised. The gaps in footnotes have to be filled in by the viewers who are required to exercise their own associations and memories in order to make sense of the work.

To differing extents all reworkings operate through the audience's degree of awareness of the source text. These dances are hybrid that at the very least evoke a bi-directional gaze (see Chapter One), for the audience simultaneously enjoy the new work and the relationship with or contrast to the source text. The normative mode of viewing in reworkings asserts a hierarchical relationship between the source and the reworking, a mode that privileges the source. In footnotes this hierarchy is challenged as the boundaries between absence and presence become blurred. Whilst the ballet is
present, for it is resonant throughout *footnotes*, the bi-directionality of this reworking is shifted such that no particular moments in *Swan Lake* and *footnotes* coalesce. It becomes almost impossible to conceive a direct relationship between the two works. I avoid the explicit device of parodic quotation in the manner of *Lac de Signes* (see Chapter Four). Instead I present a series of traces or intertexts. *footnotes* goes beyond 'source criticism', in which the present text is derived from a linear set of references to events and people (Adshead-Lansdale, 1999, p.12). This choreographic installation plays with and interweaves many fragments and is left open enough to encourage the audience to inscribe their own meanings, their own intertexts, rather than relying on notions of 'origin' or 'influence'. In this way *footnotes* is an ambiguous text which has the capacity to generate multiple, shifting and potentially contradictory meanings.

The reference in the title of the work to footnotes attempts to suggest two directions: firstly, to the paratextual information conventionally placed at the end of a written page; secondly, to bring playfully to the viewer's attention the feet and the act of dancing. As footnotes, this is a dance that operates from a marginalised space; a dance in the wings, or perhaps even further off centre, from beyond the stage door.

Linda Hutcheon (1989) argues that the paratextual role of footnotes in novels and history writings asserts a double narrative, inserting intertextual references to other texts and the external world. Footnotes are used to supplement, support and lend authority to the main body of the text. This marginalised space is also often where opposing views are dealt with. Importantly footnotes disrupt linear reading in such manner that the creation of a coherent narrative is fractured. The presentation of the footnotes only (as is the case in this reworking) might be seen to disrupt the normative balance between the primary text and the secondary paratextual footnotes even further. Seizing on unreguarded details *footnotes* performs a strategic reversal emphasising that which is hidden rather than which is to the fore. Ironically *Swan Lake*, as a dance text, does not come with a set of prescribed footnotes. These notes are not only unreguarded details but details that are not even present. This work evokes imaginary footnotes, the footnotes that are missing, footnotes that might be added by the feminist viewer suffering from the anxiety of pleasure and distaste. In
line with postmodern thought the master narrative of ballet is questioned and the marginal and ex-centric is called to the viewer’s attention. Through this paratextual strategy footnotes reminds the viewer that the primary text, *Swan Lake*, is fictive. Its role as a masterly discourse of Western culture, its centrality, is revealed to be illusory.

Footnotes are often intended to elucidate the meaning of the primary text. In footnotes however the traces, or ‘meanings’ (such as they are), are disseminated throughout the work across sound, text, video and dance. This dissemination of meanings increases the likelihood that much of it may drift. ‘Meanings’ are constantly ‘deferred’ and also ‘differential’. This fluidity of meanings can be usefully illuminated by Jacques Derrida who coined the term ‘*differance*’ to indicate the ‘restless play within language that can not be fixed or pinned down for the purposes of conceptual definition’ (Norris, 1987, p.15). For Derrida meaning never arrives, it is always subject to semantic slippage and therefore remains out of grasp. In footnotes the collections of signs evident do not coincide in a clear coherent manner, traces are suggested but never complete. Also as the work is improvisatory no meanings can be fixed as relationships between elements are constantly shifting.

Reading footnotes as a dance in which *Swan Lake* is absent yet present requires, through a Derridian perspective, that the ballet and the work footnotes are pursued beyond their lexical systems to the various sub-units or components in order to enter a chain of substitutions. As this chain can not be satisfactorily completed it becomes evident that in footnotes I am less interested in breaking through traditional, limited, readings of the ballet in order to offer yet another (closed) reading, and more interested in opening up possibilities. This places in doubt the notion of making a reading in the first place.

Evoking *Swan Lake* as an absent presence risks that, in becoming so absent, *Swan Lake* will not be recognisable at all, thereby mitigating against what might be seen as necessary for a reworking to have efficacy. (That is the audience perhaps has to be able to perceive the subversion taking place in order to experience the pleasure of
proliferating identities.) This may well be the case. However footnotes, as an installation that operates in-between absence and presence, attempts to circumvent the difficulties of a parodic process (see Chapters One and Four) and also to disrupt traditional feminist agendas which have operated in terms of binary judgements. This in-between place perhaps lacks the dramatisation of political force and may seem too ambiguous to harbour a feminist mobilisation for change. However, as Homi Bhabha notes, in-between places can be productive places which shift forces and fixities (1995, p.34) (see Chapter One for a discussion of reworkings as hybrid texts and Chapter Three for a consideration of hybrid bodies). The in-between, as animated by a marginal voice, such as my choreographic one, can be mobilised in order to re-think identity.

6.3 Open text - enacting becomings

footnotes is made of shifting fragments, multi-perspectives and is improvisatory. The work is made up of a spectrum of possibilities. The order and relationship between the elements in the work are not repeated or repeatable. Structured in the form of ‘spontaneous determination’ (to use Yvonne Rainer’s term, in Banes 1986, p.100), footnotes uses a combination of fixed elements that change in combination, predetermined options, and free improvisation.

The work is intended to operate as an open text. The notion of an open text evident in footnotes practices a concept developed by Barthes (1970). He argues that the open or writerly (scriptible) text encourages the reader to produce meanings, as opposed to the closed or readerly (lisible) text which turns the reader into a consumer. To encourage ‘scriptibility’ the installation is ever changing. In this context therefore, by open text I mean a text in which the movement, and relationships between movement, video, sound and space alter from moment to moment, throughout the performance, and from performance to performance. Operating around shifting relationships between media no elements remain in the same relationship at any point thereby leaving space for a viewer to create meanings.
Both the sound and two video images are looped. The relationships between the sound and the video, and between the two videos, shift throughout the performance as each runs at a slightly different pace meaning that whilst images and sounds recur the same combinations never do. The movement performed live is improvised and these improvisations are formed around clusters of images. There are also ten slides of written text, any of which can be projected at any time. The selection of movement images and text, in relation to video images and sound, are not pre-determined but decided in the moment of performance. I also intercede to disrupt the fixity of the video image by shifting the location of the projection onto my body - effectively blocking the screen image and rearranging the space. These dynamic interactions and exchanges between forms reflect the character of improvisation within poly/multi-media performances per se. Hazel Smith and Roger Dean in their book *Improvisation, Hypermedia and the Arts since 1945* note that: 'Polymedia are therefore characterised by their heterogeneity and density; their capacity for transformation of and exchange between semiotic systems; and their spatial and temporal complexity' (1997, p.191).

The live dance improvisation is the most open element of the work and this is continuously shifting and goalless. The movement improvisations are conceived in 'image clusters' (to use Skinners term, in Dempster,1995/6, p.23). Images such as swan/woman; topography of the ballet body; pointe shoes; posing at the edges; whipping turns; and moments of drowning, guide but do not shape the improvisations. For example the topography of the ballet body improvisation tends, but does not always, to take place standing on the stool. Shifting through the body, the internal sensations of realigning the body in accordance with the principles of ballet are juxtaposed with an opposite organisation of the body. Moving from pose to pose, the back elongates and pitches forward at the pelvis, one hip pushes out to the side and then rotates around. Both knees bend and the leg is turned in and out from the pelvis. An arm extends out to the side, reaching away from the centre of the body. Pose. The shoulder rotates; the arm drops and swings from the shoulder. Improvised movement such as this develops in the moment of enactment. As the body forms shifting textures and landscapes the viewer is encouraged to focus on the detail of these landscapes as no logical external composition ever occurs.
The choice to perform through improvisation is not an impartial or naive one. This mode of presentation has been associated with the practices of the 1960/70s groups Grand Union and The Judson Church Dance Theater, and the artists/practices, such as Contact Improvisation, that came out of these (see Banes, 1986). These groups used improvisation in performance as a way of breaking free from the perceived strictures on and of the body in modern dance forms. In performance improvisation the concept of spontaneity is central both aesthetically and ideologically. Another feature of improvised work is that the making process becomes more visible and this can assist in the demystification of creativity and choreography. Interestingly, the assertion of improvisatory practices in the late 1960/70s coincided with the growth of the women's movement. Improvisation was seen as part of the mobilisation for change and a method of working which destabilised hierarchical relationships and empowered the performer. Also the broader social conditions of the period encouraged the conception of individual liberty and equality which forms such as Contact Improvisation embodied (Novack, 1990). In more recent years a rather more critical, perhaps cynical, view of these idealistic visions is evident. Many current practitioners commonly use improvisation as part of the working processes and may include elements of improvisation within performance, but the wholesale commitment to improvisation is now less overt.

Letting go of the assurance of pre-choreographed work allows the focus to be placed on transformation. In footnotes the improvised dance promotes a constantly shifting identity as each time a new image cluster is performed or revisited the identity of that image is determined anew. The work invites an alternative way of looking, a looking which focuses on the detail of moments and interconnections within moments, rather than the consideration of grand composition - for the grand composition is never complete. Through these transformation processes the identity of the body comes to be in constant flux, mitigating against fixity and singularity. The improvisations stage their own disappearance whilst also simultaneously becoming.

Sarah Rubidge suggests that the open work is a challenge to notions of identity and authorial integrity. The identity of a work, Rubidge argues, coheres around: our ability to recognise its instantiations, the relative closeness to notated scores, the
originating impulse, and the work's original form (2000, p.205/6). She writes that 'when individuating dance works, we rely on the identification of essential, ... perceptible properties, that is, features which are observable in the presentational form across several performances' (2000, p.208).

The 'identity and form of the open work' states Rubidge, 'is, more than another kind of work, constantly deferred, demonstrating what Andrew Benjamin (Benjamin, 1994, p.24) calls an “ontology of becoming”' (2000, p.210). Benjamin, in his discussion of fine art, argues that rather than a being-object, the object for interpretation is an aspect of interpretation, thereby redefining the art-object as a temporal matter. The ontological status of all art works is such that it changes over time; the work of art is a 'becoming-object'. The object is incorporated into the process of becoming in such a way that it becomes evident that any work is subject to its own history, and the history of the world in which it is presented (Benjamin, 1994). This argument brings into the fine arts issues of provisional identity and absence of an ‘original’ object that have long been grappled with in the ephemeral art of dance.

Following Benjamin, Rubidge notes that:

If this is so for any work it is even more so for the open work. An integral, even essential, part of the identity, the ‘nature’, of the open work is that flux, is the shift in form, is the work's 'becoming'.

(italics in original, Rubidge, 2000, p.211)

As an open work footnotes is a challenge to the ontology of invariance - a philosophical argument in which the essential nature of a phenomena is fixed. This is an inherently unstable performance text. The work shouts of its lack of fixity, and, in its determination to remain uncaptchaible, refuses the structures of viewing which seek to pin it down and make it harden into myth.

This lack of fixity is somewhat ironic, for as a radical reworking footnotes is intimately intertwined with its source, a source that appears fixed, a source that might be called the 'original'. Whereas footnotes, as an open text, is formed in such a
manner that no ‘original’ text is produced, no moment which can be said to be ‘the work’, the ‘authentic’ performance. This radical reworking of Swan Lake is thereby at odds with the ballet. Swan Lake has a clearly defined identity and is, seemingly, unchanging; footnotes challenges this assumption. The lack of boundaries and fluidity in footnotes reflects an oppositional stance to the perception of sameness and authorship of the source text.

footnotes is a work that enacts becoming. Only identifiable as it occurs, each image cluster has a life only at that very moment; each action, each becoming, is valued free from any end point. This is not a becoming of some being. As introduced in Chapter Three, Deleuze and Guattari’s (1988) conceptualisation of becoming means doing away with the opposition between being and becoming, for they insists that there is no stable world, that there is nothing other than the flow of becoming. This ‘involves destablizing recognizable patterns of organization’ and ‘indicate[s] new possibilities in self-transformation’ (Lorraine, 1999, p.181).

Taking a pose the fingers mark out time and then the body slowly crumbles out of its position. Starting in the centre of the body the torso, shoulders and pelvis, knees and elbows cave in. Moving from one position to another in a constant process of mutation each position is realised out of the internal collapse of the previous one. Varying and changing without a pre-given purpose or goal, the enactment of becoming is revealed through time. But this enactment does not resolve or complete rather it continues in a state of flux. The body continues to form, dissolve and reform, such that no formation is ever the complete form.

The video images also enact becomings. The camera often moves with, around or in opposition to the dancer creating no single point of reference. These shifting, moving images are freed from an ordering point of view. The images also cut from one place, one image, to another creating a montage, this montage is also extended by the simultaneous layering of montages being made with live dance, text and sound. This montage effect is not reducible to each single image. Rather each movement, sound,
text and video image transforms the whole, thereby creating new becomings. As Deleuze in his discussion of cinema notes:

Movement always relates to a change, migration to a seasonal variation. And this is equally true of bodies: the fall of a body presupposes another one which attracts it, and expresses a change in the whole which governs them both. If we think of pure atoms, their movements which testify to a reciprocal action of all the parts of the substance, necessarily express modifications, disturbance, changes of energy in the whole... beyond translation is vibration, radiation. Our error lies in believing that it is the any-element-whatevers, external to qualities which move. But the qualities themselves are pure vibrations which change at the same time as the alleged elements move.

(in Colebrook, 2002, p.44)

The implications of this transformative text for a re-gendering of the female body become evident through the work of Luce Irigaray. She writes: 'Woman is neither open nor closed. She is indefinite, in-finite, form is never complete in her... This incompleteness in her form... allows her to become something else' (1985a, p.229). Irigaray's conceptualisation of the female body is a fluid one that is ever shifting as metamorphoses and transmutations occur.

Bodies in the act of becoming, and female bodies in particular, are then never complete; they are never finished. In footnotes the unfinished body, as it can never reach a point at which it can be fixed into a binary opposition, can fluctuate in-between. The bodies which inhabit this open text imply that the body can be reinvented, distorted, collaged, dismembered and fictionalised. footnotes operates counter to any 'authentic' or 'orginary' notion of the body suggesting instead endless transformation.

The body is exuberantly alive and points, if somewhat prosaically, to what it might be to become, in a Deleuzian sense, imperceptible (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988). Whilst for the most part becomings are not perceivable, at moments, especially through art, it is possible to perceive the flow of life. Becoming-imperceptible as a molecular style of perception is a challenge to seeing from a particular, partial perspective. Through
dance improvisation, the removal of fixed references, and the multiple perspectival arrangement of space the viewer has available to them a range of perceptions at any one time and an infinite number through time. As Tasmin Lorraine writes:

becoming-imperceptible...involves bringing faculties to the limit of communication with one another...fragmenting the coherent subject and disabling the convergence of the faculties upon an object of common sense experience...this requires transformation of oneself as well as one's understanding of the world...no identity can remain fixed...becoming imperceptible involves challenging conventional body boundaries...and unsettling a coherent sense of self.

(Lorraine, 1999, p.188-9)

6.4 Hybrid body - plural bodies

The female body evoked in this work is hybrid and plural. Parallel to postfeminist discourse (see Chapter Three) the bodies in footnotes suggest a shifting fluid presence as I 'mutate' between animal and human forms, and play out multiple identities, disrupting any sense of a coherent singular identity. The hybridity and plurality of bodies evoked resists the commodification of the body, as no single image is maintained, no one image exists. However, in what may seem like a contradiction, I also suggest that the body in footnotes is specific, marked and singular.

A repeated improvisation in footnotes explores and expands the image and concept of Odette - the queen of the swans. Odette is part bird and part woman. The improvisation evokes her as a hybrid being - a swan woman in constant mutation - a woman out of whom the bird seeps. She has wings, a twitching head and webbed feet. Working from an internal sensation the improvisation evolves as a relationship between swan and human features which are embodied singularly. Whilst the torso remains upright the knees lift, the feet shift taking long strides, creating awkward angles in the hips and knees. As the legs return to a more everyday alignment the head makes a sharp turn to the side and then lifts upward. The eyes are glazed. Deep from between the shoulder blades the shoulder reaches out to the side. A sense of a lost wing, a wing that tries to unfold, but instead an arm extends and a hand comes to the face in a very human gesture. Seen through Deleuze and Guattari (1988), it can be said that she is a becoming-animal. By becoming hybrid she can perceive otherwise as
she has the potential to create lines of flight. Freed from the ‘human’ she suggests the possibility of the ‘transversal’. Transversal becomings, for Deleuze and Guattari are the key to the openness of life. Through the hybrid improvisation there is not an attempt to become a swan, or even behave like a swan. Rather through constant transformation there is a sense of feeling a swan’s movement. The actions are not directed towards repetition or replication, rather each action, is performed without a pre-determined end. Indeed the movement is such that what is ‘the action’ and what is ‘the transformation’ become indistinct. Through this becoming the multiple, mutating swan woman asserts intersections that expand perceptions.

This recurring body is not quite whole. As noted in Chapter Three, hybrids are indistinct and can not be easily classified. The hybrid disrupts the boundaries between the human and the animal, the natural and the constructed. Embodying the ambiguous feelings we have towards our own bodies they tantalisingly suggest the power and strength of different animals - but at the same time also suggest a lack or absence in the human body. In its relationship to animal bodies the hybrid body flaunts classical views of the body. For the hybrid body is not ordered and harmonious but real and fleshy. It is often a grotesque body - it is exaggerated, inflated and embellished in unpredictable and fanciful ways. In the ballet however Odette’s ambiguous, even subversive, potential as a bird woman is controlled by the coded geometry of the ballet vocabulary. She is held within the classical view of the body and the swan side of her nature is presented as a torturous pain.

The magic of the hybrid has often also been associated with the healer or the shaman who can transmute himself/herself and draw on animal forces. However in Swan Lake Odette has no such power. This time it is the narrative that thwarts the subversive potential. She has been transformed by, and is controlled by, the evil Rothbart. Her transformation between swan and woman takes place within set hours of the night over which Odette has no control. The swan form is represented as a tragic oppression.
Part human, part bird, the swan woman also connects to many such hybrids in folklore and mythology (see Chapter Three). Marina Warner (1995) writes that bird features, such as webbed feet and the long beak, have denoted female power and deviancy. For example the deathly sirens were, in the classical tradition, bird bodied. These hybrid women were also highly sexual creatures whom defied the ‘natural’ order. In footnotes the hybrid swan woman becomes a phenomenon of endless transformation. She is continuously mutating in such away that the bird and the woman are simultaneously evident, making manifest, and extending, the subversive (but unexplored) hybrid potential of the ballet swan woman, Odette. In line with mythic readings of bird women she also embodies an erotic quality, and I will return to this later. The improvisation emphasises that bodies only exist in a process of constant transformation for as Cathy Griggers notes; ‘there are only hybrid bodies, moving bodies, migrant bodies, becoming bodies’ (in Briginshaw, 2001, p.77). Through improvisation and hybridity footnotes mitigates against any essentialist notion and the possibility of fixity, recognising that identities are heterogeneous and diverse.

To add to these already complex embodiments there are also multiple fragmentary bodies: screen bodies, live bodies and shadow bodies. Extending the hybrid body into a plurality of interconnected bodies (for one dancer performs all the roles) which are in constant states of becoming. These interconnected pluralities, that the ballet’s dual swan women already suggest, indicate that unity is an illusion. Risking the accusation of reinforcing binaries between women, and without wishing to suggest a schizophrenic body footnotes incorporates a multiplicity of bodies: live and recorded, ballerina and showgirl, functional and danced, shadow and real. These various bodies blur boundaries and confound expectations.

These multiple bodies are dispersed across different elements of the installation. The video images incorporate two dancing girls. One dressed in tutu and pointe shoes, the other dressed in pink boa and silver sequins. Another embodiment on the screen is the naked body; unadorned a woman’s body comes in and out of focus. In the live performance two other bodies are enacted: The ‘dancerly’ performative body and the everyday functional body. These two bodies are marked through the usage of the
body. The 'dancerly' body performs extra-ordinary movements - complex turns, usual shifts of weight, off centre poses. This body's organisation is rearranged between improvisations so that whilst clearly a single body it can at any point enact a transformation. This 'dancerly' body also takes up movement images from the screen bodies, in an echo or precursor to the screen bodies - she poses like the pink show girl and totters like the ballet body - further blurring identities. The functional body is carried in a casual fashion, she walks in matter of fact manner and sits slightly stooped in order to operate the computer mouse. This body constantly cuts into the 'dancerly' body's actions asserting its presence and thwarting any continuous engagement of fantasy.

The interaction between bodies in this dance of absent presences blurs the dualisms of the material body/immaterial mind and visibility/invisibility. The shadow body, which is cast onto the screen when the live dancing body intercepts the light of the video projector, marks itself into the video image. This dark hard lined body cuts into the video, creating gaps in the image. This shadow image is ironically perhaps the most present of the various bodies inscribed throughout footnotes. It appears manifest, for it is clearly marked but it is also a only a semblance, a reflection which requires a real presence to be formed and has no substantive form of its' own. The shadow creates absence yet requires a presence as an inseparable companion. In these ways the shadow/live body is absent and present, visible and invisible. Reflecting postfeminist thought these plural bodies attest to the impossibility of viewing or conceptualising 'the' body as bodies are revealed to be unstable and fleeting (see for example Riley, Grosz, and Butler, in Price and Shildrick, 1999).

6.4.1 The specificity of bodies - one body - my body

Whilst anti-essentialist thinking has usefully warned against an identification of woman with the body, making clear that 'the body' cannot be conceived as a pre-given entity, for there is no body which has not already been mitigated by (male) discourse, this has also lead to a position in which there is almost no body, no experience of the body at all. The danger of the fluid body of Irigaray, the plurality of bodies of postfeminism, and the becoming bodies of Deleuze and Guattari, which
footnotes conceptually reflects, is that they risk making the body disappear altogether. Through these lenses it often appears that the day-to-day real body, real person is absent.

However in footnotes there is an actual 'real' body, an actual 'real' person in the space and this body has a history. This body is not fixed or biologically essentialist. Gatens argues that by granting the body a history it may become possible to locate experiences and restrictions on and of the body without resorting to biological essentialism (1999, p.228). The body in footnotes, my body, is present, is specific. It is a white, middle class, English body. A body marked by the practices of release-based dance, modern dance and ballet. This body is currently slim and has experienced injury, pregnancy and breast-feeding. It also experiences sitting for hours in front of a computer screen, driving long distances, standing in front of people in class room situations and performing.

Through a self-reflexive process I experience this body, and reciprocally my experiences are shaped by it. As Trinh.T. Minh-ha so succinctly puts it, 'we do not have bodies, we are bodies' (italics in original, Minh-ha, 1999, p.258). My corporeal experiences are not necessarily explicit in footnotes, (although the audience are made aware of the 'academic' body and the 'dancerly' body, and these are contextualised via the projected text as working bodies), however the realness of the body and its close proximity allow the viewer to see bodily scarrings and stretch marks, removing any illusion of an ideal unmarked body.

6.5 Breaking the Gaze - Inscribing a Haptic Presence

In Chapter Three I introduced Laura Mulvey's model of the male gaze and some of the subsequent critiques of her concept. With its' entrapment within binary power structures, over emphasis upon visual objectification, and inability to account for the live performance presence, her model, whilst still invasive, is no longer taken wholesale in dance studies (see Daly 1992, Albright 1997, and Carter 1999). The disciplining structure of the gaze and the subsequent visual objectification of the ballerina is, I have suggested, examined and undermined through parodic over-display
by Susan Foster in *Lac de Signes* (see Chapter Four). Here I suggest that by emphasising the kinaesthetic and the sense of touch it may be possible to reconceive the audience/performer relationship. In *The Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems* (1966), James Gibson considers the possibilities of interacting with the world via senses other than the visual. He writes:

> The sensibility of the individual to the world adjacent to his body through the use of his body will here be called the haptic system. The word haptic comes from the Greek term meaning “able to lay hold of”

*(Gibson, 1966, p.97)*

The notion of a haptic system, a system in which we experience bodily rather than visually, is a useful model with which to describe footnotes and to counter Mulvey. The haptic sense comprises the tactile, kinaesthetic, and proprioceptive functions, describes aspects of engagement that are qualitatively distinct from the capabilities of the visual sense (Fisher, 1997, p.6). Haptic sense functions by contiguity and touch. This sense is most resonant in the perception of weight, balance, pressure, temperature, space and presence. Fisher notes that early research on haptic perception considered the haptic sense as a proximal sense. A sense which required the actual contact with, or use of, the body (Fisher, 1997, p.6). However haptic perception is not totally discrete from visual perception. A haptic system of visuality asserts that the eyes function like organs of touch and, as such the viewers body becomes more obviously involved with the process of seeing. Haptic perception accounts for the way we experience touch both on the surface and inside our bodies.

In footnotes the installation is arranged in such a manner that the process of seeing is brought to the fore. The viewer has to make choices from which angle to look, where and how to locate their own body - whether to sit, stand or lie - whether to look at the live, screen or shadow body. How the viewers eye/body shifts over the video image/live presence becomes multi-sensorial rather than solely visual similar to the processes of haptic perception. As Laura U. Marks writes, in an essay entitled *Video Haptics and Erotics* (1998), the haptic video ‘does not invite identification with a
figure so much as it encourages a bodily relationship between the viewer and the video image’ (1998, p.332). Haptic images are, she suggests, textured and emphasise touch.

*footnotes* isolates touch from narrative. As a feature of the haptic this disassociation of touch and narrative needs to be differentiated from the alienation of visual presence and story line discussed by Mulvey. In Mulvey the presence of woman, connoting a to-be-looked-at-ness, ‘tends to work against the development of a story line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation’ (2001, p.188) (first published 1975). In *footnotes* the tactile body (live and video) evokes identification with touch itself, surpassing any identification with character. The sense of touch evoked by the fragmented and textured body becomes the narrative, becomes the subject itself.

The viewer of *footnotes* is distanced from any external narrative and from identification with character in a number of ways. Long periods of the video are given over to the creation of textures rather than characters and when figures do appear the video constantly shift in and out of focus, or becomes so close that a figure can no longer be identified, also characters they are not contextualised or developed. The live presence shifts between locations and improvisations in seemingly random ways such that no linear narrative develops. The narrative of the source text *Swan Lake* is only ever evoked as a fictive presence, never as an identifiable force. Images, text and live bodies are fragmented and they never coalesce. In this work the viewer interacts with the creation of meaning rather than entering into an illusory fantasy.

The images on screen in *footnotes* are a flow of tactile impressions. In extended sections images of feathers falling, water rippling and shifting colour emphasise the experience of texture. Close up pink images slowly cross fade between one texture and another. The actual objects are never made clear. Rather the focus is upon the depth of colour, the subtle changes in tone and the materiality of the image. Another repeated section is that of feathers falling. They are filmed such that no location is evident. The downy feathers fall and drift across the screen. As they pile up from
the base of the screens the feathers form a white mass and the screen's surfaces appear to change - taking on a more dense quality.

These textures are put alongside those of the woman dancing in a white tutu, in a pink feathered 'show girl' costume and naked. Images dissolve and resolve in layers and are textured in a number of ways. Through close up shots the skin becomes a landscape and the shifting lens, which skims across the body, brings the images in and out of focus. Also the body has been digitised, given a pixelated quality, which protects the body from the viewers gaze, obscuring the video image. In addition, the affect of being projected on to translucent plastic and fabric screens gives the images a ghost-like quality. The images, as they are not fixed within the dense frame of television, become floating traces. They are, at once, present and absent. Present in that they can be clearly seen but absent due to their fictive status - the images are disembodied plays of light. These traces offer no resistance as bodies pass through them, but they also mark their presence on the surface of the skin.

A haptic visuality 'implies making oneself vulnerable to the image, reversing the relation of mastery that characterises optical viewing' (Marks, 1998, p.341). In footnotes the viewer is encouraged to make themselves 'vulnerable' due not only to the video image but also the context of that image. Images cannot be viewed safely from one's seat as the space is made to be walked around. The viewer may at any point also be the viewed. The presence of the live body also provides the potential that the 'image' might at any point 'look back'.

The large projected images which leak past the screens also implicate the viewer, for the textured screen images are cast on to the viewer as she/he walks around the space. Conversely the viewer also becomes part of the video image as she/he casts shadows onto the screens. These interactions are such that the viewer becomes 'commingled' with the image. As Deleuze and Guattari write: 'The first aspect of the haptic, smooth space of close vision is that its orientations, landmarks, and linkages are in continuous variation.... Contrary to what is sometimes said, one never sees from a distance in a
space of this kind, nor does one see it from a distance; one is never "in front of", any more than one is "in" (one is "on".)’ (1988, p.493).

Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of haptic vision distinguishes between haptic and optical space. Haptic space uses close vision, whilst optical space requires long-distance vision. This distinction usefully reflects the different viewing experiences of footnotes (close-vision - haptic) and a conventional *Swan Lake* (long distance - optical). *Swan Lake*, as a ballet performed behind a proscenium arch, reflects and perpetuates the primacy of the visual within Western culture (as noted in Chapter Three and in relation to Foster’s reworking, *Lac de Signes*, (Chapter Four)). The drive to find a more kinetic mode of viewing is particularly relevant in the light of this. footnotes asserts of a different sense, a different mode of visuality and more tactile representation, and as such implicitly positions itself contrary to *Swan Lake*. This is important to for a feminist reworking for; ‘the critique of visual mastery’ as Marks notes, ‘speaks from an awareness about the deathful and truly imperialist potential of vision’ (Marks, 1998, p.347).

6.5.1 ‘New dance’ and the haptic

The ballerina’s body tends towards absence, a body so distanced, so never-to-be-attained that it is cast as an illusion. As Dempster argues:

> The classical ballet thus creates conditions conducive to self-forgetfulness. In the body of the ballerina the watcher might seek another transformed body; in the contemplation of distanced virtuosity a space of forgetfulness opens, a space in which her own [the viewers] present imperfect body is subsumed in the perfected body of the other.

(Dempster, 1995, p.33)

The presence of the body in footnotes is different from this and aims, through a functional use of the body and release-based techniques, to assert a body that inscribes not perfection but recognition. For example performing functional tasks in a pedestrian manner I carry the stool, sit at and work the computer, and walk between
locations. I drink water, re-arrange my costume and push my hair behind my ears. This functional use of the body presents the potentialities of the ordinary and the mundane. Through functionality the viewer is encouraged to make connections to the commonalties between bodies - between their body and my body.

This type of bodily presence is in line with new and postmodern dance artists who, since the 1960s, have been searching for alternative audience performer relationships and have been developing different bodily aesthetics. In pursuit of a bodily aesthetic in which bodily experience is not denied but valued has given rise to forms such as 'Release' which focus upon touch and kinaesthesia. New dance forms have 'been directed towards a disordering of the visually dominated sensorium so that other, culturally neglected senses, might be experienced more fully' (Dempster, 1993, p.19).viii

Like the space used in footnotes, alternative and more ambiguous spaces such as galleries, streets, studios, fields, beaches and rooftops have been made site for performances. In these spaces the boundaries between dancer and spectator are less clearly marked, are less assuredly maintained. The passive viewer and active performer understanding is less likely to be activated as the invisibility of the viewer is undermined (Dempster, 1993, p.14). Dempster writes:

For the new dancer the dance stage is not a Panopticon [after Foucault's investigations] but can become an intimate, haptic space where the subtle and fine detail of a body’s movement can be experienced and made visible to others. It is a space of inclusion, inhabited by both watcher and watched. Here the oft-stated proposition that dance is an experience of heightened kinaesthetic sensation is actualised, for the viewer as well as the performer.

(Dempster, 1993, p.19)

In footnotes a release dance style is used to create hybrid and fragmentary forms. Through improvisation this dance style evokes a presence that, like that of haptic video, is 'more inclined to move than to focus' (Marks, 1998, p.338). The movement, which is in a constant state of transformation, forms fluid patterns that ripple
successively out of the dancer's centre only to return and ripple out in a different organisation. Dempster suggests that in forms such as release the 'emphasis is not placed upon the (static) look of the body, as that body is available to an observing eye, but on the person's co-ordination, fluency, efficiency, ease and enjoyment of movement (1993, p.18).

This indeterminate sensate body, this body styled through release-based dance as used in footnotes, is not a 'free' or natural dancing body. I am not asserting an essentialist position; rather the improvised movement is conditional upon circumstance as the choice of which image cluster and how the body is read change in each rendition. As improvisation the dancing erases itself in the act of being written. As such the body has a shifting, not single or essential, identity: 'its definition is constantly renegotiated in the changing context of improvised dance' (Foster, 1997, p.250).

6.6 Eroticism and the politics of touch

6.6.1 An erotic way of looking

As noted in Chapter Three Emilyn Claid (2002) suggests that it is the interplay between fixed points that form the seductive relations established between the viewer and the performer in performance. She writes that the 'oscillation between the real body of the performer and her/his illusive surface image is the trigger for seductive relations between performer and spectator' (Claid, 2002, p.2). In footnotes just such oscillations exist as I shift from the a performative illusory presentations in the extended dance improvisations to the functional, and from an internal gaze which allows to viewer's eyes to travel over me to a gaze which interacts and 'plays' with the viewer.

In footnotes the ideal relationship between the viewer and the performer/video is one of mutuality. The viewer is encouraged to lose her/his sense of proportion as the eyes, as organs of touch, caress and are caressed by the live body/video image: footnotes thereby evokes an erotic relationship. As Marks writes 'haptic images are erotic regardless of their content, because they construct an intersubjective
relationship between beholder and image’ (Marks, 1998, p.341). Marks argues further that ‘haptics move eroticism from the site of what is represented to the surface of image’ (1998, p.341), eroticism arising from the way of looking rather than the images themselves. In footnotes however the way of looking and the images themselves might be said to be erotic. The body is presented naked and in semi-translucent, revealing clothing and movements have a sinuous sensuality. Whilst footnotes is not graphically sexual and its purpose is not to incite arousal, it does evoke a desiring, desired body.

The debates about the boundaries and relative efficacy or commodification of erotic and pornographic representations of women are beyond the remit of this discussion but it is useful to consider the different modes of seeing evident in pornography as opposed to footnotes.iii Pornography suggests the visual inscription of the orgasmic body and the viewer’s visual mastery of the body. The limited visibility of the body in footnotes - the video effects and shots, the textures upon the body, the ghostly rendition of the body as projected on translucent screen and the body as hybrid - attempts to undermine the viewer’s mastery and hinder sexual gratification. The body is not generally ‘put on display’, and when it is, such as when posed on the stool, the body is not posed but changing and mutable. The body is not ever fully in view (as whilst the live body can be fully seen but it is never completed and always in-between), therefore the viewer in order to complete the process of viewing has to become involved in that process. This involvement is self-aware and implicates the onlooker for haptics ‘is based more upon interaction than voyeurism, haptic visuality is erotic’ (Marks, 1998, p.342).

The image caresses the viewer as the viewer’s body becomes involved in the process of seeing. The physical and erotic involvement of the viewer is not denied and rather as Ramsay Burt argues ‘through our visceral response to performance, dance teaches us about the body, defining and in some cases contesting its socially constructed limits’ (2001, p.220). The pleasure of touch provides another level of delight as it de-privileges the visual, emphasising the corporeal. This pleasure, when doubled with sensuous images, multiplies the erotic contact with the viewer.
6.6.2 The female body, erotic body, sexy body

This erotic haptic body, with its emphasis on surfaces and touching temptingly relates to Irigaray's female tactile body. Irigaray's woman, as noted in Chapter Three, 'has sex organs more or less everywhere. She finds pleasure almost everywhere... the geography of her pleasure is far more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than is commonly imagined' (1985b, p. 28). The body described by Irigaray exists in the constant touching of surfaces. It is a fluid body and a sexually female body with vagina, vaginal lips, and breasts. As its surface's rub this body blurs boundaries and distinctions.

A close up shot of a naked body, a breast, an arm, and a shoulder perhaps. Indistinct and fragmented the angles of the camera on the body are difficult to discern disrupting the viewer's perspective. Shifting even closer to the body the screen is filled with moving skin, muscle and bone. The texture of the skin and the plays of light and shadow on the body become the focus. The camera and the body are in motion meaning that few of the images become clearly defined. Fleeting moments reveal folds of flesh, legs brushing together, the crease of an armpit and a hand touching the neck. The body slowly becomes more recognisable as hands hold feet and in a kneeling position hands rest on the top of the thighs. Following an image of the body rolling across the screen is a close up of the face. And lastly from a close up shot of breasts, the camera pulls back revealing the fully naked body, standing in an everyday pose. The hands are on the hips only moving to rub the neck and brush hair back behind the ears. This section of video presents a fluid body full of touching surfaces as the body folds and creases.

As discussed in Chapter Three and in relation to Shakti in Chapter Four, the use of a semi-clad/naked erotic body is dangerous for the politically motivated artist. For whilst the naked and semi-naked body in footnotes suggest a pleasure in and of the body, it is important to ask; who's pleasure is this? And, how is that pleasure viewed? The pleasure in and of the body evident in footnotes is unlike the topography of the ballet body. *Swan Lake* suggests sexual union and the dancers intimately touch but the ballet's narrative and the codification of the form veils these erotic possibilities.
Whereas in this work the body becomes a site of pleasure, the body is desiring and desired, for as subject and object it at once resists and invites viewers objectification.

Perhaps the most overtly erotic section of footnotes is found during a repeated collection of images in the video which focus on the mouth and feet and uses costumes as fetishised objects. In the foreground lay a pair of pink somewhat worn out pointe shoes. I am to the back of the image, naked. Dipping my head into the white tutu in front of me I crawl forward, with the tutu casually hanging at my waist. Reaching forward I grasp the pointe shoes in my mouth, shaking them side to side. The fetishistic treatment of the pointe shoe reflects stories of Russian balletomanes who held a banquet at which the main course was a dish including a one of Marie Taglioni’s used ballet shoes. More generally it also refers to the image of the dancer per se who has become the site of fetishist speculation.

The fetishist and naked images on the screen are juxtaposed with the live presence and projected text. Through the live dance I intersect with the video image. I stand on the stool with my hands on my hips, (a stance that also appears on the video screens). Whilst standing in this pose I look about the space and view the viewers. At times I catch the eye of a viewer and their ‘safe’ viewing is disturbed. At another point I sit in front of the projector, casting the image directly onto my body and effectively blocking the screen whilst also being marked by my own image. I become both seer and seen entering into a network of relationships. I am watched whilst I view myself on screen, whilst I also watch the viewers of my viewing! In this there is a constant emphasis on my bodily presence and in this dual role there is an inherent refusal to give up the object status while at the same time claiming the viewing subject position. This makes both positions unstable.

The projected text also presents a way of refocusing the reading of the naked body. The words ‘She is faultless, a proper object of desire: She is silent, a proper object of desire: She is fragile, a proper object of desire: She is illusory, a proper object of desire’ are projected. These words bring the viewers attention to their desirous gaze and ironically undercut that gaze. Rather than the veiled, dislocated viewer of classic
perspective *footnotes* drives towards an embodied viewer in whom the process of viewing is made explicit.

In this network of viewing relationships and through montage the notions of the body evident in *footnotes* create a dynamic of essentialist/constructivist tensions. Rebecca Schneider suggest that this feminist “both/and” like ‘a Brechtian “not, but”’ makes room for ‘critical inquiry, political agency and discursive mobility’ (1997, p.36). Following theorist Diana Fuss, Schneider labels this paradoxical double stance an Irigarayan ‘gesture double’. Fuss writes:

Irigaray’s reading of Aristotle’s understanding of essence reminds me of Lacan’s distinction between being and having the phallus: a woman does not possess the phallus, she is the Phallus. Similarly, we can say that, in Aristotelian logic, a woman does not have an essence, she is Essence. Therefore to give “woman” essence is to undo Western phallomorphism and to offer women entry into subjecthood... A woman who lays claim to an essence of her own undoes the conventional binaries of essence/accident, form/matter, and actuality/potentiality.

(in Schneider, 1997, p.36)

The naked body in *footnotes* - its smooth evolving movement and the focus upon the texture and surface of the skin - suggests an essentialism of the pre-marked, pre-performative body but this is tinged by the overtly constructed images placed in juxtaposition to the naked body. The parodic (in Butler’s sense) ‘doing’ of the woman in tutu, or the woman in show girl costume suggest the ability to ‘play’ or ‘do’ multiple roles. Also my status as constructor, dancer and controller of events confuses binaries between feminisms, between male/female and between source and reworking.

**Conclusion**

As a work which recalls *Swan Lake* as an absent presence *footnotes* operates in the margins, evoking never fully realised resonance’s an such a manner that ‘meanings’ disseminate and drift. The relationships between this reworking and *Swan Lake* are constantly deferred and the conjunctions between the elements within the work
(movement, sound, video and projected text) are constantly shifting. This slippage, I have suggested, makes it difficult to read footnotes and indeed places in to doubt the possibility of making a reading in the first place, creating instead an ambiguous text in which multiple and contradictory possibilities exist. Using improvisational structures within a changing landscape of video projections and sound emphasises transformation and provisionality in a manner that relates to concepts of becoming. I have argued that the recurring improvisational dance that explores the image of Odette as a hybrid swan/woman is particularly potent as, by becoming-animal, she has the potential to create other lines of flight. Aligned with postfeminisms this is seen as an important challenge to previous constructions of woman as coherent and singular, for as a hybrid, she embodies multiple identities. However footnotes also emanates from a specific body – that is my body. This ‘real’ body, ‘real’ person, problematises the instability of postfeminist bodies and emphasises the risk of loosing the body altogether within discourse.

The haptic form of footnotes also problematises the structures of optical, erotic viewing. In opposition to the long-distance vision of proscenium arch stages – commonly the viewing arena for ballet – the installation format of footnotes implicates the viewer such that she/he becomes part of the work and is engaged in a seductive relationship with me as the performer. Evoking a tactile and embodied response rather than a optical one footnotes enables the illusion of reality to be challenged and pushes the viewer back to the surface of the image, mitigating against identification, narrative and legibility. I propose that the representation of the nude body and the erotic images in this work operate as a feminist strategy rather than an essentially feminine form. Given the repression of the erotic in the ballet Swan Lake, perhaps the embodiment of it in footnotes, whilst risky, implies a critique, and alleges a transformation. The erotic properties also connect the swan woman to other bird women - to hybrids that have a more sexual nature. As such she becomes a deviant subversive creature, countering the more conventional, fragile image of her predecessors.
Notes

i I would like to express my gratitude to these collaborators in the making of footnote. Thanks are also due to Kate, Eve, Lei, Brian, Chris, David, Valerie and Alysn who gave their time and support to this project. The performance was made possible due to financial support received from East Midlands Arts, The National Lottery and University College Northampton.

ii Performance Credits:

Awaking Aurora: Performed by Fiona Warne, Cathy Spalton, and Dominic Phillips.
Music edited and part composed by Sally Hall

The Original Sylph: Choreographed and performed by Vida Midgelow. Music by Adolphe Adam.

The Collection: Co-directed by Vida Midgelow and Jane Mulchrone
Perform ed by Vida Midgelow, Darren Adams, Ceroc Central, and Haraam.
Music by Mickey Skeedal. Edited by Tim Coley.

iii Darko Suvin (1988) proposes that all plays have some central invariants and that a rewriting, to be considered a version of a particular play, however distant, must contain at least one of these central invariants.

iv Feminist writers such as Adair (1992) and Novack (1993) have noted this dual stance towards ballet.

v Recent examples of feminist dance scholarship have critiqued the previously used binary models that often left dance, particularly ballet, in an impossible situation. See Carter (1999 and 2001), Banes (1998), and Albright (1997).

vi The perception of sameness is brought about due to the processes of mythification (see Chapter One).

vii While offering an insightful discussion of how women might 'write the body' in postmodern dance forms, Dempster's analysis problematically asserts binary oppositions between forms. As an advocate of postmodern dance she often passes over some of the less than revolutionary aspects of postmodernism and, conversely, fails to give ballet due recognition (see Manning, 1997).

viii New / postmodern dancers are not the first to have considered these questions as, for example, Isadora Duncan's challenge to nineteenth-century ballet can also be seen to critique the processes of objectification. See Copeland (1990) for discussions of the primacy of different senses within in ballet, modern and postmodern forms and Manning (1997) for her analysis of the male gaze and early modern dance.

ix An extended discussion of these ideas is found in Dolan (1988) and a review of different perspectives can be found in Brooks (1997).
Chapter 7
CONCLUSION

7.1 Transgressive Desires

The field of reworkings has been delineated and specific examples have been analysed. I have argued that reworkings reflect aspects of poststructuralist theories that have destabilised the foundational claims and grand narratives of Western discourse (see Chapter One). As a form of intertextual practice reworkings are hybrid texts that evoke, at the very least, a bi-directional gaze. These dances have the potential to demythologise the dances of the ballet canon, for as canonical counter-discourse (which may be intentional or otherwise), reworkings engage in feminist and postcolonialist debates that have sought to deconstruct and rewrite the ideologies embedded within canonical practices. This characterisation of reworkings was supported via a review of practice in Chapter Two. This review emphasised two recurring aspects of reworkings. On the one hand, I brought to the fore the ways in which these dances have re-conceptualised gender, sexuality and ethnicity, creating a proliferation of identities, bringing viewers attention to previously unseen and unnoted perspectives. While on the other hand, I suggested that however radical or subversive a particular reworking may be the canon continues to reverberate within them as they simultaneously reveal and reiterate their sources.

In order to probe further strategies of re-gendering I took the refiguring of the female body as a specific focus in Part Two, analysing three reworkings of Swan Lake by female practitioners. To contextualise these dances I presented an overview of postfeminist reconfigurations of the female body in Chapter Three, introducing the performative, material and plural bodies that characterise postfeminism. In Chapters Four, Five and Six I undertook a detailed analysis of the reworkings of Swan Lake by Foster, Shakti and myself. This has lead to a consideration of the interactions between reworkings as canonical counter-discourse, postfeminist reconfigurations of the body and the erotic. I suggested that each of these reworkings of Swan Lake reinscribes the female body and embodies a female erotic agency in a manner that reflects and problematises both postfeminism and canonical discourses. These dances are however
caught, like other reworkings, between the authorised and the unauthorised, between transgression and desire.

In this conclusion I draw together these key arguments. In the first section, *Reworkings as canonical counter-discourse*, I suggest that reworkings teeter at the edges of successful difference and fatal re-appropriation. I revisit the ways in which reworkings have demythologised their mythic sources, but note, more negatively, that remythologisation is always a possibility. However in the second section, *The double gesture: moving beyond binaries*, I contend that reworkings have the potential to operate in-between. As hybrid texts that shift between perspectives it is possible that these dances are able to go beyond binaries, embodying mutability and interconnectedness instead.

In *Diversity and difference: reworkings (re)inscribe the body* I bring to the fore the ways in which these dances have refigured the body – particularly the female body. I argue that through difference and diversity these dances deregulate gender, as the markers of identity are realised as only partial and provisional belonging to particular times and contexts. I then turn in *Pleasure and power: the (re)eroticised body* to a consideration of the erotic within reworkings. I suggest that the ways in which the ballerina and the female body is eroticised within particular reworkings has served to reframe women such that they have the potential to enjoy the pleasure and power of their own sexuality, without recourse to dominant orthodoxies.

### 7.2 Reworkings as canonical counter-discourse

The dances discussed in this thesis have reworked the most canonical of ballets and have been shown to unveil and dismantle the basic assumptions of specific canonical texts. Divesting the canonical texts of their (specious) authority and authenticity, and re-investing them anew with a more local relevance, reworkings can, I have suggested, be usefully understood as a form of canonical counter-discourse. These dances have been shown to offer not simply an unrelenting critique or an uncritical celebration. Rather they reconfigure their source texts for other readings. They can, I have argued, make us aware of the continuum of images and experiences, releasing canonical ballets from their status as seemingly frozen events of the past, while also reflecting images of
the present. Furthermore they bring to our attention the provisionality of knowledge and illusory nature of truth. For, as stated in Chapter One, an essential feature of these dances is that they emphasise departure. The source text is significantly altered in order to give rise to a new dance that has significantly different resonances and meanings, mapping out alternative aesthetic terrains. Thereby reworkings can help us recognise our assumptions and shift our perceptions as they challenge previously hermeneutic bodies of knowledge.

Reworkings have been shown to be a particular kind of intertextual practice. Evoking particular obligatory intertexts from within their very substance these dances rely on, or at least use, the viewer's awareness of intertextual references. Importantly however they also challenge these intertextual references via a rewriting project as they work to destabilise power. Provoking, at the very least, a bi-directional gaze these dances are never (even in their most 'whole' forms) fully 'closed'. They always remain 'open' inviting viewers to read and re-read the reworking and the ballet at the source. Using the strategies of intertextuality reworkings manifest a resistive stance for these dances encourage the viewer to read the discourse between texts and to become a co-creator of meaning. Rather than relying on the mind of the resisting audience member to read canonical ballets 'against the grain' the potential of reworkings is that they embody and play out resistance in the act of performance itself. Thereby reworkings demythologise their sources such that the viewer becomes unable to consume myth innocently and is able to recognise the mythic transcendence of the source and its simultaneous deconstruction.

It has also become evident however that while reworkings reveal myth, they do not vanquish it, for this is a very difficult thing to do. Barthes writes, 'the very effort one makes in order to escape its [the mythic texts] stranglehold becomes in its turn the pray of myth' (1993, p.135). These dances are held in a tense relationship between the canon and counter-canon. For while reworkings express a desire to transgress the bounds of their sources they simultaneously reinvoke the source within their very substance. This desire to transgress, whilst also desiring to have, has been shown to place these dances in a paradoxical position. Indeed as I noted in the Introduction -
reworkings are framed within the status quo of the ballet canon. The implication of this frame resonates continuously within these dances.

For example in Chapter Two I suggest the reworkings of Bourne and Morris are problematic due to the way in which they reinscribe the values the conventional ballet, reiterate the heterosexual matrix, and are commodified within the frame of the canon. As these examples demonstrate the citing of the dominant norm does not necessarily displace that norm. Rather the dominant norm may well be reiterated as a desired object. There is a tension therefore in reworkings between transgression and desire. Reflecting what Foster describes as a ‘magnetic contradictoriness’ (1995a, p.110) reworkings express both a distaste and fascination for the ballet.

This dual stance is embodied in reworkings due to their bi-directional nature and this is both the strength and weakness of these dances. Tiffin’s (1995) discussion, cited in Chapter One, of the risk of contamination and neo-assimilation within postcolonial counter discursive texts, applies equally to reworkings. A parallel argument is found in Chapter Five when I paraphrase Spivak (1995); she notes that one is deeply mired in the things one deconstructs. Similarly in Chapter Four, regarding Foster’s use of parodic strategies, I quote Hutcheon who writes that ‘you are always implicated in the value you choose to challenge’ (Hutcheon, 1988, p.223). The ambiguous status of parody means that while parody trans-contextualises it also incorporates, for parody operates as a form of ‘authorised transgression’ (Hutcheon, 1985, p.75). I argue that reworkings as particularly bi-directional texts, that refer to an obligatory intertext (whether overtly operating via parody or not), are similarly bound and it may well be that their transgression only takes place within limited contexts.

Overall, reworkings, like a Baktinian carnival, might be seen to mark only a fleeting emancipation. In his discussion of carnival Bakhtin writes that ‘one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions’ (Bakhtin, 1984, p.10). From this perspective reworkings are presented in a context in which transgressions take place in the safe knowledge that as the curtain lowers the status quo will be reasserted. However, whilst this model
suggests the containment of subversion and a neat closure, with no noticeable political transformative effect, I suggest that these dances, that enter the canon from within, demonstrate strategies through which some leakage is bound to occur. They challenge the canon whilst simultaneously exploiting an audience’s recognition of the source texts. The reworkings discussed through this thesis demonstrate the potential to resist the nostalgic and authoritative frame of the canon, revealing gaps and omissions, elucidating assumptions and privileges and exposing gender and ethnic specificities - existing as sites of struggle, reworkings may act as a catalyst. If this is the case the hybrid and bi-directional nature of reworkings does not undermine the resistive value of these dances. For whilst in reworkings the source ballets may retain their mythic status we do come to understand them differently.

Reworkings shift between a kind of unfaithful faithfulness, in the manner of Ek’s reworkings, to willful deconstructions, such as Foster’s approach. These dances are overtly double coded and dialogic texts that present a purposeful rereading of their sources – rejecting the false illusion of absolute or unequivocal meaning. Hence these dances serve to demythologise their source texts in a self-conscious manner. The multiplicity of perspectives evident in reworkings avoids the entrenchment of any one approach, authority or reading, and displays a deregulation of the past. Reworkings thereby reflect a counter tradition in which the past is embodied in multiple ways and becomes complex rather then singular and linear. The historical canon thereby becomes recognised as a collection of texts that can be opened up, and may fly apart and be reconstructed at the whim of those who would perform them.

As a strategy for feminist resistance the deconstruction of the canon is an important feature of these dances. As Griselda Pollock notes slippages between images and tropes, such as are overtly evident in the reworkings, ‘allows us to dismantle the fixed architecture of canonical discourse with its teleology of individual artistic development so as to permit a feminist intervention through the creation of its own perverse genealogies’ (1999, p.252). Feminist reworkings can enter into and change canonical ballets, radically reinscribing them rather than endorsing the values of the ‘father’ text. Thereby a feminist reworking can reconstitute the canon and reworkings become the vehicles for values other than those of the Western, white, male.
Importantly particular reworkings have also contributed to a decentring of the European norms and have given voice to postcolonial perspectives. Reworkings such as those by Iwana, Tankard and Shakti have been shown to question Imperial, Colonial, and the accompanying Orientalist, power structures. These forces try to maintain neat order and have excluded non-white, non-Western voices from the canon. By forming intercultural texts these artists have demonstrated the way in which reworkings can operate effectively to contradict the geographical, historical and cultural assumptions of the canon. As Tiffin has written the 'processes of artistic and literary decolonisation have involved a radical dis/mantling of European codes and a post-colonial subversion and appropriation of the dominant European discourses' (Tiffin, 1995, p.95). Interestingly Iwana and Shakti do not only rework European discourses as represented in ballet but also rework the dance forms of Bharata Natyam and Butoh respectively. These dances highlight the false perception of the India and Japan as tradition bound cultures and it becomes clear that cultural contexts and cultural forms are not stable or knowable containers.

7.3 The double gesture: beyond the binary of otherness

Placing a rift in the tropes of same/other reworkings do not just refer to other texts in a neutral or innocent fashion. Rather the intertextual practice of reworkings is specific and purposeful in its use of prior texts, for as discussed above, reworkings, like other counter-discourses, are involved in destabilising power. Recognising that the canonical can never be erased these dances are hybrid in form and reinforce the fact that hegemonic processes require continual deconstruction. This process is also evident in all reworkings due to the operations of the bi-directional gaze. Reworkings implicitly and at times explicitly resist binary categories. Existing as hybrid texts they blend or fluctuate in such a manner as to challenge the fixity of referents to shift 'in-between'.

The hybrid asserts the transactional nature of power, texts and bodies - as introduced in Chapter Three, and as exemplified in relation to Shakti’s Swan Lake (Chapter Five), and again in relation to my own hybrid image of the swan/woman (Chapter Six). The site of the hybrid is a site of fluctuation and mutation that can estrange the basis of dominant discourse. Through a blend of the familiar and the unfamiliar reworkings create a disorientation which can be unsettling, for as they are not totally new they
show us the otherness within the same, for it is the invisible which animates the visible. While it should be noted that hybridity presents the potential for resistance but does not assume a resistive stance, these dances create a dialogic signifier which is unstable and oscillating rather than single and discrete, remaking boundaries and exposing the premise of their sources.

Drawing on the epistemology established by Deleuze and Guattari, Braidotti (1994) suggests that the hybrid subject is a nomadic and becoming subject that can flow between connections, which may, but does not necessarily, connect by appropriation. The process of becoming, as discussed in relation to O (a set of footnotes to 'Swan Lake') in Chapter Six, is never complete. As it does not lead back to, or reduce to, a subject or a source, it can never fix into binary oppositions. A reworking that operates in this way emphasises process and change; from this perspective reworkings can be seen to be about constant transformation, not arrival. In particular the reworkings discussed through Part Two reflect a commitment to process and resistance to closure. Whilst, as pointed out in Chapter One, all reworkings by their very nature suggest a sense of process, a sense of continual renewal, the reworks by Foster, Shakti and I, are, through their particularly hybrid natures, and commitments to improvisation (Midgelow and Shakti) and parody (Foster), especially ‘incomplete’ and defiant of single definitions. They represent an ongoing dialectic between hegemonic centrist systems and the peripheral subversion of them. These reworkings are dynamic, not static. As Tiffin (1995, p.96) notes in relation to postcolonial counter-discourse, reworking do not seek to subvert the dominant with a view to taking its place, but rather, they operate to continually consume their own biases, while at the same time they expose and erode those of the dominant discourse.

All the reworkings discussed operate in at least two directions at once, but the dances by Foster, Shakti and I, reveal an especially ‘and/but’ approach rather than the stance of the ‘not/but’. The promise of these reworkings is that they may in Braidotti’s (1994, p.5) terms bring ‘interconnectedness’ to the fore via the shifts between unlikely encounters and unexpected sources. Beyond binaries between texts and between bodies these reworkings can be seen to embody a ‘double gesture’. This double gesture as used in Chapter Six to refer to Irigaray’s parodoxic double stance, indicates
a way out of dualisms and offers instead the possibility of a discursive mobility. I am suggesting here that the double gesture operates in reworkings in such a manner as to undo conventional binaries of same/other, canon/counter-canon, old/new, past/present, and mythologised/demythologised. Without simply discounting the ballet (and all the women represented therein) these dance makers lay claim to what is theirs and what is not theirs to give glimpses of possible alternatives whilst still allowing us to know the ballet, but to know it differently.

7.4 Diversity and difference: reworkings (re)inscribe the body
Choreographers, through the processes of reworking, have encompassed changing attitudes towards gender and sexuality, unsettling the bodies of their predecessors. They have reworked the ballet and re-represented the ballerina by appropriating, trans-contextualising, and transforming her identity. This appropriation and transformation is such that the categories of identity become open to the convergence of multiple discourses at the site of identity - rendering categorisations problematic.

The reinscription and self-representation of the body is a key issue within reworkings. The insidious and persuasive construction of the body within the ballet canon, which tends to inscribe the body as object, makes the reworking of the body a particularly critical task. In Chapter Two, quoting Wolff (1990), I note that the body (in particular the female body) is a potential site of resistance, a site that ‘may threaten to erupt and challenge the established order’ (Wolff, 1990, p.122). Similarly Elizabeth Grosz points out that the body is never simply a passive object but a site which maintains the possibility of ‘counter-strategic reinscription, for it is capable of being self-marked, self-represented in alternative ways’ (in Gilbert and Topkins, 1996, p.204).

The reworking of the body (especially in what I have considered to be feminist reworkings) has been shown to usefully alter the source text and embody strategies of resistance. The radical reworkings by Foster, Shakti and I, establish and extend relationships between postfeminist discourse and Swan Lake to present Odette and Odile anew. The bodies evident in these works are contemporary, they are not explicitly politicised in the manner of 1970s feminist performances, nor do they proffer unitary or monolithic representations of women as ascribed to their ballet counterparts,
rather they are characterised by pluralistic, hybrid, fluid and becoming bodies. As such the bodies found in these three reworkings can be seen as literal embodiments of the bodies only written about and imagined in postfeminist discourse – throwing into doubt the substantive nature of the body.

As indicated in Chapter Three the reconfiguration of the body via diversity and difference is an important concept within postfeminist theorising and while clearly not all reworkings are postfeminist, the nature of reworkings is to create difference, and as a collective group of dances they render diversification. In line with Butler who states that her ‘recommendation is not to solve this crisis of identity, but to proliferate and intensify this crisis’ (Butler, 1990, p.121), I suggest that the bodily reinscriptions evident in reworkings refigure the body by creating multiple and heterogeneous representations. The promise of these dances is that they may offer such a proliferation of bodily inscriptions that identities can no longer be perceived as natural and indeed may no longer be categorisable at all.

In reworkings gender is signed as particularly fictive – the deliberate reinscription of the body marks gender as a construct. Because reworkings self-consciously ‘repeat’ the dances of the past they bring the performativity of gender into the open – failing to reiterate, and thereby failing to produce, the bodily acts of their sources. Whether they repeat in such away as to displace norms or become reincorporated varies across dances. However whatever the degree of displacement, or not, of norms within specific dances, the body’s ability to fracture has been shown to provide a significant site for feminist and postcolonialist decolonisation. Rather than reinstating the highly coded bodies of the ballet canon reworkings have re-choreographed the body such that a wider variety of bodily incarnations are encompassed allowing for divergence and multiplicity, as opposed to uniformity and sameness.

Significantly the analysis of the dances by Foster, Shakti and me bring these otherwise marginal bodies the centre. These dances present unpredictable and disruptive self-representations and create idiosyncratic vocabularies that challenge the codification of their source. This approach inscribes subjectivity and suggests ways in which the canon can be perceived more flexibly. Each of these dances literally embodies the
experiences and interests of their makers/dancers – as each is made and performed through their maker’s own, very specific, body. These women perform themselves, marking out their own identities, which are not easy to categorise, and are contrast to the seemingly universal canon.

However whilst they embody fluid and plural bodies in line with postfeminist theories they also can be seen to question postfeminist discourses, disrupting feminist accounts of the body. Two dances which have been shown to be particularly disruptive of Western feminist discourses are those by Shakti and I (see Chapters Five and Six respectively). footnotes challenges the potential absence of the body evident in postfeminist discourse and brings the experience of, and through, a particular body back into the frame, for the plurality of bodies evident in the dance are all held within one specific body. This one body is my body. This is not an essentialist position, for the body is not reduced to a fixed or singular identity, nor is it naively celebrated, but it acknowledges the complexities of my bodily experience. The specifics of my body are marked throughout the dance so while the dance encompasses multiple, becoming bodies, the concrete body, the ‘real’ body, is not lost.

Indo-Japanese dancer Shakti inserts her hybrid, urban and sexual presence into the ballet and in doing so challenges feminisms that have coded the ‘third world’ woman as tradition bound and as sexually repressed. Using classical Indian dance (alongside Western modern dance and yoga) to rework the ballet she redefines the ballet and brings its cultural specificity to fore. Shakti does not however rework Swan Lake with a conventional style of Indian dance but opens up tradition through improvisation and her intercultural mix of styles. Shakti’s body is anti-authentic and stands in opposition to the ‘first world’s’ search for a real or authentic ‘third world’. This resistance of a ‘third world’ identity also challenges Western feminisms that have tended to re-double the colonisation of the Oriental woman. I have also argued that Shakti’s sexual dance fractures feminist discourses that have sought to repress the erotic portrayal of women and it is to this aspect of reworkings to which I turn.
7.5 Pleasure and power: the (re)eroticised body

A number of the reworkings discussed in this thesis reclaim the pleasures of eroticism and sexuality in contrast to the ballets repressed and hidden representations. Shakti’s Swan Lake as discussed above explicitly celebrates female sexuality. Other dances also explore sex and the erotic as a positive force. For example for Ek’s Giselle and Odette are both sexual women and de Frutos interestingly expresses the erotic in a gay sexual relationship.

Using Jeanie Forte’s (1992) concept of erotic agency I suggest in Chapter Three that Foster, Shakti and I embody a specifically female erotic agency and this point was expanded and exemplified in subsequent chapters. While the modes of eroticism in the each of the works differ I have argued that these women reclaim the erotic to present their own bodies and own sexualities in a form of erotic agency. Shakti uses and challenges conventional understandings of the erotic to expresses her own sexual pleasure, whereas I, rather than invoking sex or sexual desire, focus upon my own bodies impulses and pleasures. Then in yet another mode Foster and I explore methods of presentation that destabilise the erotic objectification of the performer to confront (Foster), or more simply alter (me), conventions of representation. The erotic agency evoked by these women operate within the frames of power and pleasure and it is useful to consider, as I have implicitly done through Chapters Four, Five and Six, what is the nature and form of this agency and to ask; how successful is it?

Shakti (see Chapter Five) asserts her own pleasure and sexuality, reclaiming the erotic, whilst exposing her body. The erotic pleasure reflects the esoteric traditions of Shaktism rather than being driven by a corrective of Western feminist doctrines. This powerful female force is celebrated in this dance as Shakti practices a Tantric yoga that releases sexual energies. However the power of the global economy of sex impacts upon her dance, and her body, as she risks being viewed in the same frame as a stripper. This frame could consume her but the nature of her dance as a reworking, which clearly has an agenda other than titillation, her interaction with the audience, and her all too fleshy body mitigate against the fetishistic properties of stripping. Equally problematic however is the trope of the erotic within the exotic is this holds her erotic agency within Orientalist structures. Nevertheless, whilst problematic, Shakti does
challenge conventional representations of Odette and successfully asserts an eroticism that calls into question previous categorisations.

My own reworking, *footnotes*, explores erotic agency and the haptic. The dance performed naked in the video and the almost translucent costume I wear throughout the live performance, alongside the sinuous sensuality of the movement style do not graphically present sex but is erotic. I argue that like Irigaray's woman the erotic body in *footnotes* is a site of tactile, fluid pleasure - this is a female pleasure that is multiple and diffuse as I write my own body. This erotic body resists and invites the viewer's objectification. I suggest that the installation format, video projections, and the improvised movement form, work together to hinder sexual gratification, creating instead a haptic presence. This haptic presence, which focuses on kinaesthetic and proprioceptive awareness, and emphasises tactile impressions rather than a visual sense, evokes a seductive relationship between the viewer and the performer. The live body is presented in an ever-changing fluid form that resists the viewer's objectification whilst also laying itself open to be viewed. These haptically erotic bodies engulf the viewer in a flow of tactile impressions, arousing whilst evading sexual gratification.

Rather than presenting the erotic as a reclaimed positive force Foster, as an erotic agent, dismantles the appearance of the sexual offering. Using a range of techniques such as over-display and parody she overtly explores looking-at-to-be-looked-at-ness and refuses the erotic by dismantling the structures of viewing - shifting and challenging the gaze to de-automatise the way she is viewed. Framing herself between a pair of curtains attached to a head-dress she demonstrates the objectivication of the ballerina while giving the ballerina a powerful, 'knowing' voice. In this dance Foster has been shown to create a new language of desire based in upon an interaction with her audience in which they and she enjoy the pleasure of resistance.

Another key aspect of erotic agency in *Lac de Signes* is Foster's concept of the ballerina-as-phallus. As phallus the ballerina makes overt her status within the symbolic system. I have argued however that the imagery used by Foster also suggests the more subversive possibilities of the penis and the dildo. By reading the ballerina-as-penis,
with all the specificity and materiality that the penis embodies, I have suggested that
the ballerina is significantly reinscribed. The reference to dildo’s also inserts a lesbian
erotic agency. This lesbian eroticism threatens the normative bi-polarized sexuality of
the ballet and asserts that bodies do not always line up into expected categories as
sexual practices proliferate. Thereby the conception of the ballerina is shifted as a
subjective and fluid identity is inserted into her conventional appearance of fixity.

These three radical reworkings embody a feminist recuperation of sexual bodies as an
erotic politics of the female body is fashioned as part of a flux of identities, in a
plurality of styles. These reworkings open up categories of gender, sexuality and the
erotic intervening in the representation systems that objectify the body. Reclaiming the
erotic these dances use erotic agency as a strategy to intervene in the cultural
construction of women as fantasy object and replace it with the ‘subject-performer’ -
presenting the subjective pleasure of their maker/dancers own bodies. This I have
argued is a significant response and reaction to the perceived limitation of female
sexuality in the ballet Swan Lake.

Due to the operation of the ‘double gesture’ in reworkings the reframing of the body
becomes explicit as viewers see the body in new, reappropriated, and erotic ways.
Destabilising normative modes of viewing these dances disrupt conventionally male-
authored paradigms of desire. These reworkings encourage a model of spectatorship in
which audience's look beyond the immediate and to the simultaneous habitation of
multiple and overlapping formations. Beyond binary oppositions to the ballet, these
dances enter, extend, shift, and mutate that which already exists. Opening the
imagination to see differently and not simply ‘other than’, and recognising the diversity
of voices that might articulate future terrain, I am left dreaming of a plethora of Swan
Lakes.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Dolan, Jill (1985) ‘Gender impersonation on stage; destroying or maintaining the mirror of gender roles’, Women and Performance, 2/2, pp.4-11.


Ferguson, Alastair (1999) ‘People think Swans are gentle sedate birds, but they’re sexy’, *The Express*, August 20th.


Hutera, Donald (1999a) ‘Giselle’, The List, August 19-26, p.44.


(1999) Personal Email Communication with Author, July 1st.


_____ (1999b) Unpublished interview with author, tape recording, August.


Videography of the Key Works Cited

Andersson, Örjan (1999) ‘...and then the lake engulfed them’, Helsinki City Theatre Dance, personal communication.


_________ (1996, stage premiere 1995) Swan Lake, Adventures in Motion Pictures, BBC 2, 26th December.


De Frutos, Javier (1998) The Hypochondriac Bird, The Place Videoworks Collection, recorded at Queen Elizabeth Hall, 22nd October.


Midgelow, Vida (2002) O (a set of footnotes to Swan Lake), personal copy of the author.

Awaking Aurora, personal copy of the author.


Tallard, Phillippe and Sultan, Jose Luis (1997) Schwanengesange, Mannheimer Ballet, personal communication.