

2475/4099

MONASH UNIVERSITY
THESIS ACCEPTED IN SATISFACTION OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ON..... 7 March 2003

.....

1 Sep. Research Graduate School Committee

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**AN EMBODIED POLITICS: RADICAL
PEDAGOGIES OF CONTEMPORARY
DANCE**

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**Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at
Monash University, 2002**

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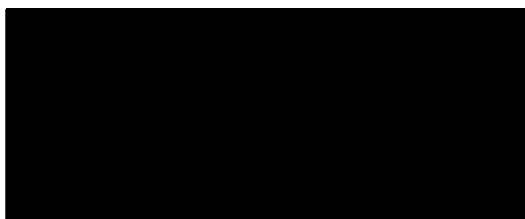
Thesis Abstract

This thesis works to elucidate the role of dance training and performance in the formation, reproduction, and reconfiguration of gendered dispositions. To this end, dance practices and the literacies or knowledges they embody are examined as explicitly constituted forms of corporeal habit, which have aesthetic and political, as well as personal significance.

While the principal research focus is dance pedagogy, the thesis draws upon Pierre Bourdieu's theorisation of embodied *habitus* to argue that the dancer's corporeal habit, or habitus, is not formed exclusively in the sites and techniques of dance training. The thesis builds an account of the dancer's habitus as constituted by the interaction of many different, sometimes contradictory, discourses and practices. Psychoanalytic perspectives upon the identificatory processes of subject formation are brought to bear upon the investigation of the dancer's habitus, in recognition of the fact that the process of training 'a body' entails imaginary and perceptual, as well as material processes. Work in feminist philosophy, in particular that of Elizabeth Grosz, Moira Gatens and Luce Irigaray, provides another theoretical framework for the examination of dance pedagogy undertaken in this thesis.

In summary, contrasting approaches to dance training and performance are investigated and critiqued from the perspective of post-structuralist and feminist accounts of the body. This range of theoretical perspectives creates a rich context for a close analysis, undertaken in the case study, of ideokinetic and Release-based approaches to movement and dance training. Finally, the argument is made that this field of practice, insofar as it seeks to effect change at the level of corporeal habit, represents a form of radical movement pedagogy, and that ideokinetic method offers a productive framework for the realisation of an embodied politics of dance pedagogy and performance.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university, and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, none of the work submitted herein contains material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.



Elizabeth Dempster

4th January 2002.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the generosity of my principal informant, Eva Karczag whose commitment to corporeal inquiry and play remains undiminished after almost thirty years of dancing. Thanks are also due to a number of dance artists with whom I have had the privilege of studying — Mary Fulkerson, Steve Paxton, Russell Dumas and Jennifer Monson. Their embodied insights, arising from long engagement with processes of corporeal inquiry, have inspired and directed my own 'corporeal inquiry' in this study.

The early research for the thesis began with Terry Threadgold at Sydney University. It was she who first encouraged my research with her conviction that the task of bringing insights of performance practice into relationship with other theoretical perspectives was a necessary and productive enterprise. To my second supervisor, Rachel Fensham I owe a significant debt of gratitude. Her incisive intelligence, academic rigor and diligence beyond the call of duty, were invaluable in bringing the project to completion.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks to Simon and Georgia Lloyd, for their forbearance and unstinting love.

Preface

Movement is like a wellspring. It moves through you, it moves out of you and it moves into you.

Barbara Clark

This thesis investigates movement practice as a locus of self-formation and creative change grounded in everyday life. It is concerned with the ways in which dance training organises and stabilises particular subject positions, as well as with the potential of movement to disassemble and mobilise subjects. I begin with a statement from Barbara Clark (1889 - 1982), an innovative American teacher of body alignment whose work has had a profound impact upon postmodern dancers and choreographers in America, Australia and Europe. In Clark's formulation, movement is not an object or thing; it is not an attribute or a possession of an individual, neither is it a discipline or technique. Movement happens; it is a relation to the world, a modality of being body, or to borrow Deleuze and Guattari's term, a 'becoming'. Clark's reflections upon movement arise out of a deep engagement with a process of kinaesthetic learning and re-education known variously as Todd alignment, release technique or ideokinesis. For Clark, movement is both a source of personal pleasure and a social practice. It is a means of engaging with and understanding one's place in the world. Thus to work on movement, to move and be moved, is to effect change in one's relation to the world and to the self.

Ideokinesis is a method of movement education, which seeks to effect change in the deep psycho-physical structuring of bodily alignment and movement. The ideokinetic method directly addresses the crucial role of corporeal habit in daily life and in specialised movement practices. Habit in this context is understood as a dynamic constellation of behaviours, comportments, gestures and movements, which are both socially constituted and subjectively inflected. In everyday life, bodily comportment and movement are governed by ingrained habit and thus proceed automatically, without conscious attention. Ideokinesis is practiced as an antidote to the unconsciousness of habit.

Ideokinetic methods have been practiced in specialised fields of physical education and dance training since the 1930s. It is paradoxical, given the active, physical orientation of these disciplines, that the method entails the inhibition of voluntary movement and the sustained

focus upon *imagined* movement. The idea or image of movement occurring in one's body is the principal means whereby habit change is effected; production of new habits, that is new neuro-muscular pathways, is developed through a process of sustained imagination.

In Clark's view, the practice of attention and imagination which supports and facilitates habit change is qualitatively different from other mental processes such as cognition. This distinction has important methodological implications both for the evolution and extension of ideokinetic practice itself and for the investigation of the impact of specialised movement training undertaken in this thesis. In the following quotation Clark draws a distinction between thinking *about* and thinking *through* the body.

There is a difference between the way the mind accepts an idea, knowing it as a theory or as an action ... The object of the work is to teach kinaesthetic awareness; everything else must be subordinated to that. Kinaesthetic awareness is our guide in the use of the body — the pleasurable experience that makes joy out of movement and makes movement into an art. We should not allow the subject matter to eclipse the above purpose. The science of movement is mechanical, and does not necessarily include kinaesthetic awareness. Scholarship in the science of movement can do much, but imagination and perception can do more (in Matt 1993:45).

Clark's observations point to the key themes and preoccupations of this thesis: the role of imagination and perception in psycho-physical change, corporeal pleasure, and the aestheticisation of everyday movement. These have been areas of academic, artistic and personal research for some years. The thesis was originally conceived as a response to and interrogation of issues arising in the practice of choreographing, performing and teaching Release-based dance. The terms Release work, Releasing dance and Release technique refer to dance practices, developed since the 1960s, which draw upon ideokinetic approaches to postural integration and movement education. My engagement with ideokinetic method and Release dance extends over twenty-five years and yet the explanatory frameworks available within these practices have not adequately accounted for my subjective experiences of ideokinesis, or my perception of its political potential. I have found it important to bring other disciplinary and theoretical frameworks to bear upon practice, in order to locate specialist dance knowledge and the in-body researches of contemporary dance artists within wider contexts of corporeal inquiry.

These ideokinetic methods have an ambiguous relationship to mainstream professional dance performance and choreography. This ambiguity is due in part to particular details of their social history and the type of institutional alliances they have been able to forge, but there are certain processes, intrinsic to ideokinetic methods, which resist a pervasive tendency in contemporary dance towards the reification and commodification of the dancer's body.¹ My relationship to current thinking concerning the relationship between dance training and professional performance in Australian dance is a critical one. When I identify as a dancer I articulate an investment in an ongoing project of embodied personal and social transformation, as well as an intellectual commitment to intervention in dominant understandings and techniques of making the dancer. The motivation behind this thesis remains my desire to lend language, and therefore the possibility of exchange and circulation in discourse, to an area of dance practice which at this moment in time is extremely marginal. The thesis works to give substance, through textualisation, to a fragile bodily belief in the possibility of new ways of thinking and creating habitus.

¹ Susan Foster comments critically upon the commodification of the dancer in contemporary American dance, describing the dancer as a 'hired body' in "Dancing Bodies", *Incorporations* (1992: 480-495).

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter consists of three sections. Section 1.1 is an overview of the thesis together with a brief account of significant theoretical and aesthetic contexts within which the research is located. Section 1.2 outlines the methodological approach and includes discussion of the collection of materials and the interpretative approach used to structure the thesis. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the significance of postmodern and ideokinetic approaches to movement education for the rethinking of the subject of dance.

1.1 Discourses of the dancing body

1.1.1 The thesis: an overview

This thesis maps the experiential and representational texture of a number of new dance practices with a particular focus upon ideokinesis. It seeks to identify and elucidate some of the social and political implications of these processes of bodily and perceptual change. Dance training practices are investigated and critiqued from the perspective of poststructuralist and feminist theories of the body but the overall methodological orientation and logic of the research is ethnographic. A key question orientating the research and informing the approach to the writing of the thesis is: What happens when we focus our attention upon physical experience? This question is approached from a range of perspectives and is posed in different domains of dance activity — in dance training contexts, in modern dance theory and criticism, and in the perceptual experience of the dance spectator. This breadth of approach is necessary, I will suggest, because the making of dancers, learning how to move in particular ways, does not occur in isolation but in the interaction of many discourses, practices and institutions.

In her editorial introduction to *Feminisms and Pedagogies of Everyday Life*, Carmen Luke identifies pedagogy, relations of learning and teaching, as the 'inter-subjective core relations of everyday life'. She notes that teaching and learning are 'endemic to all social relations ... and fundamental to all public/private life and all communicative exchanges from the nursery to the playground, the classroom to the courtroom' (1996:20-21). It is within and through these everyday sites and interactions that gender identities and relations are taught and learned. Luke's own essay in this volume, "Public pedagogies and everyday

life" focuses upon the broad cultural and social dimensions of pedagogical practices. She calls attention to the ways in which one learns from and is taught the 'doing' of gender by popular culture, peers, parents and teachers. Pedagogical regimes of subject formation are not confined to the classroom, school or lecture theatre, or to the ballet class, the modern dance studio or workshop.

The thesis is concerned with issues of pedagogy principally within the relatively closed setting of the pre-professional dance classroom and the dance workshop. However, the thesis also encompasses some discussion and analysis of the ways in which dance representations and practices interact with daily life. One of the concerns of the study is to examine the ways in which the relationship between the artistic domain and the realm of the everyday is construed and embodied in different genres of dance.

Some dance scholars have argued that dance representations function as public pedagogies, that is, as exemplary styles of 'being body' in the wider contexts of everyday life.¹ Another approach is that of dance ethnographer Cynthia Novack whose research on the relationship between daily life, forms of popular culture and art/theatre dance suggests that the influence often flows in the opposite direction, that is, from the 'grass roots' up. In "Looking at Movement as Culture" (1988), an essay focused upon the counter-culture of the 1960s and early 1970s, Novack argues that everyday bodily practices with their tacit, taken for granted 'theorisations' of corporeality impact upon art dance in diverse ways. Everyday life informs, instructs and regulates the forms and styles of corporeality which are the subject of dance practice. In this thesis I begin to explore the contrast between these different conceptualisations of the pedagogical relationship that exists between dance and the movement of everyday life.

If this thesis is about the making of dancers, it is also an exercise in the discursive production of a field of practice. Both an account and a *production* of a field of practice, the thesis draws together and names as 'dance' a set of procedures, methods and practices that are more conventionally regarded as an adjunct or therapeutic supplement to dance technique. This active production of a field is most evident in the case study where ideokinetic method is identified as a new approach to *dance* pedagogy. To investigate ideokinesis as dance pedagogy is to ask how the subject is 'fabricated' within its practices and techniques, and what knowledges and 'literacies' are produced through its engagement.

As a study, the thesis is situated at the intersection of three broad disciplinary domains. The first of these domains is dance education and training. While the thesis does not

¹ See Ann Daly's "The Balanchine Woman" (1987), Marianne Goldberg's "Ballerinas and Ball Passing" (1987/88) and Evan Alderson's "Dance as a Symbolic of Embodiment" (1990).

purport to be a formal study of, or in, dance pedagogy, it draws on a range of texts, which theorise issues of dance training and more broadly, movement education. The principal focus of the study is professional dance practice and the techniques, methods and discourses employed within contexts of pre-professional and professional training.

The transmission of dance knowledge or embodied understanding in these contexts involves experiential body-to-body learning, as the dance student is inducted into genre specific modes of conceptualising and articulating movement. The theorisation of practice that occurs in professionally orientated dance training is systematic and coherent, but is generally not formally articulated. In these settings questions of dance pedagogy are often taken as self evident or otherwise unproblematic and when issues do arise in the relatively closed contexts of professional dance training rarely do they spill out into wider arenas of discussion and debate. The identification of professional dance training as a sequestered aesthetic practice removed from social and political process is an isolation that the thesis explicitly seeks to challenge. Although the thesis does not engage with the formal discourse of dance education, work in dance pedagogy has provided the *objects* of the investigation: it has oriented the selection of classroom and workshop 'talk', interview material, reference texts, teaching manuals and other dance training-related documents.

The second disciplinary domain in which the thesis situates itself is that constituted by avant-garde or exploratory dance practice. Dance historian and theorist Susan Foster has described the conception and production of choreography as a process of theorisation. In her 1998 essay, "Choreographies of Gender" she questions the current dominance of the term 'performance' in accounts of the social production of gendered subjects² and proposes, as an alternative rubric, the term choreography. In a section of the essay entitled "Theoretical moves" Foster writes an account of a choreographer at work creating and shaping movement. 'She is sorting through, rejecting and constructing physical images. Her choices make manifest her theorising of corporeality' (1998:3), writes Foster. Later in the process the choreographer is engaged with the deployment of dancers in space:

She forges phrases of movement that construct groupings of dancers with gendered connotations — chaotic, convoluted, pristine, or geometric. When she does this for multiple bodies, she elaborates a theory, not only of gendered corporeal identity but also of relations among gendered bodies (1998:3).

² Foster refers to the widespread influence of Judith Butler's notion of gender as performance and questions its usefulness as way of understanding the embodiment and practice of gender in dance.

According to this view, dance-making and performance are deeply inflected by theory and theoretical debate — theories of the body, theories of agency, theories of social interaction and communication, and theories of gender are produced and reproduced daily in the processes and mechanisms of dance-making, dance performance and reception. Scholarly investigation of the embodied, non-formal theory in dance practice is a quite recent development in dance studies, with the notable exception of anthropologically oriented research. If, in the past, few commentators have taken dancers and choreographers at their word, the situation is changing as scholars, who are also dancers, bring to their investigations an understanding of the embodied, non-formal logic that both generates and constrains dance practice. Mark Franko's close analysis of Duncan's choreographic process in *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics* (1995) is an example of dance research that is sensitive to the logic of practice.³ Rather than interpreting Duncan's statements on practice as mere metaphor, he 'takes her at her word' and produces a complex and novel reading of her innovations in dance syntax and phrasing.

What dancers, improvisors and choreographers say about their practices and particularly what they say about and do with their bodies are important resources for this thesis. Dance writer and teacher Laurence Louppe has noted that 'Dancers' words on the body remain virtually unknown, and virtually unheard, for they rarely correspond with the different discourses of which the body is the object' (1996b: 13). The thesis engages dancers' words and theories in two ways — firstly, as an important part of the *method* of investigation. By taking the artist-teacher at her word I seek to understand these bodily theories in their own terms. This requires recognition of, and attention to, the embeddedness of theory in specific contexts of practice. Secondly, I pursue a more critical or reactive engagement with embodied dance 'theory' asking in what ways it accommodates, perpetuates or gives substance to constraining representations. In her introduction to an essay celebrating the work of choreographer Pina Bausch, Ana Sanchez-Colberg notes,

More often than not dance perpetuates — in its training, practices and critical approaches — patriarchal ideology, value judgments and its accompanying ready-made worldview... The process of analysing the old methods from a theoretical/critical point of view has started, but the process of analysing through, from and within the dance practice has yet to begin (1993:151).

One of the difficulties with which experimental dance practices must contend is that new forms of corporeality and new styles of moving are perceived within the conceptual

³ See Chapter 1 'The Invention of Modern Dance', pp 1-24.

frameworks already available. Furthermore, even the most exploratory of practices sediments over time as it generates its own sustaining narratives and myths of origin. The conceptual framework, which was necessary and important at a particular phase of development of a practice, may impede new theorisations and analyses in a different socio-political moment. While this thesis values and seeks to give voice to the understandings and insights arising in dance practice, it also brings a critical eye and ear to bear upon these practice-based perspectives. The principal resources for this aspect of the inquiry are artists' texts drawn from selected dance journals including *Contact Quarterly*, *Writings on Dance* and *Movement Research Journal*, and reflection on practice, which encompasses my own experience as a participant observer in ideokinetic workshops, and interviews conducted with a number of dancer-choreographers and improvisors active in the field of Release dance.

The third domain in the interdisciplinary matrix of the thesis is feminism. As a broad social and political movement directed towards improvement of the economic, cultural and political status of women, feminism has always been concerned in one way or another with issues of 'the body'. Although a notion of the body has been central to feminist understandings of the subordination of women, very divergent ideas about what the body is and how it is conceived have emerged in contemporary feminism. One of the most vigorous debates generated around the idea of 'the body' concerns the question of the significance of sexual difference or corporeal specificity. There is a marked contrast between egalitarian/liberal humanist and social constructionist feminisms, and more recent feminisms of sexual difference.

Feminist theories, of different theoretical persuasions, have problematised the category of the body and questioned its representation within dominant scientific, medical and philosophical discourses as mute facticity or biological substrate. In its articulation of the social and historical production of the body, feminist thinking has drawn on various intellectual and political traditions — philosophy, psychoanalysis and Marxism, for example. These traditions bring with them certain entrenched logics and theoretical commitments, which may have contradictory implications for feminist projects of social and cultural change. Feminist philosopher Elizabeth Grosz speaks of this when she describes the body as a 'conceptual blind spot' not only within mainstream Western philosophy, but also in some strands of contemporary feminist thinking (1994:3). Grosz summarises the role of the body in the Western philosophical tradition in the following way:

...the body is conceived as the polar opposite of mind, (and) is associated with a series of negative terms within binary

opposites. Where the mind is traditionally correlated with reason, subject, interiority, activity and masculinity, the body is implicitly associated with the opposites of these terms, passion, object, non-conscious, exteriority, passivity and femininity (1989: xiv).

Binary thinking produces hierarchical relationships between terms; it governs a sexual imaginary that represents the interests of one sex only — so feminist thinkers such as Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous have argued. These theorists, in recognising the negative implications for women of this philosophical heritage have sought to refigure the relation between the terms body and mind. More particularly they have sought to 'reclaim a notion of the body which refuses traditional binary oppositions' (Grosz 1989: xv). Although dancers working within diverse movement traditions may be actively practicing less dichotomous conceptions and understandings of embodiment, the language available to describe and reflect upon corporeal experience in dance has been constrained by the logic and values of powerful aesthetic and philosophical traditions. Thinking through or from the place of the body is a difficulty engaged by dance scholars as well as feminist philosophers.

One of the objectives of the research, consistent with a major trend in dance studies, is to draw discipline-specific theorisations of embodiment and representation into closer dialogue. Feminist theorising of corporeality contributes to the reconceptualising of theories of dance representation, performance and reception. Philosopher and dancer Philipa Rothfield, for instance, has observed that 'depending on what bodily theory one holds rather different approaches to the moving body will follow' (1988:10). In broad terms my approach to the body in dance will be informed by a feminism of sexual difference — what is sometimes called corporeal feminism.

In summary, questions of dance literacy, performance and cultural value are engaged in ways that interconnect the domains of dance pedagogy, experimental dance practice, and feminist theory. The thesis also engages accounts of the bodily basis of subjectivity arising from within poststructuralist theory more generally, with particular attention to Michel Foucault's work on discourse and discipline and Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the habitus.

1.1.2 The social formation of dancing bodies.

It is the centrality of the body as a site of social control and resistance, discipline and invention that makes the work of French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault particularly productive for analysing dance practices. Foucault has developed a way of conceiving the body as a concrete, historical phenomenon without ascribing to it a fixed

biological essence. His analysis also attempts to show that it is impossible to know the materiality of the body outside of its cultural significations.

In his genealogical writings of the 1970s Foucault traced the emergence of 'discipline' as an historically unique mode of the exercise of power. Disciplinary power functions to regulate the movement of the body through the material organisation of space and the temporal elaboration of action and gesture. Foucault identifies three different 'orders of events' that are invested with power relations. The first is the order of discourse, including texts of High Theory, documents or archives, the notes and memos of small time officials etc. The second order is that of non-discursive or non-verbal practice such as systems of education, punishment and confession. Foucault is concerned here with the concrete, material processes which mark and form human bodies in historically specific ways. Finally Foucault focuses upon the effects of these discursive and non-discursive operations, which in his view lead to the creation of docile, observable, quantifiable and also resistant bodies, groups and populations.

I intend to identify dance training practices as disciplinary regimes in order to highlight the complex interplay of texts, practices, discourses and techniques which together constitute a dance genre and delimit its cultural significations.

In Foucault's later work, particularly in the second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality* (1985&1986), he makes a transition from a focus upon the somewhat coercive functioning of disciplinary power, to an investigation of modes of active self-fabrication or self-fashioning. Speaking of this development in his conceptualisation of the relationship between individuals and social structure, he states:

I am interested in the way in which the subject constitutes himself in an active fashion, by the practices of self; these practices are nevertheless not something that the individual invents by himself. They are patterns that he finds in his culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture, his society and his social group (1988:11).

My analysis of dance practices as discourses and disciplines will be extended by a consideration of Foucault's notion of the 'use of the self'. Because dance techniques are directed to specific outcomes and effects, there are ways in which all dance practices could be said to function as disciplinary regimes. However, the effectiveness of such disciplines is dependent upon the manner in which a dancer takes them up, on her own account, so to speak. The question of the individual's active engagement with her own self-constitution

through dance will be important in the development of my argument concerning the transformative potential of new dance practices.

Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has also developed ways of theorising how people are situated as social subjects, taking a particular focus upon the role of cultural practices in that process. In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984), Bourdieu undertakes a close study of the ways in which our relationships to cultural forms and practices are learned and developed. Cultural capital — Bourdieu's term describes a form of social prestige based in intellectual and/or aesthetic knowledge — is acquired through both implicit and explicit means, within the family and in processes of schooling. Taste, according to Bourdieu, functions as a mode of classification and judgement; it classifies people and their preferences in food, clothing, entertainment, music etcetera, in ways that define and organise their social relations. Bourdieu's analysis of the social function of taste and culture in the production and legitimatisation of social differences provides useful ways of thinking about dance as a cultural practice and as a cultural product. The linkage Bourdieu makes between social class and cultural capital is neither simple nor fixed. We may inhabit several social groupings and the power and prestige associated with the different forms and systems of capital may conflict. The dance practice at the centre of this thesis has a complex relationship to high culture. Access to the traditions of ideokinesis and Release dance is, as Brooklyn-based performer Jennifer Monson has observed, a matter of educational and social privilege,⁴ and yet, as a dance practice associated with the experimental end of the performing arts spectrum Release dance occupies a very marginalised sphere.

Another important aspect of Bourdieu's work explored in this thesis is the notion of 'habitus', which in Bourdieu's formulation is a key to understanding the bodily basis of social meaning, identity and exchange. According to Bourdieu, habitus is both the outcome and the process by which social meanings, the distinctions of social class, ethnicity and gender are literally incorporated, taken up and expressed through the postures, movements and gestures of everyday life. In the thesis the notion of habitus provides a valuable conceptual framework for investigation of the manner in which dance practices produce contrasting forms of embodied politics and cultural signification.

Offering another perspective on the relationship between dance and social formation is dance scholar Evan Alderson. Alderson describes dance as a socially persuasive cultural practice, one that functions as both aesthetic form and social transaction. According to Alderson, dance offers opportunities for experimentation with bodily ways of being. It is a

⁴ Monson made this observation in an interview with the author in Melbourne, 1999.

social practice that provides occasion for the 'creative exploration, articulation and elaboration of the phenomenal body in space and time' (1990:2). These capacities for invention and play at the level of the body are always experienced in relation to limits, which are both biologically given and governed by social and artistic conventions. The exploration of these limits is definitive of the freedom dance offers, Alderson suggests. Australian choreographer Russell Dumas echoes this perception when he speaks of the medium of dance as a body that is both utopian and pragmatic. 'The body's resistance to change and the choreographic desire for change is a conundrum at the very heart of dance', notes Dumas (2001). Dance has a dual character; it is both conservative and utopian. Being an art of the body and thus defined through a habitus, dance has a conventional or conservative aspect; belonging to the aesthetic, dance instantiates values of freedom and invention; it participates in world-making as well as world-reflecting. Dancing may also entail a transcendence of individual action. 'One *enters* the dance', actively lending one's body 'to a pattern and rhythm that are outside it' writes Alderson (1990:3). This experience of being 'taken over by the dance' has a social aspect, strongly manifested in particular forms of dance. Postmodern dancer-choreographer Simone Forti similarly describes the self-transcendence that may be experienced in dance as entering the 'dance state' (1984: 8).

Unison movement, the patterns of social dance and Contact Improvisation are Alderson's examples of dance forms which may effect powerful self-transcending experiences of a body-in-common. In some settings, this sense of a body-in-common or 'being all together' is a precondition for experimentation with bodily ways of being. In this thesis these insights concerning the function of a body-in-common, or 'being all together' will be applied to the analysis of the inter-subjective interactions of a Release dance workshop. In Chapter 5 I will investigate the dance workshop as a particular form of social practice, a site of female sociality that supports experiment with habit (habitus) change.

Alderson makes a further observation concerning the interaction of danced corporealities and everyday life that is pertinent to the thesis investigation. In his discussion of the dual character of the body's presence in dance Alderson suggests that this paradoxical doubleness (whereby the body is both conservative and visionary, affirming and challenging of habitus) is also a feature of the body's everyday social existence. The body in dance is 'twice performed', since the body in everyday life is itself performed, Alderson states, making reference to Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1971) and to the work of feminist philosopher Judith Butler.

Butler's notion of performativity has been a powerful and productive metaphor of the constitution of gender. According to Butler, gender identity is the effect of a surface inscription, a stylised repetition of acts, gestures and movements that 'congeal over time to

produce the *appearance* of substance, of a natural sort of being' (1990:140). Butler is concerned with undermining the belief that there is a fixed, biologically determined relationship between sexed bodies and their gender. She represents gender as an effect of practice; practices are the means by which ideas and concepts are substantialised, given body and made 'real'. In its close attention to the body's movement in time and space, dance suggests itself as a powerful context for the practice and performance of gender. Dance training will be investigated as one site of dance practice where detailed, persistent attention is paid to the acquisition of specific, gendered dispositions of body and mind. Butler's notion of performativity is drawn not from theatre or performance practice, but from linguistics and the speech act theory of J.L. Austin, however. We need to ask, as a number of theatre and dance theorists have begun to do (Auslander 1997 and Foster 1998), how useful is Butler's notion of performativity in the empirical space of the dance workshop or theatre rehearsal; and what are the actual difficulties of what Butler terms 'affirmative re-signification' (1993:240), that is 'remaking selves' and performing them differently, in that context.

Linguist and semiotician Terry Threadgold, whose research encompasses analysis of the process of theatrical rehearsal, has suggested that Butler underestimates the labour of performing gender differently.⁵ This thesis will hopefully offer some insight into the physical and conceptual labour of 'doing gender', or performing the self, differently. In this study I will propose an extension and partial redefinition of Butler's notion of performativity to encompass the idea of corporeal habit. A dancer's mastery of a particular dance genre or style is demonstrated by the degree to which a specific movement modality becomes embodied as a relatively unconscious habit. The dancer's acquisition of a particular form of corporeal habit is understood to entail the transformation of deep neuromuscular and perceptual patterns. Corporeal habit is constitutive; it is what she is. In my analysis of dance training I will examine the notion of corporeal habit not only as the relatively fixed and unconscious embodiment of social norms, but also as a mechanism by which change occurs. In this regard, dance-training practices may have something unique to offer to feminist understandings of the performance of gender.

Poststructuralist accounts of the socio-cultural formation of bodies have also informed the work of dance theorist and historian Susan Leigh Foster. My argument builds upon Foster's detailed analysis of the ways in which different dance genres produce distinctive forms and styles of embodied subjectivity. Foster's groundbreaking work in *Reading Dancing: Bodies and subjects in Contemporary American Dance* opened the dance field to a consideration of the *choreo-graphy* or writing of the dancing subject. Foster proposes the

⁵ See Threadgold, *Feminist Poetics: poesis, performance, histories*. (1997:84).

term 'writing' to indicate the imbrication of choreographic text and dancer's body. Dancing and choreographing are represented as writings which produce particular kinds of subject positions. The en-gendering of a dancer is understood as a process of knowledge production and subject formation.

Foster's project in *Reading Dancing* was to contest the muteness of dance consequent upon a division of labour between writers and dancers. Against the 'sanctimonious mutism' of dance she insists on a critical practice of reading dance in terms of representational codes. Foster diversified a field which for too long had been conceptualised in terms of a fundamental opposition - formalist versus expressivist, Cunningham versus Graham, modern versus postmodern. However, in some ways her representation of dance as writing, gives precedence to the choreographic schema over the performed event; representation is counterposed to feeling, and sense, the operation of reason, is valued over sensibility. If dance theory has been limited by the assumed ineffability of its object, that is, movement's apparent resistance to transliteration, it may be also be constrained by its failure to systematically investigate the libidinally invested body of dance.

As performance theorist Philip Auslander notes in his review of *Reading Dancing*, Foster's theory forcecloses discussion of the possibility that there may be moments in dance performance at which representation does not occur. 'Such an allowance would admit the further possibility that dance can provide access to an originary, uncoded body and its "unspeakable" referents after all' (1988:9). Auslander proposes a theorisation of the body in performance that might avoid the binarised essentialist/anti-essentialist opposition. The body in performance is doubly coded, Auslander suggests; it is defined by the codes and conventions of particular dance performance, but it is also inscribed by social discourses. The study of the dancing body might thus become a study of the interaction of these various encodings. Despite his initial critical evaluation of Foster's approach to dance analysis, Auslander concludes his review with a reconfirmation, albeit with some modification, of her analytic strategy.

Marcia Siegel's response to *Reading Dancing* is more explicitly critical of the textualisation of dance experience exemplified by Foster's analytic approach. Siegel, along with fellow dance critic Deborah Jowitt, was at the forefront of the movement in dance criticism away from an interpretive, hermeneutic approach and towards a descriptive dance aesthetics. This descriptive aesthetic places a particular value upon the perceptual experience of the spectator-reviewer as she/he seeks to render as accurately as possible the sensuous immediacy of the dance. In her review of Foster's book Siegel (1988) insists on the recognition of the specificities of dance experience including its embodied, visceral and emotional dimension — and is dismissive of attempts to reduce dance to representation.

In a more recent essay Foster acknowledges that there are aspects of dancing which are resistant to written description.⁶ However, Foster's overall argument in this paper would seem to suggest a continuing caution with respect to the non-discursive and sensuous dimensions of dance experience. She notes the historically dominant and still pervasive conflation of the terms dance, woman and sexuality and reiterates her commitment to challenging limited views of dance which would reduce it to a mere vehicle of sensual and sexual pleasure. She again grounds her analysis of dance as a signifying practice in the choreographic schema rather than the performative event.

Foster's commitment to the 'reading' and 'writing' of choreography leaves certain dimensions of dance experience relatively unexplored. This thesis departs from the representational emphasis of Foster's work and seeks to develop an understanding of what could be termed the semiotics of perceptual experience. It is this realm of the sensuous, libidinally invested body which has presented such far-reaching conceptual challenge to dance theory. I will suggest that the field of psychoanalytically informed feminist philosophy offers some productive ways of negotiating and re-thinking the essentialist/anti-essentialist, representation/embodiment impasse that has dogged and constrained dance theory and dance practice.

1.1.3 Feminist perspectives in dance practice and theory.

In her introduction to a feminist issue of the journal *Writings on Dance*, Sally Gardner observes that dance as a female-centred and body-based art has a distinctive contribution to make to contemporary feminism. The possibility exists for a rich dialogue between dance practice and feminist theory. Gardner writes: 'dance as a performance art is a unique site where key terms upon which feminist enquiry turns - women, women's bodies, sexual difference, forms of embodiment and representation - are literally incorporated' (1993:3).

As Gardner notes, the women's suffrage or first wave feminist movement provided a context for the production and reception of the 'free' or 'new' dance of female artists such as Isadora Duncan and Maud Allen. Early in this century Duncan spoke of her work in feminist terms: she saw the dancer of the future dancing 'the freedom of women'. However this kind of explicit linkage of a feminist perspective and dance practice has been relatively rare in dance history. In contrast to the proliferation of feminist theatres during the 1970s,

⁶ See "Choreographies of Gender" (1998:11-12))

there are few examples of dance which have identified themselves as feminist⁷ and in the discussion which follows I will reflect upon the reasons for this lack.

The identification of dance as a female or feminine art form has contradictory implications for women, and for women artists. It has been argued that the feminisation of dance contributed to its long exclusion from the fine arts canon and to its relegation to a low status category of entertainment or spectacle.⁸ Ironically, the feminisation of dance may also be a contributing factor in the relative neglect of the art form by earlier feminist thinkers. In *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (1994), philosopher Elizabeth Grosz suggests that feminists have been wary of ascribing to women any special or distinctive relationship to the body, principally because of the way in which patriarchal thinking has used fixed concepts of the body and notions of biological determinism to denigrate and restrict women. This wariness accounts perhaps for the delayed recognition of the feminist implications of women's work in dance. Grosz is amongst the philosophers who are developing ways of conceptualising bodily specificity in terms that are not essentialist. The theoretical project of 'corporeal feminism' is providing new conceptual depth to contemporary dance research and it is this approach which informs the analysis of dancing bodies undertaken in this thesis.⁹

Issues of equity and participation, which have been important arenas of feminist analysis and action in other art forms, have been less significant in dance. The compensatory histories detailing women's participation in various arts, which were an important feature of the cultural work of seventies feminism, initially seemed less pertinent to dance where a major genre, modern dance, had been defined and developed largely by female practitioners. Major choreographic development throughout the twentieth century has been concentrated in the area of modern dance and women artists have dominated this genre. In *Dancing Women: Female bodies on stage* (1998), a major study of the changing representation of women in dance, Sally Banes notes that during the 1920s and 1930s in both Germany and the United States the modern dance world was predominately female. Reflecting upon the emergence of solo dance artists in this period Banes notes that: 'Women were not only taking centre stage, they were taking all of the stage' (1998:2).

⁷ For example, in *Dancing Women* (1998) Sally Banes identifies a small number of dance artists who are explicitly engaging with feminist concerns (Johanna Boyce, Blondell Cummings, Chremos) in a section entitled "The 1980s and 1990s: bad girls". The 1970s Melbourne based journal of feminism and art *Lip* contains only two references to dance — an interview with postmodern choreographer Nanette Hassall and prima ballerina Marilyn Rowe.

⁸ Francis Sparshott identifies Hegel's classification of the fine arts, which excludes dance, as a factor influencing the philosophic neglect of dance in "Why Philosophy Neglects the Dance?" (1983). David Michael Levin's view in "Philosophers and the Dance" (1983) is that it is the patriarchal investments of the western philosophical tradition that present an obstacle to fuller recognition of dance as an autonomous art.

⁹ For example see Rachel Fensham's "Dancing in and out of Language: A Feminist Dilemma" (1993) in *Writings on Dance* #9, Sally Gardner's "Spirit of Gravity and Maiden's Feet:" in *Writings on Dance* #15 (1996:48-62) and Eluned Summers-Bremner's "Reading Irigaray, Dancing" *Hypatia* 15.1 Spring 2000, pp 90-110.

As well as the changing representations on stage, the audience for dance was also undergoing significant reconfiguration. The principal modern dance choreographers and performers were female, so too was its audience.¹⁰ Banes asserts that modern dance not only reflected changing social values concerning sexuality and marriage but also constructed new social relations as it produced a new, predominately female, audience for dance. In the following passage Banes outlines some of the feminist implications of the new developments in dance:

Although these early forerunners were not politically active feminists and were unaffiliated with any organised groups, they contributed to the growing discourse about women and to the pressure women were applying to society's strictures, whether in the political or cultural spheres. They created an alternative market — and largely female audiences — for dance performances, outside of the male-dominated opera-house ballet stage and popular entertainments. When they put their bodies, their emotions, and their imagination center stage, these aspects of the particular selves they projected, while not *essentially* female, nevertheless were marked as bodies, emotions, and imaginations of women (1998:122).

The motif around which Banes organises her far-reaching discussion of representation of and by women in dance is the 'marriage plot'. She notes the predominance of the theme of marriage in dance history, observing how amateur ballets were staged at royal wedding ceremonies in the European courts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Marriage initially marked the occasion for ballet. The occasion of marriage later became the subject of dance, incorporated into the narrative content of dance performance. Despite the diminishing significance of narrative in contemporary choreographic production, for Banes the 'marriage plot' is still a useful point of focus for analysis of dance representations. Explaining her continuing engagement with the theme she writes:

For the physical conditions of the vital people portraying the action in dance over-determine the preeminence of the marriage plot ... the central performers in both ballet and modern dance are young women at the peak of their powers as dancers. And their job on stage is to move — to be active. The medium of

¹⁰ In America the emerging modern dance depended upon a network of women's colleges and physical education departments; middle-class women and girls formed the audience for modern dance and its student constituency. See Manning (1993:146) and Siegel (1987: 146-7).

dance — lively young bodies, with a preponderance of female bodies in motion — itself militates against depicting sedentary states (like domesticity) and leans towards issues of sexuality and the social governance of mating through the marriage institution (1998:6).

As Banes herself notes, the elision of non-sexual and sedentary subject matter and the preeminence of the theme of heterosexual romance in dance deserves closer attention. Her commitment to the marriage plot as a structure of analysis gives rise to some curious anomalies and contradictions. Banes concludes *Dancing Women* with a brief discussion of the postmodern dance of the Judson era. This body of work, with its rejection of overt emotional expression, its conscious adoption of strategies to minimise gender distinction and its rigorous extension of non-representational strategies seems to directly challenge the analytic frame adopted throughout the book. In postmodern dance the marriage plot was not only attenuated but also functionally irrelevant to the concerns of the artists under discussion. The postmodern dance experimentation of the 1960s and 1970s, that Banes herself has so eloquently documented and analysed elsewhere,¹¹ represents a deep rupture with the representational conventions upon which the marriage plot rests.

In *Dancing Women* Banes identifies Yvonne Rainer and Trisha Brown as exemplary female artists who achieved intellectual equality with men. According to Banes these choreographer-dancers asserted the equality of women 'as thinkers and speakers with equal access to authority and equal claims to seriousness' (in Carroll 1996:341). Speaking of Trisha Brown, Banes notes, '(she) easily stakes out a space for women as intellectual artists on a par with men' (1998:226). Banes's recourse to the marriage plot, if not her affection for it, arises from the fact that her principal object is the representation of women in the received canon of high art dance — examples from classical ballet, contemporary ballet and modern dance are closely described and analysed. Banes notes the predominance of the marriage plot in the major canonical works surveyed but argues that the representation in dance of women's relationship to the demands of patriarchal social institutions (such as marriage) is complex, and indeed often challenged prevailing social conventions.

Given the depth and erudition of Banes's research, the fact that her analysis of postmodern choreography in this work is less than persuasive indicates something about the radicalism of the new forms of corporeal practice explored in postmodern dance. It also suggests that the theoretical framework that Banes adopts may be inappropriately applied to this particular body of work, however effective it may be for the principal objects of her

¹¹ See *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-modern Dance* (1980) and *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theater, 1962-1964* (1983).

analysis. Furthermore, concerned as she is with a reconsideration of the canon in terms of an egalitarian or liberal feminist agenda, to reject the marriage plot altogether and to propose a dance of sexual difference is not a possibility that Banes entertains. The liberal feminist conceptual framework she has recourse to ties her analysis to a binarised worldview in which women, their social status and value and their contribution to culture are determined on the basis of their similarity to or difference from men. Man is the normative term against which women's rights, capacities and achievements are to be measured, even in a feminised art form such as dance. The evident limitations of the liberal or equality feminism Banes assumes would appear to confirm Grosz's insights concerning the unwitting phallocentrism of certain forms of feminist theorising — which brings me to the question of why it might be necessary to argue (again) for a feminist theory and practice of dance.

In an article outlining the limitations of mainstream feminism, theatre scholar Loren Kruger is critical of its failure to address the entrenched masculinity of the theatre institution itself.¹² Kruger asserts that feminist analyses of theatre practice have limited their interests to questions of representation within mainstream theatre practice and have substantially ignored the material organisation of theatre and its economically driven strategies of legitimation. Kruger argues that these strategies of legitimation in the theatre institution allow for the marginalisation of alternative theatres, and in particular, certain kinds of feminist theatre practices by dismissing them as illegitimate and therefore improperly 'theatre'. She is also wary of claims that too readily equate aesthetic innovation with social and political radicalism:

Once we acknowledge the determining influence of place and occasion on the critical significance of a theatre event and on the audience's recognition of that event, we cannot make any obvious claims for the critical potential of drama on the sole basis of formal innovation (1995:43).

In dance there is a danger in assuming that the feminism of early modern dance still serves women in dance today. Sally Banes reflects a not uncommon assumption amongst dance scholars when she writes in her introduction to *Dancing Women* that she initially regarded an explicitly feminist approach to the dance unnecessary, given the highly feminised nature of the field. Notwithstanding her early reservations, her book does affirm the continuing importance of an explicitly feminist critique of dance practice and performance. My own interest, elaborated in the thesis, lies in the contribution women artists have made to the

¹² Loren Kruger "The Dis-Play's the Thing: Gender and Public Sphere in Contemporary British Theatre " in K. Laughlin and C. Schuler (eds.) *Theatre and Feminist Aesthetics* (1995).

reevaluation and transformation of the 'kinaesthetics' of performance. I will be concerned with a minor tradition, a movement practice, which from certain perspectives is regarded as 'illegitimate', and improperly 'dance'. Throughout the twentieth century, dance artists, predominately female, working in the areas of modern and postmodern dance, have undertaken a thoroughgoing reevaluation and redefinition of corporeal knowledge. The thesis records and traces the impact upon dance pedagogy of some of their epistemological and aesthetic innovations.

1.2 Notes on method

Practice has a logic which is not that of the logician. This has to be acknowledged in order to avoid asking of it more logic than it can give, thereby condemning oneself either to wring incoherences out of it or to thrust forced coherence upon it (Bourdieu 1990: 86).

Pierre Bourdieu's *The Logic of Practice* points to a difficulty in applying a theoretical or scientific logic to ritual practices. The formulation of ethnographic data for example entails a process of 'objectivisation' whereby the researcher selects data and determines significances in terms of the priorities and logics of his discipline. The logic of the ritual practices Bourdieu observes and the artistic practices that are the focus of my research are organised in terms of effectiveness. They are coherent and regulated without conforming to explicit rules.

Dance theorist and educator Rudolf Laban has also considered the problematic task of treating dance as a discipline, if not a science. In an essay entitled "Dance as a Discipline" he writes: 'Dance can best be explained by dancing ... dance-thinking, or the thinking connected with movement, is diametrically opposed to ordinary thinking, thinking connected with words' (1971:22). Understanding what dance is and means entails some measure of participation in the practical logic of dancing, Laban asserts.

Labananalysis, Laban's major contribution to dance theory has provided dance scholars with a movement sensitive framework of analysis. The emergence of film and video technologies has lessened the difficulties presented by the ephemerality and uniqueness of performance. However for dance researchers concerned to articulate the subjective effects of dance and dancing some methodological difficulties remain. How a dance researcher approaches her field of inquiry is a matter of delicacy. Perhaps it is in recognition of the forces that still hierarchically divide cognitive and bodily projects, coupled with an unwillingness to perpetuate such divisions, that many dance researchers have adopted an ethnographic approach to the research task. Ethnographic research has provided a

methodology which is sensitive to context and which seeks to systematically address the issue of the researcher's implication or 'interestedness' in the object of study. Ethnographer Clifford Geertz has elaborated a mode of analysis that articulates the complex layering of meaning in cultural performance. This mode of analysis has been very effectively employed in contemporary dance studies.¹³

My relationship to the object and field of study with which I have a long association as dancer and choreographer is that of a participant-observer, and to that extent the study is ethnographic in orientation. In ethnographic research Geertz advocates use of 'the hermeneutic circle', a process of analysis and interpretation that moves between the general and the particular instance. The hermeneutic circle is created in the movement between these two questions: What is the general form of their life? and What exactly are the vehicles in which that form is embodied? Geertz argues that this method of conducting analysis in a complex field of practice avoids the unproductive polarisation of abstraction and specific observation. This controlled oscillation between the general and the particular, which Geertz advocates in anthropological inquiry, has informed both my approach to the research and the writing about it. The thesis moves between theoretical overview and immersion in instances of practice. The chapters focus upon specific topics and perspectives but they move across similar terrain repeatedly in order to create a rich evocation of practice, a 'thick description' to adopt Geertz's terminology (1973:14). Within the constraints of the thesis as genre, I am attempting to represent something of the 'practical logic' of dancing.

The initial definition of the research study was largely determined by my own history of engagement with ideokinetic and Release practice. Questions that initially arose in practice have shaped in large measure the parameters of the study and have influenced decisions concerning the inclusions and exclusions of materials. As has been quite widely observed, dance scholarship and criticism, once the province of male writers (who were generally positioned as non-dancing critics), is now dominated by a new generation of female dance historians, critics and theorists whose engagement in dance is a much more implicated, visceral one. The work of distinguished dance scholars such as Susan Leigh Foster, Susan Manning, Mark Franko, Cynthia Novack and Deborah Jowitt (to name only a few) presumes an embodied dance literacy. The dancing writer cannot claim to be disinterested, and often does not wish to be. This thesis, like the work of dance researchers cited above, seeks to call attention to the place and the body from which its story is being told.

¹³ Some examples of contemporary dance research informed by the ethnography of Clifford Geertz are Ann Daly's *Done Into Dance* (1995), Ann Cooper Albright's *Choreographing Difference* (1997) and Cynthia Novack's *Sharing the Dance: Contact Improvisation and American Culture* (1990).

Significant sections of the thesis, particularly Chapters Four and Five, are drawn from my own experience as a dance student, teacher and workshop participant. I have found Teresa de Lauretis's definition of 'experience' to be invaluable in understanding its purpose and function within this research study. De Lauretis, a feminist film theorist and semiotician, outlines her notion of the term 'experience' in this way:

I use the term not in the individualistic, idiosyncratic sense of something belonging to one and exclusively her own, even though others might have 'similar' experiences, but rather in the general sense of a process by which, for all social beings, subjectivity is constructed (1984:159).

De Lauretis goes on to describe subjectivity as an ongoing construction, a process and movement in time and space, and not a fixed point of departure. Subjectivity is thus an effect of interaction with the world; and it is the process of 'subjectivisation' through which one is placed and places oneself in social reality which De Lauretis names 'experience'.

(Subjectivity) is produced not by external ideas, values or material causes, but by one's personal, subjective, engagement in the practices, discourses and institutions that lend significance (value, meaning and affect) to the events of the world (ibid:159).

This thesis therefore works to develop an understanding of how experiences of dancing and watching dances constitute particular forms or styles of subjectivity. The connection De Lauretis makes between (personal) experience and the social formation of subjectivity provides both a methodological and theoretical rationale for the propositions this thesis makes concerning the embodied politics of dance.

In keeping with the broad ethnographic approach of the study some final comments on the immediate context from which the study arises and to which it speaks are in order. Australian dance for reasons of geography and history has had a somewhat tangential relation to the main currents of dance thinking in twentieth century Euro-American dance. To draw out the full implications of this local history is not my objective here but a few observations on local context will hopefully clarify the rationale behind the inclusions and exclusions exercised in the thesis. The reader may wonder, for example, why a thesis concerned with the elaboration of new dance practices begins with an analysis of the governing imaginary of the practice of ballet. From where I stand, the inclusion of ballet seems important and necessary, if not unavoidable. Ballet is an influential cultural institution in Australia. Unlike other forms of theatrical dance it has a well-documented

history and a socially valued heritage; it knows its 'place'. The history of theatrical dance in Australia as documented in Edward Pask's two works *Enter the Colonies Dancing: 1835-1940* (1979) and the *Ballet in Australia: The Second Act, 1940-1980* (1982) is essentially an account of the establishment and consolidation of ballet as the major arena of dance practice in this country. Comparable accounts of modern dance history and heritage do not yet exist.

One of ballet's most powerful effects in contemporary Australia is that of definition — it knows what is dance and what is not. In the absence of a significant, broadly recognised tradition of modern and postmodern dance, ballet sets the terms of reference for dance practice in Australia. As Gardner has noted, modern and postmodern dance have not found fertile ground in which to fully develop locally, principally 'because the hegemony of ballet — as an aesthetic and a system of training and values — has never effectively been countered' (2002). In this thesis a partial critique of ballet is presented in Chapter Two and further elaborated through different points of focus in subsequent chapters. The function of this critique is towards the development of an understanding of the conditions of possibility of other practices and other dancing bodies.

1.2.1 Collection and organisation of materials and structure of the thesis

The approach to the collection and selection of primary sources is inflected by my own relation to the set of practices under consideration. In Chapter Two, for example, the analysis of aspects of classical ballet training proceeds principally through a reading of a number of standard teaching texts. Selected field notes assembled during a period of classroom observation conducted at the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School, Melbourne, supplement this reading. Over a five week period during 1995, I observed the full range of classes offered across the dance curriculum — girls, boys and mixed classical, *pas de deux* and repertoire, body awareness/kinesiology. As the focus of my research clarified, most of these materials were left behind.

The case study (Chapter Five) developed from an earlier period of fieldwork undertaken during July-August 1994. I was a participant-observer in a Release dance workshop offered by dancer and teacher Eva Karczag. My involvement in this work and with Eva Karczag extends back to 1975, when we worked together in the Dance Exchange Company. In 1975 Karczag was already an accomplished and experienced performer and teacher of ideokinetic method.

The thesis contravenes one of the more established conventions of thesis structure, which is to open with a detailed account of a theoretical framework that is then 'applied' to a research object. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks introduced briefly in this

introductory chapter are developed further throughout the thesis in dialogue with an account of dance practice. Although the thesis brings theoretical perspectives to bear upon instances of practice, it also acknowledges that embodied dance practices are forms of abstraction in their own terms. Part of my project has been to attempt to elucidate these 'practical theories' in ways that connect them with theories of the body developed in other disciplinary settings. To this end poststructuralist and feminist accounts of the body are brought to bear upon the analysis of various instances of practice. I have attempted to ground these theoretical concerns within a complex evocation of practice. This embedding of theory within practice is particularly pronounced in Chapter Five but informs the shaping and presentation of the thesis argument overall.

The management of the case study materials and their analysis is also somewhat unorthodox. The research is constituted by an analysis of new dance/movement practices. These practices are represented at the most concentrated and detailed level in Chapter Five, where the focus is upon ideokinetic and Release dance, but important elements of the analysis are located in earlier chapters which address specific contextual issues of postmodern dance practice. Chapters Two and Five present differently focused accounts of dance training in two contrasting settings. What is common to these otherwise divergent accounts is the representation and analysis of dance and movement training as the forming of corporeal habit.

Perceptions about the corporeal habit or habitus of the dancer govern the structure of the argument and are distributed throughout the body of the thesis. Cumulatively, they present a view that the dancer's habitus is formed in the interaction of discourses and practices and not exclusively in the sites and techniques of dance training. I will now briefly trace the line of argument in the thesis.

Chapter Two, "The body of ballet" presents a picture of one aspect of contemporary dance pedagogy and movement practice in Australia. Chapter Three investigates the notion of the pedestrian or everyday body within the wider context of dance modernism and opens a conceptual space for the linkage of ideokinesis with postmodern dance. In this chapter I also revisit John Martin's theorisation of kinaesthetic communication in dance: this is later applied to the analysis of ideokinetic-based dance. Chapter Four considers the impact of perceptual habit upon processes of semiosis in dance and explores some of the gender implications of postmodern dancers' experimentation with perception. Chapter Five presents an overview of the history and genealogy of ideokinesis and a case study of the teaching practice of Eva Karczag. The brief concluding chapter summarises the research findings and explores some applications and extensions of ideokinetic practice in the context of feminist dance performance.

1.2.2 Preliminary statement of significance of the research

Pedagogy in this case is not defined as simply something that goes on in schools. On the contrary, it is posited as central to any -political practice ... pedagogical practice refers to forms of cultural production that are inextricably historical and political. Pedagogy is in part, a technology of power, language and practice that produces and legitimates forms of moral and political regulation which construct and offer human beings particular views of themselves and the world (Giroux 1991: 55).

This statement from Henry Giroux's editorial introduction to *Postmodernism, Feminism and Cultural Politics* suggests an approach to the politics of pedagogy which might be usefully applied to dance and the important task of rethinking dance pedagogy.

Dance training generates genre-specific sets of competencies, knowledges and literacies that have a political dimension. The thesis draws attention to a socially marginal practice — a marginal sector of an already marginal genre of contemporary dance practice. This is not to represent ideokinetic method as embattled and insignificant — it is after all, incorporated into the curriculum of several mainstream dance courses in Australia, including the Victorian College of the Arts secondary and tertiary dance programs — but to underscore its radical re-evaluation of what counts as dancing and to indicate how the forms of bodily competence and movement intelligibility it promotes contrast with orthodox understandings. Against an entrenched view of the universal applicability and neutrality of classical ballet technique as the necessary foundation of all theatrical dance, I argue that learning to move in particular ways involves being trained to become a particular kind of meaning-making subject. The thesis works to elaborate certain processes of subject formation in a specific domain of contemporary dance practice, in which learning to move involves habit change and has implication for processes of social change. It is hoped that the account and analysis of movement pedagogy presented here may prove to be a useful resource for further research into the possible contours of an embodied dance politics.

Chapter 2 The body of ballet

The dancer is not a woman who dances for the juxtaposed reasons that she is not a woman but a metaphor.
Stephane Mallarmé 1887

The relationship between representations on the ballet stage and everyday life remains relatively unexplored. What role does ballet play, as a performance form and as a classroom practice, in the formation and reproduction of socially and sexually appropriate bodies?

In this chapter I will consider certain key aspects of the culture of ballet, as it is practiced in Australia today, in order to develop some insight into the question of how gender is constructed, expressed and experienced, embodied and performed in this dominant genre of theatrical dance. While attention has been given to the gendered narratives of ballet choreography, I am concerned here with issues of gender and sexual difference primarily in the context of dance training. If ballet is, as Ann Daly (1987/88) has stated, a 'discourse of difference', how is that discourse promulgated and how is sexual difference described, defined and constructed in the teaching and learning of ballet?

These questions will be examined principally through a study of texts written by and for teachers, performers and students of ballet. My analysis of these writings on ballet will consider the ways in which teachers, performers and critics have represented ballet as a performance form and as a physical practice. Focusing upon the manner in which ballet represents itself to itself, the chapter examines the values and the discourses that circulate in these texts and asks what they might reveal about the gendering of ballet training. This review of literature is supplemented by field notes consisting of brief descriptions and discussion of class observations conducted during 1995 at the Victorian College of Arts and the Australian Ballet School.

As noted in the introductory chapter, my engagement with the ballet will be quite narrowly defined and somewhat schematic; it serves a strategic function within the overall thesis study. In Australia today the ballet is an influential cultural institution; it sets the terms of reference within which the art of dance is practiced and perceived. In a dance culture where one genre of theatrical dance, ballet, is dominant, other forms and genres tend to be negatively defined, that is as 'not ballet' or 'lesser ballet' — it is difficult to

conceive of difference except through or from the place of ballet.¹⁴ Given the prominence of ballet within Australian dance culture, it would seem important to critically engage with this genre of dance before attempting to elucidate some alternatives. In this chapter, I will examine the practice of ballet as both a system of representation and as a discipline of the body. Feminist critiques of the dominant traditions of Western philosophy, and the dichotomous thinking which underpin them, will be brought to bear upon my analysis.

This investigation of the pedagogy of ballet is also prompted by a more specific and limited issue arising in training practice. In recent years the ideokinetic methods which are the primary focus of the thesis study have been selectively applied to mainstream dance training in a number of institutional contexts in Australia. These methods are contributing to the reappraisal of the training practices of different genres of dance, including ballet. One of the objectives of this study is to develop a more nuanced understanding of the interaction between these contrasting philosophies and techniques of the body.

2.1 The production of the dancing body

The idea of the human body as not simply a natural object but as socially and historically constituted is common to much recent theoretical work on the body.¹⁵ The dancer's body could be said to be doubly marked; it is, like all bodies, an effect of socially and historically specific material and psychological processes. What distinguishes the dancer's body is the extent to which processes of bodily inscription are self-chosen and self-willed. The constructedness of the dancer's body has been emphasised in many recent accounts of dance practice and performance. Susan Leigh Foster's *Reading Dancing* (1986) offers a detailed survey of the ways in which various styles and forms of dance presume and produce different kinds of dancing subjects. As Foster argues, it is through participation in the given discourse of a dance genre, constituted by dance classes, choreographic and rehearsal processes and performance, that the body-subject characteristic of that genre is constructed and inscribed. Whilst recognising the importance of the physical techniques and practices which contribute to the formation of dancing bodies I am concerned to balance the materialist focus of Foster's account with a consideration of the imaginary and metaphysical dimension of bodies and dances. I want to weave into the discussion of engendering and dancing some reflections upon the role of the imagination in the formation and differentiation of sexed bodies and identities.

¹⁴ Edward Pask's second major work on the history of theatre dance in Australia *Ballet: The Second Act 1940-1980* (1982) exemplifies this kind of appropriative representation. In this book, Pask, a ballet historian and archivist with the Australian Ballet Trust, subsumes under the rubric of 'ballet', diverse dance traditions, works and artists who might more readily be identified with 'modern dance' genres.

¹⁵ Accounts of the body which will be important in this thesis include those developed within sociology and ethnography (Bourdieu 1977, Douglas 1980) history and philosophy (Foucault 1977&1978) and within feminism (Irigaray 1993, Grosz 1994).

In her book *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Corporeality and Power* (1996), feminist philosopher Moira Gatens offers an analysis of some of the social and sexual imaginaries which influence human embodiment. In Gatens's view, women and men are formed not only through social institutions and processes but through the dominant ways we have of imagining them. Gatens's use of the term 'imaginary' encompasses but is not reducible to its more technical and circumscribed meaning within psychoanalytic theory. In the psychoanalytic framework, the 'imaginary' refers to Jacques Lacan's conceptualisation of the formation of the ego and the critical role played by the child's identification with its own image in this process. The 'mirror stage' as Lacan has famously described the process of ego formation, marks the establishment of the body-image, or body *schema*, upon which the earliest sense of self is founded. The body-image is a composite of one's own felt body, an image of that body as though from the outside, and the image of other's bodies. The body-image serves as a symbol for the subject's insertion into the social order; it precedes, and is the pre-condition of the subject's ability to take up a position in language. In order to become a differentiated individual the child has to see itself as others see it. In identifying with an image of itself, the child sees itself as a whole, as having a boundary and a particular location in space. It sees itself, as it were, at a distance.

Gatens's notion of the imaginary has a somewhat broader application. For Gatens, the imaginary does not exclusively signify a psychic structure or process, but includes broader socio-cultural dimensions. She employs the term 'imaginary' to refer to those images, symbols, metaphors and representations which help construct various forms of subjectivity. In *Imaginary Bodies* her focus is upon philosophical representations of human embodiment and the examination of the social and political implications of the same. Gatens is concerned with the ways in which the imaginaries of specific cultures, that is the 'ready-made images and symbols' (1996:viii), give meaning and value to social bodies and determine the way they are treated. My investigation of the imaginary dimension of the ballet proceeds from Gatens's expanded definition of the category.

In the discussion that follows I argue, counter-intuitively perhaps, that the institution of ballet represents patriarchal interests and is reflective of a masculine imaginary in which Woman remains not the dancer but a metaphor. In order to pursue this line of argument in contemporary ballet training it will be necessary to look beyond the metaphor of the dancing body, in order to ask: What is the mind of ballet, what is its governing imaginary?

2.2 Ballet: an art of distinction(s)

In representing the subject of ballet as masculine, I am reflecting a widespread characterisation of ballet training as a process of enculturation which represses or

transforms the natural body. The natural body — which according to the associations set in train by the operation of binary logic is a *feminine* body— is subject to a precise form of cultural inscription, or overwriting, through the agency of the ballet.

The discourse of ballet is founded upon this distinction between the natural and the cultural. Thus, it is not only twentieth century critics of ballet training, such as modern dancer Isadora Duncan, who have declared ballet to be unnatural. In *Ballet as Body Language*, dancer Joan McConnell writes:

Ballet is unnatural. It represents the victory of the body over nature. A dancer must carefully and painfully train her body for years so she can transcend its natural limitations. Thus perfection for the dancer means dehumanising the body (1977:20).

Where Duncan judged ballet training to be a crime against nature which produced only deformation and injury in the bodies of young girls and women, proponents of ballet value its artifice, its complexity and its intricate stylisation of human movement, in short, its 'unnaturalness'. Systematic, thorough and highly logical, ballet technique is the means by which the limitations of the natural body may be overcome. In this view, the natural body, with all its limitations, is nonetheless a body that may be improved upon and therefore even approach perfection. It is the raw material from which an object of harmonious beauty may be wrought. In *Apology for Dancing*, first published in 1936, the British essayist and balletomane Rayner Heppenstall writes:

Man, in his natural state, is a thoroughly unsatisfactory piece of work: in form, in moving, far from express and admirable, as a rule, and much less like an angel, in action, than a well-bred whippet is ... And Ballet, fundamentally, is an attempt to defeat this fact, to reveal Man as, also, 'an infinite reservoir of possibilities', which, however, needs Tradition and Organisation, as the commoner kind of reservoir needs filters and drain-pipes ... It is a struggle between a wastefully complex muscular system, designed for a limited range of animal acts and offices, and the economy, the simplicity, in line and mass, of the postures and movements - the Physical Ideas - to which his body, as a material of Art, aspires (1983:288).

Curiously, in a period when the ballet stage was dominated by female performers, Heppenstall writes of 'Man' and his body. The gendered dimension of the binarised thinking subtending ballet discourse here becomes more complex and contradictory, and

more explicit. While Heppenstall's intention may be simply to lend dignity to the practice of ballet by representing its subject as universal (as Man), his apologia also reflects a change in the sexual economy of the ballet during the 1920s and '30s in Britain. .

Previously, in the late nineteenth century, theatrical dancing, including ballet, was dominated by and identified with female performers. In this period theatrical dance was not accorded the status of a legitimate art form and was popularly assumed to be concerned primarily with the erotic display of the female body. According to writer Amy Koritz, a resurgence of interest in and standing of the ballet in English society followed the London seasons of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes during the 1920s. Koritz argues that for dance to achieve artistic legitimacy in British culture it was necessary that there be a 'severing of the association between dance and the female body' (1995:13). The success of the Ballets Russes, with its male-dominated hierarchy of creators — the male choreographers, designers and composers brought together by impresario Serge Diaghilev, was in part due to 'the attenuation of the centrality of the female dancer' (ibid). Dance emerged as an elite art form in such a way as to exclude women from its most authoritative positions and although women continued to be successful performers, the cultural authority of the ballet became identified with the male-dominated choreographic and directorial roles. The female dancer became the body, that is, the raw 'natural' material, of the dance, to be shaped, directed and controlled.

2.2.1 Choreographic mind — dancing body

In ballet discourse the distinction between nature and culture is closely correlated with other binarised terms — mind and body, male and female, reason and passion, permanence and transience. Ballet production of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries has divided the creative labour of dance along rigid gender lines; ballet performance has become identified with the feminine and the body, the choreographic process with the masculine and the mind. Ballet choreography endures beyond the moment of performance, whereas the dancer's creative labour is transitory and ephemeral. This division and branding of sexed bodies according to dominant patterns of social organisation has contradictory implications for the men and women who dance across the divide.

Reiterating the logic outlined above, ballet choreographer George Balanchine has described the choreographic process as an activity of the male mind ordering and transforming 'raw nature' as incarnated in the bodies of women. Balanchine is heir to a tradition which identifies choreography, that is, the 'writing' of movement, as the province and privilege of men. Historically, women have rarely been the authors of their own

representations and ballet is not exceptional amongst the arts in its exclusion of women from directorial and authorial roles. However, throughout the twentieth century recognition of women's artistic practice in various fields has gradually increased, as has their participation. Contrastingly, in the art of ballet, women are valued largely for their skill as performers and for their sensitivity in the interpretation of existing dance texts. They are markedly absent in the ranks of ballet directors and choreographers, notwithstanding a few notable exceptions.¹⁶

Koritz's *Gendering Bodies/Performing Art* (1995) details the impact and effects of modernism upon dance representation in the early part of the twentieth century. According to Koritz, the impact of modernism was felt in all genres of dance and within a variety of settings, ranging from music hall/vaudeville entertainments, to ballet and in the concert presentations of modern dance artists such as Isadora Duncan and Maud Allen. In an account of Maud Allen's *Salome* (1908), Koritz describes the schism or separation which must be effected if dance is to aspire to the condition of art under modernism:

The dancer's movements make visible the music or emotion that it is the business of the dance to communicate, without intruding her personality, her idiosyncracies, her sexuality. In a successful performance, the dancer's body should not call undue attention to itself but should function like a transparent signifier, an innocent instrument of a greater power, a field on which the unity of the incommensurate might be imagined — where music becomes visible, the intangible, definite. Although it is the purely physical presence of the dancer's body that mediates this unity, its successful accomplishment depends on the erasure of that presence at the moment it fulfils its function. That body, insofar as it draws attention to itself, is an intrusion, an alien presence in the dance (1995:41).

Under modernism, the dancer is a split subject; she must demonstrate, or at least create the illusion of a necessary detachment from the bodily means of her art. She must enact a separation between her art and her body, between the signified, the choreographic materials and content of the dance, and the signifier, her dancing body. In ballet, one of the objectives of training is to create the possibility of detached action. As noted above,

¹⁶ Sally Banes cites Lynn Garafola's research on women choreographers as follows: 'In discussing the gendered employment hierarchies of ballet (Garafola) has shown that there were more women ballet choreographers in Paris in the nineteenth century, for instance, than has been documented previously, although they usually worked on the popular stage or in the second-rank theatres' (1998:255 n.1). In the twentieth century, notable female ballet choreographers include Bronislava Nijinska and Agnes de Mille. There has been a greater presence of women in non-choreographing directing roles, for example, Peggy Van Praagh (Australian Ballet), Marie Rambert (Ballet Rambert) and Ninette de Valois (Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet).

rigorous training in ballet is regarded as a means of 'dehumanising' or neutralising the bodily specificities of the dancer so that she may function as a perfect instrument (McConnell, 1977). The conceptual separation of the ideational and sensuous aspects of art, accompanied by valorisation of the former and suspicion of the latter, is mirrored in the ballet by a division of choreographic and performative roles.

The absence of women choreographers in the ballet is consistent with and part of the logic of an aesthetic tradition which places a high value upon detached, that is, disembodied contemplation and which claims these attributes as male. This absence reflects an enduring belief in the incommensurability of the aesthetic realm of human experience and the contingent, sensuous reality of the body. The ballet dancer as woman is bound to her body. She produces herself as an artefact, an *object* of aesthetic contemplation, but as dancer, as female body, she is not the subject of choreographic production.

The manifold contradictions consequent upon the imposition of hierarchically organised binaries are becoming apparent. The labour of training by which nature (the child body) becomes culture (the dancer) is practiced by male *and* female subjects. The close association of dancing with the feminine presents certain difficulties for the male dancer, just as the presumed masculinity of the art of choreography has created significant obstacles to women's participation in that role.¹⁷

The division noted above, which separates the creative act of choreography from the creative act of performing has, in ballet, a curious temporal dimension. Given that a large part of the contemporary performance repertoire of a ballet company such as the Australian Ballet or the Royal Ballet consists of the work of nineteenth and early twentieth century choreographers, many professional ballet dancers will spend most of their working lives with little direct experience of the choreographic process. Ballet may have perfected a system of dance training but it can tell us little about the process of choreography as an contemporary force in contemporary society.

2.2.2 Noble bodies, elite machines and the value of useless bodies.

Another axis along which distinction is asserted in ballet is through the dancer's body itself. In the context of twentieth century ballet, cultural capital accrues through sustained aesthetic labour, which produces the specialised, streamlined body of the dancer¹⁸ and

¹⁷ Beginning with Isadora Duncan, choreographic artists working within the modern dance tradition have attempted in various ways to challenge and overturn the assumed masculinity of the choreographic act. Koritz has analysed the complex strategies employed by Duncan and other early modern dancer-choreographers in their efforts to be both the subject and object of representation. Aspects of Koritz's analysis will be explored in Chapter 3.

¹⁸ Nadine Nicolaeva-Legat likens ballet training to the investment of capital, an investment which in this instance leads to an increase of vital energies *Ballet Education* (1947).

distinguishes it absolutely from the quotidian, chaotic body of 'everyman'. Perception of the superiority of the dancer's body is at the core of ballet appreciation in the opinion of many ballet commentators and theorists (Stokes in Copeland & Cohen 1983, Levinson in Cohen 1974). If, as Heppenstall asserts, the pedestrian body is considered to be an 'unsatisfactory piece of work' then part of the appeal of the ballet form is the hierarchical relation it establishes between the ordinary 'unsatisfactory' bodies of its audience and the 'elite machine' (Kirstein) of the dancer. Audience pleasure, in this view, is based on awe of a superior body and on recognition of its fundamental difference from 'any-old body'.¹⁹ Ballet training is valued as an achievement of culture; it is a process which celebrates the pursuit of bodily perfection and that perfection is represented as an overcoming of the natural, fallen state of the body. The ballet body thus made is distinguished as a product of enculturation, that is, as an artefact, in several key respects — the turn-out of the legs, the high carriage of the head, an elongated, straight spine. For Selma Jeanne Cohen the principle which exemplifies the classical ballet style is that of *en dehors*, outwardness. This quality of outwardness distinguishes the ballet body from the utilitarian body of the non-dancer. As she observes, 'in full classical style, the entire person appears in extroversion — open to other bodies, open to the surrounding space' (1982:120). The body is 'open' but it is not vulnerable. The rib cage is 'held erect, confidently', the head is held high and the arms are lifted away from the sides of the body. Outwardness is not practical; it does not equip the body for the affairs of everyday life, Cohen writes,

The *en dehors* style facilitates useless actions; it creates a state of dancing ... the style developed in a royal court, where to move in an ordinary manner would have been considered demeaning. The idea was to look noble rather than serviceable (ibid).

One needs to ask what the significance of this distinction between nobility and serviceability might be in the early twenty-first century. What is the meaning and value of useless bodies? Bourdieu's analysis in *Distinction* (1984) would suggest that uselessness, the apparent distance from necessity which such a body demonstrates, is the precondition of its nobility. The ballet dancer's body, ill equipped and unfit for mundane tasks, is both a sign and an instrument of distinction.

The social distinction which ballet accords to the dancer has a particular value and nuance in postcolonial contexts where it serves as a link to European high culture. Ballet is ennobling; it marks the colonial body as civilised. In his efforts to establish the New York

¹⁹ The reference is to critic Jill Johnson's review of Steve Paxton's 1968 walking dance, "Satisfyin' Lover", published in *Marmalade Me* (1971:137). Johnson praised the piece as celebrating the beauty and humanity of 'any old bodies'.

City Ballet, under the direction of Russian emigre George Balanchine, as the pre-eminent American dance company, Lincoln Kirstein repeatedly argued the case *for* the ballet and *against* the emerging modern dance by linking the former with the 'great flowerings' of Western history, in particular the Renaissance traditions of music, painting and architecture. Ballet, albeit in a modernised and streamlined form, would secure for America a vital connection to elite European culture and taste. In ballet, authenticity of style and the authority of the individual ballet dancer's performance are established through lineage, bloodlines or patrimony.²⁰ But, as Kirstein asserts, success in ballet rests upon a fortuitous convergence of *both* biological and cultural inheritances — right body, right cultural lineage and teacher. Balanchine would secure for the New York City Ballet the all-important authenticity of style; America itself would provide the expansive, dynamic physicality which would, according to Kirstein, reinvent the ballet as the exemplification of a streamlined modernity.

The story of ballet in Australia as told in ballet historian Edward Pask's two major works *Enter the Colonies Dancing: 1835-1940* (1979) and *Ballet in Australia: The Second Act: 1940-1980* (1982) similarly emphasises the importance of connection to an elite European heritage. Pask underlines the distinguished classical pedigrees of emigre artists such as Edouard Borovansky and Helene Kirsova, who were instrumental in the development and recognition of ballet as an elite art form in Australia. Both dancers with the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo, they settled in Australia during the 1930s and established schools in Melbourne and Sydney. Later, in the early 1960s, the English dancer and director Peggy van Praagh was invited by the Australian Ballet Foundation to become the founding artistic director of a new company to be called the Australian Ballet, thus representing a continuous identification with the heritage of a British colonial system.

As Koritz has argued, in the early part of the twentieth century ballet was reconceived as an unquestionably elite form, gaining cultural legitimacy through newly institutionalised hierarchies that established standards and elevated taste. One such institution, The Royal Academy of Dancing, has had an important role in the expansion, development and standardisation of ballet training in Australia. Founded in 1920 as the Association of Teachers of Operatic Dancing of Great Britain, its purpose was to watch over the standards of operatic (ballet) dancing. A Royal Charter was granted in 1936 and the association was henceforth known as RAD. It conducts examinations throughout the world, most extensively in the ex-colonies of Australia, Rhodesia and New Zealand.²¹

²⁰ A common feature of ballet training texts is the genealogical profile, whereby authors establish their authority by tracing their origins back to Russian or French roots.

²¹ Summary from the RAD entry in *The Encyclopedia of Dance and Ballet* ed. Mary Clarke and David Vaughan (1977:396).

In a critique of the colonial inheritance of Australian ballet, dancer and choreographer Russell Dumas has drawn upon arguments similar to those of Lincoln Kirstein.²² His analysis of the role of lineage in ballet is put to a rather different, more critical effect however. Dumas argues that the Australian ballet body is an illegitimate body, stylistically unsophisticated, impure, displaced and lacking organic connection to the lifeblood of European soil. This 'illegitimate' body has been cultivated, regulated and occasionally rewarded through elite 'imperial' instruments such as the Royal Academy of Dancing and the Queen's Birthday (now the Australia Day) Honours Lists.²³ Issues of legitimacy and authenticity are at stake for both Pask and Dumas. Although they come to diametrically opposed views on the status of ballet in contemporary Australia, both perceive the heritage of ballet to hinge upon questions of embodiment. The process of training through which embodied knowledge is passed from the body of the teacher to the body of the pupil, is an important means by which lineage is established and distinction conferred and transmitted. Distinction in ballet is an attribute of the 'useless' body.

Dance theorist and writer Sally Gardner, curious about girls' interest in ballet and ballet training, has another response to the question of the value and meaning of useless bodies. She suggests in her paper "Why Girls Do Ballet" (1995) that part of the attraction of ballet for girls and young women lies in its apparent refutation of certain styles of normative femininity. The ballet body is not, for example, a maternal, reproductive body. It is not serviceable or useful in these terms. Gardner argues that ballet training may be pursued as a strategy of resistance and as 'a refusal of femininity at a bodily level' (ibid:4). Participation in ballet training does not represent a straightforward or simple capitulation to the requirements of patriarchy she asserts. On the contrary, ballet training produces a body which is in many respects a phallic body. The ballet dancer works to create a strong, muscular body with clearly defined boundaries. She experiences her body as a unified, contained whole. She is practiced in the articulation of clear spatial forms. Drawing upon phenomenological and Lacanian accounts of the body-image or *imago*, Gardner persuasively argues that the practice of ballet provides a means by which the young dancer

²² See Dumas "Dislocated, Isolated, Seduced and Abandoned" In *Writings on Dance* #3 (1988:29).

²³ Recipients have included Dame Peggy van Praagh, Sir Robert Helpmann, Dame Margaret Scott, and Laurel Martyn (Order of Australia).

can refuse to identify with a castrated body-image, the one she must assume as a woman, and continue to maintain her earliest ideal ... She refuses to relinquish her pre-adolescent body and identity to become a woman (1995:5).

A serious commitment to ballet dancing may thus erase or obscure the identifying signs of the feminine. Like other forms of intense physical training, the practice of ballet often delays the onset of menstruation and associated bodily changes. The young woman's body is not serviceable or useful in the terms of a reproductive heterosexual economy.

'The dancer's body is not a feminine body, and that is precisely the point' states Gardner (ibid:6). To the outside eye, the ballet dancer occupies an extremely feminised position, but at the same time, in their own bodies they refuse this identification. The dancer's 'femininity' is an effect of a complex system of theatrical representation, that is to say, her femininity-as-dancer is a cultural production created through a series of intricate, but relatively transparent, performance conventions.²⁴

These representational conventions, through which a young woman distances herself from quotidian notions of normative femininity in order to re-present her femininity-as-dancer, have been naturalised to the extent that they are rarely acknowledged as skill, art, or accomplishment. In her discussion of the production of gender distinctions in ballet, Ann Daly cites celebrated dancer Ivan Youskevitch who observes:

The inborn feminine tendency to show herself physically, combined with the natural feminine movements that are the cornerstone of her dance vocabulary, is to me the golden key to feminine dance.... For a man, the technical or athletic side of dance is a rational challenge. Once mastered, it provides him with the opportunity to display strength, skill and confidence, as well as with the vocabulary and means to achieve creativity (in Daly 1988: 57).

For woman, dancing is doing what comes naturally — she follows the inclinations of her body. For man, dancing entails a challenge and an overcoming of obstacles both intellectual and physical. His reward is enhanced creative resources. Youskevitch's fanciful representation of the female dancer as untouched by the stringent technical, physical and aesthetic demands of the ballet system is not exceptional in the ballet literature. His belief in innate sexual difference, or, more accurately, women's difference from men, produces a remarkable distortion in perception. This distortion is consequent

²⁴ Ann Daly details a number of these conventions in partnering, gaze, gender-specific vocabulary and phrasing in "Classical Ballet: A Discourse of Difference" (1987/88).

upon an unwillingness or inability to recognise the *confusion* of nature and culture which is integral to the experience of ballet. Despite the apparent orderliness of ballet it is, as Gardner has indicated, the site of many contradictions. One of the ballet's most striking contradictions is that the image of the ethereal feminine, judged by many to be central to the ballet spectacle, is constructed through intense and strenuous physical training. There is a split between the operation of ballet as a system of representation and its effects at the level of the body. The relationship between femininity and female bodies and masculinity and male bodies is in the 'theatre of ballet' a matter of performance, subject to certain rules of narrative. Youskevitch's desire for the orderly bifurcation and assignment of gender roles and attributes is an attempt to reconcile an irreconcilable contradiction at the heart of the ballet, to insist, against all evidence, that ballet holds up a mirror to a world of 'naturally' determined sexual difference. Herein, perhaps, lies the value and the politics of useless bodies in the late twentieth century — such bodies construct and vibrantly perform the illusion of an orderly, harmonious sexual economy.

2.3 A public body and its formation

The ballet body is also a public body, according to Lincoln Kirstein. It is highly regulated and disciplined, it is exquisitely legible, 'purged of atmosphere' (Stokes 1983:247), impersonal and objective, as if freed of interiority. In my discussion of the public dimension of ballet discourse, I will draw upon field notes from my observation of ballet training processes and methods in two state-funded training institutions, the Victorian College of the Arts Dance School and the Australian Ballet School.

During 1995 I observed a series of classical ballet classes at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA), Secondary School, Melbourne. The school offers specialist performing arts programs in dance and music for gifted young people. In the dance program, ballet is the core discipline, supported and extended by studies in kinetics, body awareness, gymnastics/acrobatics, jazz, character, modern dance making (composition) and performance workshop (repertoire). There is a marked emphasis on performance. Each term ends with a performance and a large annual concert which is open to the public and staged in the final term. Much of the class work in the second half of the year, and during the period of my observation, is geared to the end of year performance.

The Director of the secondary school dance program, Tim Storey, is very welcoming of observers and responded warmly to my initial request to watch several classes. He expressed the opinion that it is good for the students and for the staff to have outside observers. The VCA defines itself as a performance training institution and in the director's view being seen, being observed at work, as well as in performance is a

necessary and important part of the development of the dancer. In contrast to the modern and Release dance contexts with which I am familiar, in this setting there is no discourse of interiority or a private self which must be protected and nurtured into maturity away from the gaze of strangers. The students work on and with themselves in public.

If the ballet dancer's body is a public body, it is so in at least two regards: first, the dancer's labour in class throughout the training process, in rehearsal and in performance occurs in public spaces. As was evident during my period of observation at the VCA dance school, the dancer's body is on view, open to scrutiny, whether that is of the teacher and fellow students, the choreographer or rehearsal director or the wider ballet audience. Ballet is a public art; the dancer must be fully visible, available to the gaze. Secondly, as a performer of a profoundly conservative art, the ballet dancer is charged with a public responsibility; she is custodian of the art, preserver of its traditions. Although the ballet lexicon, repertoire and social function has altered profoundly since its inception in the *ballet de cour* the relative fixity and permanence of the ballet form is stressed in many contemporary accounts. Ballet is represented as being governed by absolute, unchanging standards; it is a universal language, a lingua franca. It is fixed, stable, finite and complete, an apparently timeless, impersonal and highly rational system.

As outlined above, the value of the ballet in contemporary Australia might be defined in a number of ways. I have suggested that ballet has a role in maintaining historical connections with English and European heritage. It also has a role in representing a dominant model of gender distinction. Furthermore, in its self-representation as a form of the aesthetic that is governed by impersonal, universal and highly rational principles it may have political utility as a model of the perfectly governed state. In all these respects the ballet could be said to have a civic function and responsibility which is discharged through both the individual dancer and the institution as a whole. One measure of the recognition accorded to the ballet's public role is that of state subsidy.

Ballet is a costly enterprise not only with respect to the scale and lavishness of its production as spectacle, but also in relation to the length and intensity of training which is required of its performers. The body of ballet is an expensive one, produced by the investment of significant public capital. Professional training institutions, linked with national ballet companies throughout Europe, in England and in Australia are sponsored by the state. The Australian Ballet and the Australian Ballet School, for example are richly supported by Federal and State government and by a number of private corporations. Where the individual dancer has a responsibility to history, the institution of ballet is charged with a responsibility to the present. If the relative degree of government financial support available to the different forms of dance practice and performance can be taken as a (rough) measure of their public significance, ballet, which enjoys lavish state

subsidy, would seem to be of great political importance. This issue of the ideological force of different genres of dance, relative to their apparent centrality or marginality to the public sphere, will be explored in more detail in later chapters of the thesis.

2.3.1 Becoming a public body

The public body becomes such through a process of standardisation and legitimation, that is, through the process of training. Entrance to professional training in ballet is strictly controlled. As Lincoln Kirstein sternly remarks, 'admittance to ballet-schooling ... is not licensed by simple ambition, but through expert opinion' (1983:240).

Melbourne writer Dianne Rayner's *Becoming a Dancer* (1992) follows five students through their first year at the Australian Ballet School. She offers an insider's view, beginning with a detailed account of the audition and selection process undergone by young people seeking admittance to the Australian Ballet School. As described by Rayner, the first stage of the process entails a physical appraisal of the applicant by a panel of experts. The applicants are handed numbers, which they wear over their leotards, back and front. They then stand in front of each judge in first position, while their head and body alignment are checked. This process of appraisal is described in a straightforward manner, that is, as a self-evident and necessary procedure. Rayner details the questions which guide the appraisal:

The physiques of candidates are appraised to establish whether they have the right kind of body for a dancer. Do the joints move freely? Is the back supple but strong? Are the feet flexible? Do the legs turn out freely from the hips? (1992:99)

A young person who is preparing for a life of public performance may be presumed to have been inducted at a relatively early age into a culture of surveillance and competition. The ballet student has perhaps become habituated to this kind of intense scrutiny through such instruments as annual ballet examinations, competitions and Eisteddfods, all of which are a strong part of ballet school culture in Australia. They may too be reconciled to the fact that 'simple ambition', that is, their desire to dance, is not enough to guarantee professional success.

Once selected for admission, the student enters a world which is governed by strict hierarchies of time, space, rank and progression. Michel Foucault's elaboration of the development and effective functioning of disciplinary regimes offers a productive mode of analysis of the discipline of ballet. In the "Docile Bodies" section of *Discipline and Punish* (1979), Foucault presents a detailed description of the production of disciplined subjects through the precise management and training of the body. Foucault investigates

the bodily operation of power in a number of institutional contexts, including the school, the barracks and the infirmary. His analysis can be extended to the ballet academy where the body is similarly both target and site of an investment of power.

As dance scholar Taze Yanick has observed, Foucault 'proposes a uniquely choreographic understanding of power and history'. Yanick further notes that 'power functions by operating on the elements of space, time and the body, precisely the elements with which choreography is concerned' (1998:5). I would add that these are precisely the elements and operations which ballet training has perfected through its harnessing of instruments of surveillance and its close management of the body's movement in time and space. Ballet is incremental. Each class undertaken is but one in a long series of classes. The repeated gestures, actions and procedures slowly, over years, form a 'clarified' body, the outcome of a logical sequential development. The teleological structure of the ballet training process is mirrored in the order and structure of a single class. The ballet class begins with a slow, thorough warm up leading to sequences of greater complexity and culminating in combinations requiring high energy, speed, and strength. The student's location in the developmental sequence of ballet has a past which is known and a future which is, within certain limits, predictable. The female student must begin her training at an early age, around eight, if she is to qualify for consideration for admission to professional training at around sixteen years of age. The increasing difficulty, complexity and intensity of the demands made upon the student dancer as she or he progresses ensures that few will complete the process. Only a select few will master the technique.

A distinct order of visibility governs the organisation of space in the Australian Ballet School. All the studios are equipped with full length mirrors; the doors to the studios have windows, as do the long corridors connecting the various work spaces. The ballet student is on view, at all times. Class begins at the barre; students are evenly spaced on three sides of the room. The dancers organise themselves into orderly lines as the class proceeds to centre work. The spatial organisation of bodies in this section of the class presumes the stage space, bordered on three sides and open to the fourth. Movement is oriented to the front, that is, facing the teacher, the mirror and the audience. Organisation of the body is such that this fundamental orientation is maintained — the face must face front, holding the gaze. The centre of the dancer's body is stabilised. The spine is elongated and somewhat held, its stability a functional necessity for achievement of the high extension and elevation in jumps required by the form. Departures from the centred vertical are rare, although some styles of ballet favour a small degree of movement off centre.

At the Australian Ballet School the student's rank is indicated by colour-coded dress. The first year girls wear pale blue leotards and tights, the second year sapphire blue and the third year, navy. The boys progress from grey to navy to black. Each student's order in the

serial progression of training is immediately given to perception. Their rank, where they are, and what they are, is unequivocally displayed on the body.

Ballet is characterised by pedagogical orderliness (Foster 1996a: 109); it is a perfected disciplinary regime which inculcates the ethos of subordination essential to its smooth functioning. Sociologist Arthur Frank describes the disciplined body as a body constituted by lack. The value of regimentation for such a body-subject lies in its capacity to forestall the sense of disintegration.

The disciplined body understands itself as lacking. What it lacks is itself. The regimentation does not remedy this lack, but it can forestall total disintegration ...

For discipline to be sustained, the sense of lack must remain conscious. One device for sustaining the consciousness of lack is for the disciplined body to place itself in some hierarchy in which it is perpetually, and to itself, justifiably, subordinated.

Thus subordination is a medium and outcome of lack (1991:55).

In her article *The Teaching of Ballet* (1988), dancer Shona Innes draws upon Foucault's notion of the docile body-subject to present an experiential account of the workings of the disciplinary regime of ballet. Her account of the production of the student body-subject confirms Frank's thesis about the role of a sense of lack in the effective functioning of discipline. The ballet student enters a hierarchically organised system. Ballet is regarded as the most rigorous, technically difficult form of western dance; its rigour 'sets it apart from the others' Innes notes, and 'this difficulty confers superiority on it. It embodies "the perfect"' (ibid:41).

Innes goes on to describe the ways in which inherent contradictions of the ballet form are naturalised and subjectivised. They are taken up by the individual ballet student on her own account and experienced as attributes of the self. One of many contradictions explored by Innes is that between the widespread representation and promotion of ballet as 'every little girl's dream', and the fact that only a minute proportion of those who begin ballet training will see that dream realised. The discipline of ballet is a mode of investment in the body which generates a desire whose object, for most girls and women, is unattainable. Innes writes:

In my experience, which I think is a fairly standard one, I found myself struggling with the technique for years. As a little girl, I could see myself as another Margot Fonteyn. By the time I reached age eleven, it was becoming very clear that my body was lacking some of the vital physical attributes which ballet

requires — a well arched foot, slightly longer legs in proportion to torso, outward rotation of the thigh bone approaching 180° 'turnout', and flexibility in tendons and ligaments. Fairly easily I took on the notion that my body was wrong, since it didn't measure up to the ideal (ibid:41).

Innes reflects upon her continuing engagement with the practice of ballet, despite her early recognition of the fact that she would not become a ballerina. The disciplinary regime of ballet generates effective mechanisms of social control through the activation of a sense of lack or inadequacy and in Innes's account this sense of lack takes on particularly feminine form as 'shame and envy'. The female student of ballet is persuaded of the fact that her only avenue of success is through a precisely managed system of subordination. This subordination is enacted on a bodily level by the individual student and informs all interpersonal communication, especially that between student and ballet teacher.

2.3.2 Becoming a public body - boys and girls

One of the significant limitations of Foucault's analysis of the function and effect of body discipline is its gender blindness. Several feminist scholars such as Sandra Bartky (1988), Lois McNay (1992) and Elizabeth Grosz (1994) have found Foucault valuable in their development of poststructuralist readings of the politics of the body. However they differ from Foucault in their insistence on the differential role of gender in the production of the disciplined body as a site of domination and resistance.

In ballet, gender has a constitutive role in the elaboration of the disciplinary regime. The differential role of gender in the discipline of ballet is articulated at all stages and levels of training, beginning with the identification of physical prerequisites. In 1947 Nicholaeva Legat defines these prerequisites as follows:

There are two conceptions of perfect proportions for Ballet if Ballet dancing is to be taken up as a profession: one classic and one modern. I am not speaking here of passing fashions which come and go; to-day, tall, slim figures are in fashion, whereas in the XVIII century a short plump figure, such as one can find in any Watteau or Boucher painting, was the ideal. I speak rather of the type of proportions suitable to the needs of ballet art and, therefore, for the easiest execution of dancing movement.

For men: middle height, or slightly above. Among the works of Greek sculptors, one finds the best examples of perfect masculine physique, and this type of body can best interpret the

art of Ballet. A strong heart, devoid of organic weakness, is essential; the respiratory system, starting from the nose to the lungs, must be clear, as perfect dancing must be accompanied by breathing through the nose, never through the mouth. It is also important that the muscles of the stomach should be normal, and free from signs of rupture.

For Women: it is preferable for dancers to be small, or a little above. An ideal type among ancient sculpture would be Diana, not Venus; the former is characterised by lightness and graceful body movement, whereas the Venus type is slower and heavier and not so suitable for classical dancing. As regards health, the same points must be considered as those required for men (1947:11).

By 1984, things have changed. Sandra Hammond's *Ballet Basics* describes 'the ideal ballet body' as follows:

The female student longs to see the ideal reflection; head neither too large not too small, well-poised on a slim neck; shoulders of some width but with a slope gently downward; small bust, waist and buttocks; a back that is straight but not rigid; well-formed arms hanging relaxed from the shoulders; delicate hands; slim, straight legs with smooth lines both in back and in front; a compact foot that arches easily - all this totalling a slim silhouette of ballet perfection.

The ideal male physique is not as specific, although it is generally considered to be strong and well-muscled without excess weight or bulk, the shoulders wider than the waist and hips and minimal height, now probably about 5'8" (1984: 129).

Legat's 1947 assessment of the bodily requirements for professional dancing is remarkable for the value it places upon the dancer's state of health and organic integration. The second description of the ideal ballet body, separated from the first by less than forty years, differs most notably with regard to the relative attention paid to visually determined bodily attributes. Hammond's detailed enumeration and description of the desired features of specific body parts is centred upon the female dancer. The distinction between the ideal male and ideal female bodies has increased markedly.

'Ballet dancers have to be on the thin side or they can't dance', asserts Dr McQueen (in Rayner 1992:85), consultant physician to the Australian Ballet School. Despite increasing numbers of young men entering ballet training, the subject of ballet is female, it would seem, because it is she and not he who has to be thin. The standards of size, weight and height expected for the female dancer today are represented in contemporary literature as absolutes. Although there is recognition of the relative recentness of such standards there seems to be an unproblematic acceptance of extreme thinness as a cultural ideal, an ideal to which the ballet must conform. The productive role of the institution of ballet in the creation, sustainment, modification or transformation of this image is rarely questioned. The impact of this abstract ideal upon the bodies of dancers has not been adequately addressed. The cost of this representation is in many senses, invisible.²⁵

In his study of the psychological development of the male ballet dancer, William Earl makes the observation that male dancers generally begin ballet training in their adolescent years, at a stage of development he terms the 'sociocentric' stage. The age at which male dancers appear in the ballet studio tends to be during the period of heightened awareness of role definition. Contrastingly girls begin ballet in their pre-adolescent years. The decision of boys to begin ballet training would seem to be more directed by professional aspiration. It could also be argued that this is how their choice is interpreted by parents, teachers and others; that is, it is taken 'seriously', professionalised.

Boys don't 'do ballet' as such. Contrastingly, girls may 'do ballet' for all kinds of reasons. Doing ballet may involve being part of an important girls-only social network; ballet offers girls and young women a socially valorised way of developing their bodies' power and strength; ballet recognises and supports girls' ambition and competitiveness; and it is an active, physical bodily practice at which they may excel. Boys of comparable age tend to lack the requisite flexibility, coordination and physical maturity, according to Storey, the VCA secondary school director.

In my observation of classroom practice at the school, marked differences between the presence and performance of girls and boys were apparent at the lower levels. These distinctions and the female dancers' earlier clear superiority seem to diminish as training proceeds. In the Year 7 (mixed sex) classical class taught by Storey, students were very self-contained and focused on their own mirror image; they worked to clarify and perfect it. The composure, containment and self-sufficiency which the girls assumed in performing the various class materials, particularly the centre work, was striking. It was as though at this young age (of 12 -13 years) they had already learnt how to be a ballet dancer, that is, how to demonstrate the detachment and authority which is the mark of a

²⁵ Notwithstanding the few celebrated exposes of the personal cost of ballet - Gelsey Kirkland's *Dancing on My Grave* (1986) and Suzanne Gordon's *Off Balance* (1983).

consummate performer. The boys would appear to be slower to achieve this quality of detachment and autonomy in their dancing. This style of subjectivity is, I surmise, one of the effects of technical proficiency.

However, at the point at which training becomes oriented to professional performance a different social and sexual economy applies. The girl-only culture encounters what might be described as the Law of the Father — the representational system which may or may not be evident at earlier stages of ballet training.²⁶ As training becomes directed towards professional performance, gender differentiated skills take on a new importance. Pointe work also creates particular physical challenges for the adolescent female dancer. She must re-learn previously established skills and her legs and feet may lose resiliency as they adjust to the new and extreme pressures of being *en pointe*. She must accommodate a partner in the *pas de deux*.

As noted above, girls commence their training at an early age in order to compete for scarce jobs in professional ballet companies. It is still the case that a boy may make the transition to a professional role with perhaps only three years of formal training and there are many examples of successful male ballet dancers who effectively speaking learned on the job. The late Kelvin Coe joined the Australian Ballet at age sixteen as an apprentice, with only two years of classical training behind him. Ross Stretton, artistic director of the Australian Ballet in the late 1990s and now director of the Royal Ballet, had a similarly late start in dance. The boys 'catch up very quickly' is a common perception amongst teachers and coaches, but such an observation ignores the sexually differentiated requirements and demands of the ballet form and the ballet institution. Boys and girls, men and women have distinct roles to play and precise cultural functions to fulfil in this system of representation, and perhaps, for numerous social and sexual reasons, the girls choose to drop back, lose or renounce the mastery which they once demonstrated in the classroom. Assuming that the young woman aspires to a career as a professional ballet dancer, it will be around mid to late adolescence when the demands of the representational economy of ballet begin to be felt most strongly. Classroom practice becomes more explicitly geared to the performance of a ballet repertoire which instantiates a deeply marked discourse of difference.

2.3.3 The respective roles of teacher and student.

The teacher of ballet must play an active interventionist role in the student's development, according to Genevieve Guillot of the Paris Opera Ballet,:

²⁶ See my earlier discussion of Gardner's analysis of young dancers' decision to take ballet 'seriously' as a negotiation with the requirements of patriarchy/the Symbolic in section 2.2.2

the teacher must have his attention focused acutely on each of his pupils....Not only must every mistake be immediately pointed out and corrected, and every laxity suppressed, but ... the teacher must stimulate the student to do his very best (1976:14).

Ballet is governed by exacting standards which neither the student nor the professional dancer can achieve alone, so it is argued. The ballet teacher has a crucial and powerful role in the formation of the dancer and correction and criticism are fundamental to ballet instruction. The dancer's daily class proceeds under 'the watchful eye' of the ballet teacher, whose job, according to William Earl, is 'to clarify conceptual questions as well as prevent bad habits in the execution of steps or ill functioning physical placement' (1988:55). If and when the dancer proceeds to professional status the need for corrective feedback does not subside but intensifies. As Earl observes, 'Ballet has a sense of the absolute about it in that every step is accurate or it is not'. Because the margin for error is extremely slim, ballet performers are reliant upon 'eyes other than their own to keep the clarity of their presentation' and 'to prevent bad habits from destroying the alignment necessary for ongoing strength of execution' (ibid:55). The very narrow tolerance for error is a reality the ballet dancer must live with daily.

The ballet dancer is cast as dependent upon her teachers, her coach/ballet master and upon choreographers for the duration of her career. 'Pleasing the inner circle (teacher, ballet master, choreographer and model) is part of the personalised identity of the dancer' writes Earl, noting the 'awkwardness' for the male dancer of this condition of dependency (ibid:56). He is silent on the issue of the female dancer's relation to this necessary state of dependence. Presumably, her lack of autonomy is considered to be neither problematic nor unusual. Shona Innes, in her much more critical account of ballet teaching, also writes of the dancer's dependence upon and desire for feedback, noting that for some dancers even abusive attention is better than no attention at all (1988:43).

If the ballet student is on view and open to public scrutiny at all times during the training process, so, too, is the teacher. During my observations at the VCA and at the Australian Ballet School I was struck by the teachers' fastidiousness in dress and grooming. The teachers appear to exercise great care in the presentation of self; they embody the discipline necessary to the art, not only in the classroom but also in 'everyday' dress and comportment. The correlation between the management and presentation of the teacher and the embodiment and representation of ballet discipline is made explicit in Rayner's observation of a senior teacher at the Australian Ballet School, the late Kelvin Coe. She

writes, 'Coe's impeccable appearance is indicative of his general approach to his life and his art. He will not tolerate sloppiness, laziness or inattention to detail' (1992: 39).

The teacher's role is to be an exemplar of the exercise of discipline, in life as in art. The student of ballet, especially in the early years, also has a clearly defined role: they are expected to be punctual, polite, and to be able to take correction. Some of the much vaunted benefits of ballet lessons for young children, regardless of their physical ability or dance aspiration are that the traditional ballet lesson, conducted in a formal, highly structured way inculcates discipline, obedience to the teacher, concentration, the development of graceful deportment and good grooming. Anna Paskevaska outlines the advantages of formalising the behaviour of children in the context of the ballet class:

It sets the studio apart from other environs; it is not a big space like the gym, where they can run, jump, and scream. It is a place in which to concentrate in silence, to listen attentively and to learn something very special (1990:15).

In a section entitled "Student Conduct" Paskevaska approvingly describes the opening moments of class conducted by Martha Mahr at her Miami school:

Miss Mahr began each lesson with a procession of the children, who walked in line as they entered the studio and formed a semi-circle to curtsy before proceeding to their place at the barre (ibid:15).

The practice of marking the beginning of class with a formal observance is widespread and has the effect of gathering together in one body an otherwise disparate group of children. I have observed a variation of Mahr's opening choreography at the Halliday Ballet Studio in Sydney where the youngest girls gather at the entrance to the studio, raise themselves up on demi-pointe and run on to the floor together, a pint-sized *corps de ballet*. In this brief and elementary moment of choreography the young children are imbibing a critical lesson concerning the ethics of ballet. Forming one body they submit their individualities to a greater whole; they move as one. Class always ends, as it has begun, with a formal observance, that of the reverence. It is an action which embodies respect and deference not only to the teacher but to the lineage and tradition which she or he represents.

Given that few boys take ballet class at a young age, the stated benefits of ballet are reserved for young girls. They learn, through ballet, to be graceful, polite, economical, contained and refined in their movement. They learn composure; they achieve, within the context of the weekly class the elimination of 'loud', unplanned, unpremeditated and uncontrolled action. They master their bodies.

The dancer's job is to be a sensitive instrument, responsive to the direction and instruction of teachers and choreographers. This is not to imply passivity however. The serious student, that is, the student who has professional aspirations, is distinguished by her ability to monitor her own actions, to be self-disciplined and self-critical.

2.3.4 The crisis of adolescence

They have to exist in a very competitive world. They have to be like steel ... The girls have to be, and remain, small, fine-boned and underweight (Rayner, 1992:124).

In discussion of the reasons why students decide to leave the Australian Ballet School, Rayner notes that 'sometimes a student's physiology makes the decision for them'. Gailene Stock, then director of the Australian Ballet School continues the theme: 'Bodies can start doing the wrong thing. Kids grow or they put on weight, which makes it difficult for them to dance' (in Rayner 1992:103). The text presumably refers to dancers of both sexes, but the described effects of puberty impact most strongly upon the female dancer. When the dancer puts on weight, develops hips and breasts, this is a challenge to an aesthetic which favours extreme leanness, but these bodily changes present further difficulties for the female dancer entering adolescence. Presuming that she has begun training at an early age, by the age of twelve or thirteen the female dancer has established technical skills — in turning, in balance and in the management of swift changes of weight. If her height and weight change rapidly, or if the distribution of her weight alters, she may struggle with a suddenly unfamiliar, alien body. She loses precision in the execution of previously achieved skills. Her 'failure' is not exclusively a question of failing to conform to a narrowly defined visual aesthetic.

The students must exercise extreme discipline in diet. They exist within a stringent economy: the aesthetic ideal of the ballet requires them to be thin and they are required to maintain a strenuous physical regime. The student must carefully balance her calorific income against expenditure. At the Australian Ballet School all the students are weighed and measured three times a year, principally as a diagnostic measure it is said. The regular 'weigh-in' is a mechanism by which school authorities are alerted to any student who is losing (too much) weight. Whilst progression to anorexia is regarded as a failure, it is a rare student who is able to enjoy a relaxed relationship to food and eating. The pressures of this economy are not shared equally between the sexes. As in the wider culture, food, eating, size and weight are less significant as sites of conflict and control for the boys. Rayner writes at some length of the extreme dietary regimes adopted by many of the female students at the Australian Ballet School. She contrasts the girls' minimal intake and often erratic eating patterns with a description of a male student's sensible, economical

diet. She approvingly describes the young man's choice of large, well-balanced meals consisting of complex carbohydrates, fresh fruit and vegetables and also notes his obvious enjoyment and satisfaction in eating. The intense pressures surrounding diet, weight and size to which the young female dancers are subjected are accepted however, as an inevitable part of their desire to dance. What elsewhere might be regarded as an extreme disorder is normalised:

Judged by common standards some of the girls would seem to display the symptoms of anorexia; low body weight combined with a routine of heavy exercise. In their own environment, however, the picture is not abnormal, so long as they are not losing weight (1992:124).

Sally Gardner's previously cited analysis of the young female dancer's negotiation of her relationship to 'what is required of her in patriarchy' is pertinent to this discussion of ballet training and anorexia nervosa. As Gardner notes, it is usually at adolescence that a girl decides whether or not to continue 'seriously' with ballet — 'at the precise moment when the cultural meanings of her body are being brought into focus by the biological and physiological changes in her body' (1995:4). The girl's self-representation is threatened by changes from within and from without. According to Gardner,

Instead of refusing what comes from outside — the social meanings (attributed to bodily change at puberty) — the young dancer refuses what threatens from within. She refuses to relinquish her pre-adolescent body-image and identity to become a woman (1995:6).

Gardner perceives connections between ballet and anorexia but insists that the relationship is not a causal one. The dancer does not become anorexic because she is required to be thin. On the contrary, according to Gardner anorexia nervosa and ballet may represent psychologically allied forms of resistance to an unwelcome cultural demand. In anorexia and in her intense physical engagement with ballet the young woman refuses to be identified with her *feminine* body, as it has been culturally defined. 'Indeed she guards against that by keeping her body always in her attention as something to control, to condense and to rectify' (ibid:6), writes Gardner. 'The dancer is not a woman who dances', states Mallarmé, 'but a metaphor'. The system of representation which is ballet requires female subjects' active participation in its production of Woman. Gardner's analysis suggests that what is being negotiated by the young female ballet dancer at adolescence, at the moment in which she might be said to be becoming (a) woman is a kind of impasse, one which must be negotiated by all women. The female dancer is faced with an

impossible choice, but if she cannot be a woman who dances, perhaps she may settle for performing an image of Woman. It is through her assumption of this image that her entry to the public sphere of the ballet stage is assured. She is distinguished and set apart from other women in their everyday, pedestrian existence.

2.4 Performing gender

In its four hundred year history ballet has accommodated considerable shifts in prevailing ideologies of gender. Renaissance dance scholar, Margaret McGowan has observed that the seventeenth century court ballet was mainly the province of male aristocrats who danced for a mixed audience. The *ballet de cour* was a medium of masculine self-display and a vehicle of social transformation. However by the 1840s, in London and in Paris, the ballerina dominated the dance stage; the *danseur noble* was eclipsed. Writing of this period, Abigail Solomon-Godeau observes:

In large part the disappearance of the *danseur noble* was a consequence of altered definitions of masculinity engendered by bourgeois culture... An aristocratic, courtly ideal of masculine grace and elegance was incompatible with a new ideology of gender in which concepts of beauty and grace were coming increasingly to be identified exclusively with the feminine (1986:91).

Associated with the *ancien regime*, the art of the *danseur noble* was politically suspect as well (Garafola 1986:36). The new primacy of the ballerina in the Romantic ballets of the mid-nineteenth century signalled, according to Lynn Garafola the historical movement in which 'femininity becomes the ideology of the ballet, indeed the very definition of the art' (1986:35).

The male dancer was eclipsed by the ballerina during the nineteenth century but throughout the twentieth century there has been a gradual resurgence of interest in male dancing prompted, according to many accounts, by the impact of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes and the later defections to the West of celebrated Russian *danseurs* such as Rudolf Nureyev and Mikhail Baryshnikov. In "Classical Ballet: A Discourse of Difference", Daly comments upon the more recent rise to prominence of a number of male ballet stars and the accompanying critical interest in male dancing. The representation of ballet in particular and dance in general as a female art has precluded significant male participation and yet, Daly argues, it is male values and male identified physical skills that have been celebrated in the weekly columns of writers such as New York Post critic Clive Barnes:

Male dancing is much more exciting than female dancing. It has more vigor, more obvious power and an entirely more energetic brilliance. Of course, there are different qualities — thank Heaven — to female dancing, yet there is something about the male solo, its combination of sheer athleticism with art, that makes it unforgettable (in Daly 1987/88:61).

The renewed support for men in dance follows from a concerted effort to redefine male dancing in the latter part of the twentieth century as a physical, athletic, and virile pursuit that is as a type of 'sport'. Ballet has restyled itself as a spectacular entertainment which encompasses 'masculine' and 'feminine' movement qualities within an orderly sexual economy. Ballet is athletic and powerful, graceful and delicate, but if ballet has again secured a place for the male, his presence as dancer is still subject to some anxious debate. Danseur Kelvin Coe observes:

We want a manly style of dancing, not — and I hesitate to say it — an effeminate style ... The male dancer should be masculine in order to compliment (sic) the female fragility of the female. While dancing a *pas de deux*, the boy should look like a male dancer. Effeminate dancing is bad dancing (Kelvin Coe in Rayner 1992:57).

It was in the privatised theatres of the west in the mid nineteenth century that male dancing first became a 'problem', a site of difficulty and conflict, according to Ramsay Burt (1995:28). The nineteenth century solution to the dis-ease produced by the display of the dancing male body was the introduction of travesty dancers, women who danced the male role, partnering the ballerina. The solution today is to produce the male dancer as incontrovertibly masculine. He traverses the stage commandingly with spectacular jumps; he is assertive and powerful in partnering. A physically powerful, acrobatic style of male dancing has replaced the more restrained, 'gallant' style of an earlier generation of male dancers (Dolin 1969:12).

Many of the issues of gender definition in ballet revolve around the difficulty of being a male dancer or 'looking masculine'. The male dancer is, or has, the problem.

The major challenge for the male dancer lies in achieving the same fluid movement as the females while remaining masculine ... dancing with sensitive artistry while still looking strong is a difficult concept for some young men. (Rayner 1992:61)

This may be a difficult concept for the wider Australian public as well. Rayner, in characteristic style, personalises the difficulty facing the male dancer, and makes no

reference to the pervasive social taboo against the public display of the exposed male body. Ramsay Burt's *The Male Dancer* (1995) investigates the problematic relationship between the social definition of, and constraints upon, maleness and masculinity, in relation to dancing as performance. He observes that there is no significant social taboo against men dancing as a social activity for example; it is the display element of dance performance which renders it suspect and dangerous for men.

Male roles in the ballet emphasise action; men move the narrative forward. The male dancer is not a form to be admired; he cannot be captured by the gaze; he is on the move.

He is the veritable principle of action in the ballet, according to Ann Daly:

The man on stage — the primary term against which the ballerina can only be compared — is not inscribed as a form but rather as an active principle (1987/88:57).

The male dancer's masculinity is expressed in action and through action he seeks to avoid the objectification implied in being watched. For young women, displaying and demonstrating femininity in dancing is regarded as remarkably unproblematic, despite the well-documented costs of the venture (anorexia, injury etc). Throughout the standard ballet literature I found no suggestion that the female dancer might be involved in a representational practice with respect to her femininity-as-dancer. Furthermore, there seems to be a universal assumption of the inherent narcissism of women such that it is thought natural that female dancers should wish to cultivate physical beauty and seek the admiration of others through the display of their bodies.

Of the teaching texts surveyed, those written by American teachers tended to under-emphasise the importance of gender differentiated training, either by asserting that ballet has universal application — 'the fundamental principles of classical ballet are the same for both sexes' writes Joan McConnell (1977:26) — or in simple recognition of the fact that few boys undertake ballet training before the age of fifteen. By contrast, *The Book of Ballet* (1976) by former dancers of the Paris Opera Ballet, Genevieve Guillot and Germaine Prudhommeau, stresses the importance of separate classes for boys and girls from the earliest ages.

Where training is oriented to professional development clear distinctions between female and male technique emerge. Virtuosity is differently defined for each sex and some writers and teachers are categorical in their assertion of the unsuitability of female bodies for certain skills.

In classical ballet most of the leaping turns are reserved for men.

They require strength, precision and muscular control that are beyond the physical capabilities of the female dancer. While the

technical virtuosity of the ballerina certainly equals that of the male, she has certain specialities and certain weaknesses that are dictated by her female anatomy (Guillot & Prudhommeau 1976:17).

What is systematically ignored in most ballet literature is the fact that the ballet is a system of representation which is always already sexed. Female and male bodies are granted admission to professional training institutions, according to their demonstrated ability in the performance of gender-appropriate skills. As Thomas Lacqueur observes in *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (1995), a cultural requirement is here represented as a truth of biology. Belief in a biological or anatomical incommensurability between the sexes governs the determination of the form. Ballet does not simply mirror difference but produces it.

According to Susan Foster, the principle of distinct vocabularies for male and female dancers was consolidated and extended during the period of the Romantic ballet. The Romantic ballet highlighted and accentuated sexually differentiated vocabularies, assigning

the dainty and complex footwork, the developpés of the legs and extended balances for women and the high leaps and multiple pirouettes for men. It also rationalised the new technique of pointe work which added a strenuous precariousness to the female dancer's performance (1996b: 4).

The divergent vocabularies developed for male and female dancers during the Romantic period symbolised a profound difference between the sexes, far greater than the distinct styles of male and female eighteenth century performers.

Up until the late eighteenth century the pas de deux had placed great emphasis on male and female dancers performing alongside one another or travelling separately designated pathways in mirrored opposition. These dancers shared a common vocabulary of steps performed with distinctive styles stipulated for male and female dancers (ibid:4).

Up until the late eighteenth century a one sex model of sexual difference obtained, that is to say, male and female technique shared similar core features. Female dancing was construed as a sexually appropriate variation or version of male dancing. A profoundly different understanding of sexual difference emerged in the nineteenth century ballet and

it is this system of representation, this understanding of sexually appropriate bodies and behaviours, which continues to determine the production and presentation of ballet today.

2.4.1 Watching the *pas de deux*

The *pas de deux* is at the heart of the ballet, according to Walter Sorrell, and it is at its best when 'treated romantically'.

Ballet is at its best, truest to itself, when treated romantically. However abstractly the *pas de deux* that Petipa perfected is choreographed, its romantic nature and the interplay of the sexes is obvious. As strongly as Petipa believed in the *pas de deux* as a display of technical bravura, he did not overlook its romantic appeal, with the male dancer tenderly lifting and admiringly supporting the ballerina, while she, relying on his strength and assurance unfolds her brilliance as a virtuoso and her beauty as a woman (1967:148-9).

It is in the *pas de deux* that the differences between male and female technique, role and style are most concentrated and it is the centrality of the *pas de deux* within the ballet repertoire which is responsible, in some commentators' view, for the severe constraints placed upon the height and weight of the female dancer. The *pas de deux* is the dance of difference, of gender asymmetry and 'the girls in particular, can't be too big or the boys can't lift them' (Rayner 1992 58).

At the VCA I observed several *pas de deux* classes taught by Tim Storey. The class discussed below was one hour long and the student group comprised seven couples, plus two extra boys, all between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. The students were working on already introduced, partially learned materials.

The class began informally; the girls were costumed in skirts and leotards, the boys in T-shirts and black tights. Overall, a sociable, casual, working and problem-solving class atmosphere was evident. The teacher's manner helped to establish an atmosphere of camaraderie. He engaged with the students more as an associate, an expert who joins them in their task, rather than as a figure of authority. On this occasion the teacher did not teach by doing, that is he did not actively demonstrate the lifts but stood alongside the couple and marked the movement of one party in the duet, usually the boy's. The dancers were thus presented with a demonstration of how a lift should *look*, not shown how it feels. It was their task to figure out the mechanics of the dance.

At this level of engagement with the *pas de deux* the issues seemed largely logistic: how to negotiate and manage an other body. Conventionally, the primary responsibility for

success in the performance of *pas de deux* is borne by the man — it is his job to make sure she 'looks good'. In Joan Lawson's primer on the *pas de deux* there is a description of the role of the male partner, 'the boy must "feel" the movement of his partner not hold her in place' (1977:100), but in this class the boys' quality of touch is rather blunt and instrumental. The boys and the girls seem intent on preserving their sense of separateness and individuality, guarding the borders of their bodies and this produced a very awkward interaction between them. The boys are trying to lift at a distance, that is, they are attempting to lift whilst maintaining some space between their bodies and the bodies of their partners. It is unclear whether they are learning a role or performance script at this stage as their efforts seem largely directed towards mastering the mechanics and logistics of various lifts and supports.

Information regarding sexually appropriate behaviour is built in to the class. The male student's task is to demonstrate executive action. He holds, lifts, supports. Both male and female students are directed towards the resolution of an effective design in space. They are organising her body in relation to a given template. With the boys the teacher directs much of his attention to questions of technique in lifting — timing, placement, alignment. His instructions to the girls are more in regard to line and image — in his words, to 'getting the picture right'. He reminds the students to use the mirror as they work towards the creation of a perfect image. The boys' primary task is to support and display the girl as together they work towards perfecting the mirror image. At this stage of the training and in this class the students are encouraged to direct their attention to their own performance, to perfecting their individual roles in the duet. They both demonstrate an active, physically assertive relationship to their respective roles but the teacher's instruction reiterates what the young man and the young woman already know — that the man's function is to be seen to be doing and the woman's function is to be seen.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have traced only some of the most apparent aspects of the dualistic thinking that subtends the discourse of ballet. I have also indicated some of the paradoxes and contradictions that emerge as a result of a commitment to this 'dualistic theoretical paradigm in the practice of ballet. These contradictions are especially significant as they relate to the performance of gender. These matters deserve much fuller treatment than is possible within the confines of this thesis. I will conclude by summarising the elements of the analysis that are most pertinent to the development of my argument in later chapters. Firstly, the relationship between the ballet and the everyday. Consistent with the oppositional logic of dualist thinking, the discourse of ballet is constituted by that which it excludes. The everyday is the excluded substrate upon which the discipline of ballet is

founded and the 'natural' or the mundane body is that which must be systematically eliminated or transmuted in classical ballet. The ballet transcends everyday life and the everyday physicality of untrained bodies. It represents the human in an heroic, ideal form and therein, according to many commentators, lies its enduring appeal and value.

The second aspect of my analysis of ballet which will be further explored is the cultivation of distinction at the level of bodily comportment and movement. Within ballet discourse the untrained body is represented as being in a state of nature; it is a *tabula rasa*, awaiting inscription, or raw material to be shaped and sculpted. Ballet training, pursued intensively, marks the body in more or less permanent ways; the ballet body is a specialised, elite body, shaped by a precise, and one might say, arcane enunciation. Significant in this context is the fact that the ballet body is conceptualised as fundamentally different and distant from the pedestrian body. The ballet body is a noble body, distinguished by its self-evident cultivation. Although ballet has drawn upon folk and social dance traditions of Europe, in its contemporary formation it is not part of a continuum of physical possibility shared by most others in the society. The aesthetic ideology of ballet in the twentieth century, that is, under modernism, embraces the principles of efficiency, control and technicality. Ballet actively asserts the superiority of a particular form of enculturation. It is not 'democratic'; it does not and cannot exist alongside other dancings, other embodiments.

Ballet is represented as a synthetic 'language of the body', distinguished by its elegant artificiality and its distance and difference from the 'prose of the world'. The acquisition of this language marks the body profoundly; the ballet body carries and displays its balleticism, its otherness, not only on the stage but also in daily life. This is not necessarily an act of choice or will. The changes wrought in the body's neuromusculature by prolonged and intensive training are not superficial. They affect perception.

In the surveyed texts there is a contrast between a metaphysical register, through which theorists elaborate upon the transcendent, universal values of ballet and the very concrete, even objectifying language of the studio. (Diane Rayner's description of audition and selection processes being a case in point). The ballet body is 'ornamental' — its poetry and lyricism, its appeal to the affective realm, is linked to its non-utilitarian status. Paradoxically, this effect is produced and sustained by means of intensive labour and a highly efficient, instrumental relationship to the body.

Finally, I have begun to explore the role of the imaginary in ballet's production and reproduction of sexual difference. This question has been approached principally through the application of feminist analyses of the gendered dimension of dualist thinking. Feminist film theorist and semiotician Teresa de Lauretis has described dualist thought —

in her terms 'the theoretical paradigm of a subject-object dichotomy', as the founding myth of Western culture. She writes:

What that paradigm contains, what those discourses rest on is the unacknowledged assumption of sexual difference that the human subject, Man, is the male. As the originary distinction of classical myth reaching us through the Platonic tradition, human creation and all that is human — mind, spirit, history, language, art or symbolic capacity — is defined in contradistinction to formless chaos, *phusis* or nature, to something that is female, matrix and matter; and on this primary binary opposition, all the others are modelled (1987:130).

The gendered nature of the binary oppositional logic governing the institution and practice of ballet gives rise to many curious paradoxes. For example, how is it that the female body, traditionally associated with private space, with emotionality and passivity, performs the active, impersonal public function which is ballet? Gardner has described the sense in which it might be argued that the female ballet dancer's body is not a woman's body. The female body, through ballet, is subjected to an intense process of enculturation and thus becomes universalised, that is, it is stripped or cleansed of the specificities of female experience. I am deliberately adopting the passive voice here, not in order to suggest that the dancer is coerced into ballet, or is in any sense a victim of it, but that she actively involves herself in a discourse of detachment. She subjects herself/ her body to a process of enculturation

The ballet body is 'purged of atmosphere' writes Adrian Stokes (1983:247). Through training, the female dancer's body is freed from the taint of its 'natural' femaleness and released also from the constraint and limitation of socially and 'biologically' determined roles of wife and mother. Thus neutralised, the female body, once suspect, becomes a public body, a body fit for bearing universal values.

The body in a state of nature is female, but its cultivation and freedom is male. Ballet training might be described as an arduous process by which a woman reconstructs her mundane body, rescuing it from a state of 'nature' and reinventing herself as an icon of femininity or, in Balanchine's terms, a symbol of Woman (Daly 1987). It remains to be seen if women might imagine another dancing in their own, not his image.

Chapter 3: The everyday body as subject of dance

*I walked like I was in the street. Dancers
were supposed to walk like queens.*

Yvonne Rainer 1974

Dance historians and critics in subscribing to the master narrative of modernist art, its status as autonomous, self-legitimizing object have suppressed the difference, that is, the different modernity of women's work in dance. This observation is not my own but I rehearse it here in order to underscore another difference and another suppression. My subject is the category of the everyday as it appears, and reappears, in accounts of twentieth century dance development.

In Chapter 2, I outlined some of the practices and representations which work together to produce the ballet dancer as an elite specialist. The process of ballet training entails the progressive transformation and overcoming of the limitations of everyday embodiment and the labour which effaces or overwrites the mundane body is intense and prolonged. I argued that part of the appeal of the ballet form lies in the distance it establishes between the aesthetic realm and mundane existence, and that this conceptual separation has significance for both performers and spectators.

By contrast in this chapter I will develop an account of dancing which is predicated upon an everyday or pedestrian body. Drawing upon developments in modern and postmodern dance I will consider some of the social and political implications of an art practice which is grounded in the presumption of an affinity or continuity between the body of the dancer and the body of the spectator. The French philosopher, historian and sociologist Henri Lefebvre has explored the realm of everyday life in ways which will be useful for this investigation. In *Critique of Everyday Life* he characterises the everyday as follows:

Everyday life, in a sense residual, defined by 'what is left over' after all distinct, superior, specialised, structured activities have been singled out by analysis, must be defined as a totality. Considered in their specialisation and their technicality, superior activities leave a 'technical vacuum' between one another which is filled up by everyday life. Everyday life is profoundly related to all activities and encompasses them with all their differences and their conflicts; it is their meeting place, their bond, their common ground (1991:97).

The everyday body which is the principal subject of this chapter might be similarly characterised — as a non-specialised, residual and taken for granted background. It is also that which connects and co-ordinates diverse activities, movements and actions. In this chapter my objective is to elucidate some of the shifts in discursive ground which have facilitated the emergence of this non-elite body as subject of dance.

The investigation of the everyday body will be focused upon two important moments in dance modernism — the early or pre modern dance of the turn of the century, and 1960s postmodernism. In these two periods deep challenges to existing dance traditions were mounted by artists working outside the dominant lineages of theatrical dance. The substantive choreographic and theoretical questions of those periods which bear upon the topic of the everyday were: What constitutes a dance? and What defines a dancer?

Susan Manning signals a moment of crisis in dance modernism when she identifies a stasis in the development of modern dance in the period following the Judson Dance Theater. In dance, as in other fields of artistic practice, the progressivist narrative of modernism exhausts itself or runs aground in the early sixties. According to Manning, The Judson Dance Theater marked the end point of a period of sustained formal experimentation and of the legitimating narratives that once supported American dance. In this period a number of strategies were directed towards a dissolution of the constitutive binaries (of form and content, art and life) of modernist aesthetic ideology. The insertion of the 'non-aesthetic' in the form of ordinary movement and untrained performers was one such strategy.

The sphere of everyday life and the mundane has also been an important focus of feminist scholarship. One of my objectives in this chapter is to establish a context for discussion of the feminist implications of developments in postmodern and Release dance, with a particular focus upon the ways in which the dancer is constituted through practice. Theories and practices of the everyday will be important in this context.

I will begin by tracing some of the debates concerning the relation between the art-work and everyday life as that relation is conceived and reconfigured under modernism. The discussion of dance modernism is organised through the following questions: What is the status of the body and of women in modernist dance discourse? and How has the relation between the specialised corporeality of the dancer, and the everyday body been conceived?

3.1 Dancing Over, Under and Around Modernism²⁷

Is modern dance modernist? This was a key question preoccupying dance studies during the 1980s, precipitated to some degree by the then contemporary dispute concerning the post-modernity or otherwise of postmodern dance. The vigorous debate between Sally Banes and Susan Manning conducted in the pages of *The Drama Review*²⁸ during the late 1980s raised a number of key questions about the cultural status of dance. Is dance a central or peripheral cultural phenomenon? Has the development of a modernist aesthetic in dance followed the same broad contours of other arts throughout the twentieth century? Is modern dance consistent with aesthetic modernism (Manning) or has it traced a different historical trajectory (Banes)?

According to Manning, the debate is no longer so polarised. Two complementary accounts of the genealogy of dance modernism now exist: one account traces a line of succession within the ballet idiom from Nijinsky to Balanchine, the other follows modern dance development from Duncan to Graham to Cunningham to Judson Dance Theater (Manning 1993:23). Critics have also broadly agreed upon the formal characteristics of modernist dance which might be summarised in the following terms: the rejection of pictorialism, the defamiliarisation or abstraction of bodily emotion and the self-reflexive concern with movement as absolute 'self-speaking' material.²⁹

However in Mark Franko's view, the development of a comprehensive theory of dance modernism has been impeded by a confusion of historical method and critical promotion. In the modern dance field much critical debate has focused upon the canonical status not only of particular choreographers, but also of specific works or periods within a choreographic *oeuvre*. The identification and legitimisation of specific choreographers as the most significant exemplars of dance modernism has often been the work of advocacy and not history, Franko asserts. Projects of critical advocacy have harnessed the progressivist rhetoric of modernism in ways which have complicated and obscured points

²⁷ The reference embedded in the title is to Simone Forti's dance/game structure '*Over, Under and Around*' (1961). Forti's dance score produces and frames behaviour as dance action. Forti's work is invoked here to indicate the somewhat convoluted trajectory of dance modernism and to foreshadow the subject of the pedestrian.

²⁸ "Letters from Sally Banes and Susan Manning," *The Drama Review* 33/1 (Spring 1989): 13-16.

²⁹ Based upon Manning (1993:26) and Franko (1995: x-xi).

of connection and similarity across genres and styles. Departing from modernism's dominant narrative of radical disjuncture,³⁰ Franko's account of dance modernism emphasises the continuities in dance practice. Franko argues that some of the most significant changes in dance practice and aesthetic discourse have occurred in response to shifts in social and political context. Innovation in dance has been precipitated by social process and not only through formal experimentation.³¹

In Franko's view, the political and social radicalism of modern dance practice has been suppressed in favour of a depoliticised discourse of aesthetic radicalism. Noting the distorting effects upon dance historiography of adherence to the tenets of Greenbergian modernism, Franko demonstrates that there are other stories to be told about modern dance. His cogent essays published in *Dancing Modernism/Performing Modernism* (1995) are exercises in revisionary history. Some of the 'other stories' Franko wants to tell include the impact of the left wing revolutionary dance movement of the 1930s and the energetic realist/modernist debate which surrounded modern dance of this period, such as the work of Martha Graham. In "Bodies of Radical Will" he underlines the centrality of dance to social activism during the 1930s:

the class consciousness of American radical politics set about to endow the aesthetic revolution of modern dance with politically revolutionary content, or to create a second revolution in modern dance that would politicise aesthetics (1995:26).

The political orientation of a significant sector of the modern dance community and its impact upon subsequent socially committed dance practice has been under-represented in mainstream dance history. Manning concurs with Franko when she notes that the modern dance canon reflects the ascendancy of 'humanist' modern dancers who maintained New York studios and were associated with the influential Bennington College Summer Schools. The 'leftist' moderns, who were linked with trade unions and other political organisations, were until recently effectively written out of modern dance history. A split was effected between dance formalism and a socially committed or politicised aesthetic. Helen Thomas, bringing a sociological sensibility to the study of dance under modernism, outlines the social conditions which both enabled and constrained the recognition of modern dance as a serious art form. In the context of this discussion Thomas observes that dance is culturally marginal in at least three senses — as art, as body and as an art form

³⁰ Manning describes this particular construction of dance history whereby aesthetic innovation is invariably precipitated by the overthrowing of the old order as embodying 'the Oedipal logic of Greenbergian modernism' (1993:283).

³¹ Of relevance to this thesis study is the effect of the women's suffrage and women's liberation movements upon the public representation and social visibility of women.

associated with women (1995:166). Thomas formulates a sociology of dance which takes account of the socio-cultural contexts of dance production and reception, while recognising also that dance constitutes reflexively a resource for comprehending that context. She reminds us, echoing the sociological aesthetics of Janet Wolff,³² that the question of artistic merit, what is valued as art at a particular time and what is overlooked or trivialised, is a social and political as well as an aesthetic issue. Thomas's work suggests that the 'official' discourse of dance modernism might usefully be read symptomatically — its exclusions as telling as its inclusions. The debates over succession and periodisation — which work, which choreographer, when — and genre, seemingly only of interest to the critical establishment, point to fundamental questions of social value. They play a pivotal role in what might be termed the 'choreological' apparatus, that is, the system of production, circulation and evaluation of dance works.

In Chapter 2, I discussed the effect upon classical dance practice of what Teresa de Lauretis has termed 'the originary distinction of classical myth' — the distinction upon which all other distinctions are modelled. This primary binary opposition, between mind and body, male and female, human creation and nature, subtends the dominant aesthetic discourses of Western culture. This idealist tradition, which effects a concealment of both woman's body and 'labor power', has been the dominant voice in twentieth century dance theory. If the leftist or socialist commitments of modern dance practice have been under-acknowledged in dance history, so too have the feminist intentions and implications of the discursive representations of women and bodies in dance. It is to this aspect of the cultural marginality of dance that I will now turn.

3.1.2 The gendering of dance modernism

Few dance writers would take issue with Amy Koritz's representation of modern dance as 'the first elite art form created by women' (1995:29). However the public significance and cultural value of this unique development have been a point of contestation.

Susan Manning has described the emergence of women dancer-choreographers as an appropriation of the male identified role of the ballet master/choreographer. Not only was this an appropriation of an established role and function but it also entailed a major redefinition of the art of choreography. Choreographing dances for the modern dance choreographer involved not only the skilful manipulation and management of available technologies — bodily, scenic, musical — but the invention or discovery of new

³² As developed in *The Social Production of Art* (1981).

technologies, especially of movement³³ (Fraleigh 1987, Manning 1993) and the development of new contexts for dance presentation. Koritz's identification of modern dance as a new art form is particularly salient here. If modern dance is recognised as a *new* art form it cannot be merely a modification or extension of existing dance practice. Duncan, for example, proposed a radically new formulation of the art of the moving body and attempted to situate this new dance paradigm in what might be termed the 'interval' between the private and the public sphere, between popular and elite, between mind and matter and between art and daily life.³⁴ Judging from the tenor of critical response it does seem evident that women's early dominance of the developing art form was perceived by male critics as an act of appropriation and not simply an expansion or diversification of a previously male dominated field.

Rita Felski, writing of the relationship between gender and modernity, notes that 'the gender of authorship is a crucial factor influencing the circulation and reception of textual meaning' (1989:33). This perception would seem to be borne out in the art of dance and the struggles throughout the twentieth century for recognition of the distinctive contribution of women to its formulation of the modern. In reviewing the literature I am struck by the depth of emotional response, and what is at times a maelstrom of affect, in male critics' descriptions of women's work. A current of feeling, incompletely repressed, threatens to cloud the judgement of the putatively disinterested modernist critic. A consistent theme, evident in the writings of the defenders, as well as the detractors, of modern dance is an anxiety concerning the sensuousness and materiality of dance. This anxiety or fear is coupled with an uncritical acceptance of the containment or elision of the body as the necessary precondition of art.

The dominant theory of dance modernism in large measure recapitulates a classical aesthetics whose determinations of value are grounded in binarised distinctions. Attempts to challenge these binary oppositions — and they have been numerous in the history of modern dance — have been registered as evidence of the problematic status of dance within modernism. Indeed, there is a certain difficulty of fit between modern dance practice and theories of modernism which attempted to render dance congruent with Western metaphysics. Women's early dominance of modern dance presented a problem for a nascent dance scholarship dependant upon models drawn from visual art and literature. Indeed, two influential writers on dance, Lincoln Kirstein and Roger Copeland have explicitly excluded female modern dance artists such as Isadora Duncan and Martha

³³ Elaborating on the departure of Duncan's choreography from theatrical dance convention Mark Franko notes that her innovation was not only lexical but also syntactical. Not only did she clarify a simplified vocabulary of movement but she developed a new approach to phrasing.

³⁴ Duncan's radical cultural politics have been extensively documented in recent dance literature, especially in Ann Daly's *Done into Dance* (1995).

Graham from the modernist canon. In their accounts of dance modernism the male choreographers, Balanchine and Cunningham, emerge as the exemplars of aesthetic modernism, the most significant innovators of twentieth century dance. We here observe a deeply political move whereby a category of analysis is dehistoricised, assigned a transcendental value and retrospectively applied to art works in terms which disenfranchise the (female) artist-creator. I am suggesting that the trouble with dance, with its uneasy or incomplete assimilation into modernist paradigms is a problem of bodies and a problem of women. The following discussion may indicate why the debate concerning the modernism or otherwise of modern dance cannot be resolved by appeals to schematised aesthetic categories.

Kirstein has dismissed modern dance as 'minor verse'; its limitation is an effect of its intimacy and emotional force. His negative evaluation of the cultural significance of modern dance is articulated in provocative, gender-saturated terms:

In 'modern dance' the torsion of exertion, the moist anguish of psychological contest supplies pathos. The style in its tragic or mythic aspect stays agonized and intimate ... Psychic nuance, the visceral unconscious, upon which 'modern dance' depended remains its prime self-limiting material (1983: 243).

Copeland's slightly more restrained verbal style continues the theme. In an article which selectively draws upon feminist critiques of the visual, Copeland uncritically and negatively links kinaesthetic experience with the maternal, holistic and natural. He caricatures modern dance's appeal to kinaesthesia as 'tactile, touchie feelie modes of empathy' and then interpolates a sexually nuanced division in the field. He identifies a number of postmodern choreographers who in his view have rejected the 'touchie-feelie' in favour of a process of detached visual analysis. These women artists, true heirs to the modernist tradition according to Copeland, are credited with the appropriation of a masculine-identified analytically rigorous visual praxis.

They [Rainer, Childs, Brown] re-claim rather than reject traditional male privileges ... They strive to create movement 'objectively', not by tapping some internal — let alone maternal — instinct (1993:148).

Musicologist Susan McClary has undertaken detailed analyses of the representation of gender and sexuality in a range of musical forms and within the institution of musicology itself. As she has observed, the disavowal of the body and its sensuous engagements is one of the preconditions for the conferral of elite cultural status:

One of the principal claims to supremacy of European classical music (and other forms of high culture) is that it transcends the body, that it is concerned with the nobler domains of imagination and even metaphysics (1991:57).

Dance's body, its sensuous presence, threatens the aesthetic. It is the bodiliness of dance that must be contained, controlled and rationalised. Louis Horst, composer, influential teacher of dance composition and Martha Graham's mentor also demonstrates his allegiance to the idealist tradition in his insistence that dance, practiced as art, entails systematic repression or sublimation of libidinal energies. He writes: '(The body) is the most dangerous of instruments, which must be tempered by musical structure and compositional form'. Without these two elements the body 'is likely to run riot into emotional expression. Motion is born of emotion ... and both must be kept under control' (in Lloyd 1968:92). Bodies and emotions must be controlled; this is so irrespective of genre, asserts Horst.

The theme of transcendence of the body and the distribution of masculine and feminine on opposed axes of transcendence/immanence is continued in Copeland's essay "Merce Cunningham and The Politics of Perception" (1983). Copeland develops a persuasive argument identifying Cunningham as the exemplary modernist. The role of kinaesthetic empathy, which Copeland finds so problematic in Graham, is programatically challenged, if not eliminated in Cunningham's work. Copeland equates kinaesthetic communication with subjectivism; it is of the body, provokes feeling in the body and therefore it is 'primitive'. Copeland comments upon the liberatory impulse of modern dance, noting that the 'pioneers' of the form saw themselves as apostles of freedom. For Duncan and Graham, he argues, being free was a matter of the body; their dancing was a liberation from the conventions of puritanical culture. He continues the liberatory narrative, citing Brecht's critique of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the integrated work of art.³⁵ Brecht's injunction against the immersive, identificatory pleasures of the opera is harnessed by Copeland in support of Cunningham's 'perceptual revolution'. Kinaesthetic empathy, 'feeling through the body' to borrow John Martin's phrase, produces 'intoxication and hypnosis' and an identification, if transient, with the body of an other. Cunningham's choreographic process eschews the natural, complicates and creates obstacles to kinaesthetic identification and thus, according to Copeland, ensures the spectator's perceptual freedom. 'For Cunningham ... true freedom has more to do with seeing (and hearing) clearly, than with moving freely' Copeland declares (1983:312).

³⁵ 'Whatever is intended to produce hypnosis, is likely to induce sordid intoxication, or creates fog, has got to be given up'. Brecht cited in Copeland (1983).

The association of dancing with ritual, as something one does, a 'purely participatory activity', is an obstacle to the recognition of dance as art — 'something one looks at', in Copeland's schema. To become 'art' dance must sever its relationship with ritual, and this, through Cunningham's deliberate suppression of kinaesthetic empathy and thoroughgoing separation of kinetic, narrative and musical elements is what he achieves. Cunningham's *oeuvre* represents a systematic critique of the natural and this, for Copeland, is its precise value. Duchamp's dismissal of the sensuous in painting is homologous to Cunningham's dismissal of organic flow in movement. Copeland's choice of citation is informative: '(Duchamp) wrote that the direction in which art should turn is to an intellectual expression, rather than to an animal expression'.

In the light of recent analyses of early modern dance Copeland's representation of the tradition as predicated on the release of 'natural' impulses and as a self-consciously primitive or lapsarian response to modern life is seriously flawed. Copeland, writing as a critical advocate, engages an oppositional strategy whereby to be *for* Cunningham, freedom and the (masculine) modernist aesthetic tradition, one must be *against* Graham and Duncan and bondage to the (feminine) feeling body.

In the contrast Copeland draws between false and true freedom we see the contours of a very familiar discourse. Falsity is linked with body, nature, the primitive and women, truth with intellectualised perception and man. In Copeland's representation only a dance that supports and mirrors a disengaged style of disinterested aesthetic contemplation is worthy of consideration.

If dance is to be accorded a place within modernism, it must be seen to conform to the tenets of modernist discourse. In his book *Postmodernism and Performance* (1994), performance theorist Nick Kaye argues against the modernist assumption of the priority and independence of art works when he points out that art works are imbricated in the discourses which surround them. They are a product as much as origin or cause of explanatory theories. The work of art is implicated in 'the modernist discourse of which, properly speaking it is an effect,' writes Kaye (1994:5). Franko has described the interaction between Graham's embodied choreographic theory and Martin's discursive theorisation in precisely these terms and suggests that Graham's adoption of a more overt representational expression in later works was in part a response to Martin's critique (Franko 1996:25 -53). He perceives in Martin's critical treatment of Graham the operation of a familiar hierarchy whereby the performative is rendered subservient to the exigencies of the textual. Martin's project as reviewer and erstwhile dance theorist obscures and overwrites Graham's choreographic project. As Manning, Banes and others have noted, this schism between the discursive and the performative, writing and dancing is (over)

determined by gender — the maleness of the critic/writer and the femaleness of the artist/performer.

To recognise historical modern dance as modernist is not only to revise determinations of the modernist canon but also to begin to 'reconfigure the modern in terms of women's interests and preoccupations' (Felski 1989:10). This process of reconfiguration is evident in recent dance scholarship: in Franko's work on Duncan and Graham, Daly's extended treatment of Duncan's deployment of the body, and Manning's detailed analysis of the convergence of sexual and national politics in the work of Mary Wigman. These revisionary histories of early modern dance are a welcome corrective; in their interdisciplinarity they are a counter to earlier more narrowly focused, discipline-based accounts of dance either as a social process or as autonomous, self-legitimizing art practice.

As all three writers assert, the modernism of modern dance was 'performed' in works which were complicated by socio-political imperatives — feminism, nationalism and Marxism.³⁶ Class, gender and race played a formative role in the aesthetic ideology of modern dance practice and performance (Burt 1998). Modernism, interpreted exclusively as a concern with formal, intrinsic properties of the dance medium cannot encompass this degree of complexity. Koritz writes of Duncan's innovations in these terms:

To the extent that Duncan saw a continuity between art and life, she also saw one between herself and her audiences. In believing that her dancing could improve the lives of her pupils and her audiences, she relinquished its claims to autonomy. Her willingness to defend it on moral as well as aesthetic grounds is a product of this stance. (1995:73)

Duncan's art, with its strong ethical component, is not a 'pure' art according to Andre Levinson. Duncan's principled pursuit of reconciliation between her artistic practice and her life as a woman may have been socially progressive but insofar as she foregoes the stance of disinterestedness she cannot be regarded as artistically progressive.³⁷ Duncan's insistence upon the connection between art and life and her refusal to isolate the aesthetic from other spheres of thought and action put her at odds with the major current of art in her time. Koritz goes on to argue that Duncan's stance needs to be understood as a pragmatic response to social circumstance, rather than a 'self-conscious resistance to the

³⁶ Franko: 'I understand the performance of feminist culture in historical modern dance as complicated by simultaneous performances of modernism or marxism in the same work' (1995:146 n 16).

³⁷ Levinson accords to Duncan's work a social, not artistic significance: 'Isadora Duncan sought not so much to create a phalanx of refined artists as to make her pedagogical goal the general dissemination of her message to the masses. It is not without reason that A.G. Kornfeld noted ... the significance of her art as "the possibility for us all to be beautiful"' (1983b: 440).

separation of art from life'. As Koritz, Daly and Franko have detailed, Duncan's attempt to establish a place in art, involved a complex manoeuvre. In order to secure financial and social support for her developing work she had to appeal to the values and interests of a social elite. She had to exploit middle class gender ideology and activate it to different ends. 'Duncan had no choice but to proclaim the moral content of her aesthetic product', writes Koritz (1995:29).³⁸ Duncan's artistic innovations were intimately linked to her desire to represent the specificities of female experience. She also insisted that her dancing be regarded as a social praxis. The explicit social and sexual orientation of her dance placed her outside the modernist canon.

In the context of the universalist claims of modernist discourse, women's strategic pursuit of their own interests in and through dance has been construed as particularist and limited. These judgements, evident also in other art forms, proceed from certain assumptions about women, the feminine, and the nature of artistic production. Dance's contradictory relationship to the modernist discourse of autonomy and progression is, I would argue, an effect of gender. The inherited tradition of critical practice, its criteria of judgement and evaluation, is cut to the measure of masculine determinations of value. Phrased differently, what has counted as art in modern dance, a practice of women, has been represented in terms of an aesthetic discourse dominated by a masculine imaginary.³⁹

What emerges in the debates around dance modernism is a perpetuation of a gender divide such that the capacity for abstraction and disembodied reason is identified with the masculine.⁴⁰ Women are again cast as the subordinate body/emotion/nature part of dance, a necessary but not sufficient condition for dance's assumption of the mantle of Art.

Claims of disinterestedness are being challenged by different stories. Terry Threadgold reminds us that theories of modernity and modernism are stories, that is, works of *poesis*, or making, and they are 'told from some *body's* position' (1997:1). And Susan Manning has suggested that the interest in systematic re-examination of early modern dance has been prompted by the feminist movement of the nineteen seventies (1993:283). One of the legacies of second wave feminism is a greater sensitivity to the ideological nature of assertions of neutrality. The rewriting of the dominant story of dance modernism is

³⁸ 'For the female dancer, the assumptions that devalued dance as an art in the late nineteenth century by associating it with nature, woman, the primitive, and the exotic ... also opened a space for innovation, just as, in Martha Vicinus's analysis, the militant suffragettes could use the supposed moral superiority of women as a weapon in their fight for the vote, Isadora Duncan would deploy women's privileged relation to nature to valorize her art' Koritz (1995:29).

³⁹ My intention here is not to represent this critical blind spot as a conspiracy effected by men against the interests of women. However I do wish to underline the ideological complicity of an aesthetic theory which women as well as men have uncritically accepted.

⁴⁰ One consequence of this gender divide is the identification of exceptional men as exemplary modernists and the presumed masculinity of the work of choreography. Martin, for example, makes a distinction between the masculine and feminine aspects of Graham's practice as a dancer-choreographer.

producing a more fragmented and diverse picture of modern dance practice. If the oedipal logic of dance modernism has run its course, as Manning suggests, this may just be something for women to celebrate.

3.2 How does dance movement communicate? John Martin's theory of metakinesis.

John Martin opens his discussion of the nature of movement with a paradox. Movement is common to all people; it is 'the very stuff of life;' dance is based in movement of the body, and yet dance is the least understood of art forms 'We have forgotten how to look at movement, and how to respond to it', Martin notes (1965:22), as he embarks upon the work of redressing the cultural neglect of the expressive and communicative role of the body and kinaesthesia. The pervasiveness of movement renders it opaque, Martin suggests. He also notes that an overly instrumental relation to the body and movement tends to obscure other aspects of embodiment. If movement is principally valued in instrumental terms, the vital role of movement in both expression and perception is neglected. Susan Foster echoes this sentiment in the introduction to *Reading Dancing* where she writes; 'the talent for remembering movement is difficult to cultivate and certainly not rewarded in this society' (Foster 1986: xvi).

Martin's writings on modern dance are shaped in some measure by pedagogical objectives. Martin, like philosopher Suzanne Langer, was provoked by modern dance to develop a theory of expression and communication which was specific to the art form. Martin's identification of the vital role of kinaesthetic perception is an attempt to articulate the founding dynamic of dance in terms which are unique to it. If dance is to be an autonomous, or absolute art, its modes of representation and expression must be distinct. Comparable to the isolation of optical experience in modernist painting, Martin identifies kinaesthetic perception as the essential ground of absolute dance.

The importance Martin ascribes to kinaesthesia substantiates his assessment of the significance of modern dance. All dance involves kinaesthesia, but modern dance amplifies its effects.⁴¹ Movement, that most habitual, unconscious and taken for granted aspect of daily life is given unprecedented prominence in modern dance. This dance form is compelling, Martin argues, due to the phenomenological link it establishes between aesthetic experience and daily experience. However this inherent connection through kinaesthetic empathy may be obscured by the adoption of inappropriate presumptions

⁴¹ In *The Modern Dance*, Martin asserts that 'no conscious artistic use was made of metakinesis until the modern dance arose' (1966:15).

concerning the nature of aesthetic experience. The viewing of dance as art highlights issues of perception. Aesthetic perception is to a degree a conscious process, Martin states, and the spectator thus tends to focus his attention upon qualitative, static elements at the expense of moving, active elements (1965:52). Recognising that a new form of artistic representation may make new perceptual demands on its audience, Martin guides prospective spectators towards the distinctive aesthetic disposition appropriate to the modern dance. 'It is essential when approaching the dance to carry along the expectation of response to movement and a reliance on "inner mimicry"' (ibid: 55), he writes.

Martin's reception theory emphasises the active, embodied nature of audience perception: 'Not only does the dancer employ movement to express his ideas, but, strange as it may seem, the spectator must also employ movement in order to respond to the dancer's intention and understand what he is trying to convey' (1965:31). Martin repeatedly asserts that the expression and apprehension of dance is not an intellectual process but a 'feeling through' the sensitive body (1966:59). The spectator re-experiences the sensation that the dancer has objectified in movement, Martin asserts. However, Martin's theory displays certain fundamental contradictions.

A theory of dance which remains at the level of the body's sensuous experience and interests risks forfeiting its object's claim to art. Martin therefore is careful to return dance movement and kinaesthetic perception to the abstract category of reason through the conceptual device of 'metakinesis'. His theory of metakinesis is an extrapolation from the phenomenon of kinaesthetic empathy or inner mimicry that is part of the experience of movement in everyday life. According to Martin, metakinesis is a psychic accompaniment, correlated with but different from kinesis, or physical movement. It is a kind of non-physical movement; a movement of consciousness. It has a cognitive dimension. In the dance experience, movement functions as a bridge between consciousnesses.

Movement is a *vehicle* which transfers mental or psychic intention from choreographer/dancer to the spectator.⁴² The substantive content of the dance is not given immediately to the senses; it must be deduced. Here daily life and the aesthetic begin to separate and move apart. The modern dance artist draws upon representations of familiar experience and action principally to establish a connection with her audience.

The mimetic faculty is employed not to reproduce actuality as an end in itself, but only to provide a means of meeting the spectator where he is in the world of actuality. Once this is done, representationalism is abandoned for those abstractions

⁴² 'Movement ... in and of itself is a medium for the transference of an aesthetic and emotional concept from the consciousness of one individual to that of another' (1966:13).

and distortions that will lead away from the actual into the conceptual (1966:142).

In order to substantiate dance's claim to autonomy it is necessary to attenuate its relation to phenomenal, subjective experience and by so doing to extrapolate from the concrete particular — this dancer, this spectator, this place and time. Martin's concept of metakinesis recasts the subjective and interpersonal aspects of kinaesthetic perception in objective, universalised terms. This objectivisation, as Bourdieu terms it, produces 'dance' as an object, amenable to certain kinds of analytic procedures and subject to a scientific, intellectualised aesthetic logic.

Aesthetics, as Terry Eagleton reminds us, 'is born as a discourse of the body' (1990:13). It is not originally identified with art but with the whole realm of sensation and perception;⁴³ it is the arena of lived sensate experience and praxis, in contrast to the more rarefied domain of abstract reason. According to Eagleton, the ideological significance of the aesthetic first becomes evident in the mid eighteenth century when the German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten attributes political importance to the relationship between aesthetics, ethics and the reasoning power of the mind. Eagleton summarises Baumgarten's appropriation of the aesthetic in the following way:

Reason must find some way of penetrating the world of perception, but in doing so must not put at risk its own absolute power. It is just this delicate balance which Baumgarten's aesthetics seeks to achieve. If his *Aesthetics* (1750) opens up in an innovative gesture the whole terrain of sensation, what it opens it up to is in effect the colonisation of reason ... Aesthetics, Baumgarten writes, is the 'sister' of logic, a kind of ratio inferior or feminine analogue of reason at the lower level of sensational life. Aesthetics, configured as important but secondary, is the means whereby reason's hegemony may be assured (1990:15).

Martin's treatment of kinaesthetic perception retraces the movement drawn within Baumgarten's *Aesthetics*, that is, from body to mind. When Martin opens up the terrain of bodily sensation and feeling he exposes it to colonisation by reason. The sense of performance is effected in the realm of experience, of the sensible. The practical logic of the art of dance is a bodily, sensory logic. An aesthetic theory of dance, if it is to speak to and with its object, must proceed *with* the body. This is the initial appeal of Martin's thesis, but he retreats from it. Martin's theory of dance is inconsistent, Franko argues,

⁴³ As the Greek *aisthesis* (to take hold of through the senses) indicates.

because it oscillates between literal and symbolic registers. The capacity for abstraction and symbolisation of dance movement is compromised by the material presence of the dancer's body. To promote an understanding of dance as a discourse of the body is to draw the field into dangerous proximity to primary processes.

The French kinesiologist Hubert Godard speaks of this 'danger' when he describes dance as a 'symbolic field from which all neutrality has been drained' (1996:21). Godard asks, as Martin once asked, 'Why are we moved when someone dances?' Godard's response, informed by phenomenological and psychoanalytic perspectives, is at ease with the 'visceral unconscious' of dance.⁴⁴ Dance has the power to move us, Godard argues, because it resonates with the embodied history of our relationship with the first object of love, our mother. The way we come to negotiate our relationship with gravity is intimately related to the way that relation was first negotiated for us, that is, how we were held, touched and carried. Our bodies carry the memory of this 'tonic dialogue' (ibid:18). In its 'gravitational adventures', in its balances, falls, and recoveries, dance has the power to create echoes with these deep traces of embodied history.

Godard also rejects the universalising tendencies of Martin's theory of dance reception. The perception dance provides is always a matter of 'a unique dancer in relation to a unique spectator'. It has nothing to do with 'universal arbitration or with collective opinion.' 'Hence', Godard concludes, 'the extreme difficulty of choreographic, pedagogic and critical work on dance' (ibid:20). It is not only dance theory, but also dance itself, which oscillates between the concrete and the symbolic.

Martin's theory presumes the universality of psychological and physical experience. A number of contemporary writers have critically interrogated Martin's subsumption of social and sexual difference. Manning, for example, argues that the reception of dance is deeply inflected by gender, noting that the early modern dance held a specific appeal for female audiences. The early modern dancers authored their own performances and in so doing '(they) appeared to script the experience of many women in the audience' (1993:28).⁴⁵ Surveying responses to early modern dance performance she notes that in the written accounts of both male critics and female spectators kinaesthesia is closely identified with women and the feminine. Modern dance depended upon the patronage of women, as audience but also as amateur participants. The boundary separating professional and amateur dance blurred as middle class women took up 'dance-like' forms

⁴⁴ Kirstein (1983:243).

⁴⁵ Manning describes this self-authorship as effecting universalised or essentialised representations of Woman. There are many reasons why this characterisation is not sustainable. The early modern dancers were attacked precisely insofar as they failed or refused to perform Woman. Feminist critiques of the category identify the term Woman as an effect of patriarchy, whose function is to occupy the negative pole of an always, already divided gender economy. As I have argued in Chapter 2, Woman is a fantasy of the masculine subject.

of physical culture. These women could identify both socially and kinaesthetically with early modern dance performance. Manning cites Margherita Duncan's account of a powerful moment of identification:

The first time I ever saw Isadora Duncan ... dancing... I experienced what I can only describe as an identification of myself with her. It seemed as if I were dancing up there myself. This was not an intellectual process, a critical perception that she was supremely right in every movement she made; just a sense that in watching her I found release for my own impulses of expression; the emotions aroused in me by the music saw themselves translated into visibility (in Manning 1993:37).

Dancing holds particular value for women. This somewhat disingenuous observation requires some scrutiny. If it is so, *why* is it so? In the passage cited above it would seem that two kinds or modalities of 'identification' are activated in this female spectator—one a social identification, the other, kinaesthetic. As Manning and many other writers have observed, there has been a close historical association between women and modern dance. Women's engagement with new forms of physical culture, including dance, was predicated upon a broad movement of change effecting the social status, roles and representations of women. It has also been argued that the significant role played by kinaesthetic perception in the development and reception of the new art form was strongly inflected by gender; that the kinaesthetic is on the side of the 'feminine' (Manning 1993, Gardner 1996, Godard 1996). The question of the relationship between processes of social identification and kinaesthetic identification or empathy in the development of new forms of dance practice is a complex one, to which I will return in subsequent chapters. For the present, suffice it to say that I will be seeking to develop an understanding of the relationship between the social and the kinaesthetic which avoids essentialising women's engagement with dance. When Martin defines the power of kinaesthetic communication in dance as a response to 'a body exactly like our own' he obscures differences between bodies and the specificity of their social and sexual identities.⁴⁶ His project is a universalising one. Furthermore, as I have argued above, Martin's notion of metakinesis functions as a conceptual device whose objective is to neutralise or masculinise the participatory dynamic of dance, which, in its unreflective, feminine form threatens the very project of dance modernism.

⁴⁶ A much quoted passage from Martin's *Introduction to the Dance* begins with the following observation: 'Since we respond muscularly to the strains in architectural masses and the attitude of rocks, it is plain to be seen that we will respond even more vigorously to the action of a body exactly like our own' (1966:53).

The legacy of Martin's advocacy of modern dance as an art form based in kinaesthetic communication is therefore somewhat ambivalent. While Martin's reception theory has provided a valuable conceptual support for the recognition of dance as an independent art, an uncritical acceptance of his representation of kinaesthetic perception — as a universal, biologically determined substrate of human experience — has impeded critical analysis of the role of sexual and other differences in the experience of dance and dancing. Consideration of the social and sexual determination of perceptual dispositions is foreclosed in this essentialised theory of kinaesthetic perception.

3.2.1 Extension and critique of Martin's reception theory.

The kinaesthetic sense is a separate and fortunate behaviour. It allows the experience of dancing to be part of all of us (Cunningham 1968)⁴⁷

Martin's theory endures in later modern and postmodern dance. It is evident in a truncated form in John Cage's 1968 apology for Cunningham; it returns again in Douglas Dunn's 'Hypothesis of Immediate Perception' published in 1999. The notion of kinaesthetic perception as that which links the art of dance and everyday life is again enlisted in support of modernist dance experimentation. The following much quoted passage from Cage's "Four Statements on the Dance" summarises important aspects of his influential aesthetic philosophy:

We are not, in these dances and music, saying something. We are simple-minded enough to think that if we were saying something we would use words. We are rather doing something. The meaning of what we do is determined by each one who sees and hears it... there are no stories and no psychological problems. There is simply an activity of movement, sound and light ... The movement is the movement of the body. It is here that Mr. Cunningham focuses his choreographic attention, not on the facial muscles. In daily life people customarily observe faces and hand gestures, translating what they see into psychological terms. Here however, we are in the presence of a dance which utilizes the whole body, requiring for its enjoyment the use of your faculty of kinaesthetic sympathy. It is this

⁴⁷ No page number in original *Changes: Notes on Choreography* (1968) ed. Francis Starr, Something Else Press, New York

faculty we employ when, seeing the flight of birds, we ourselves, by identification, fly up, glide, and soar (1961:95).

Like Martin, Cage ascribes to a universalised and essentialist notion of kinaesthetic perception. Kinaesthetic perception in this view is not psychological, subjective or personal; neither does it entail 'translation'. It is immediately given to experience. Cage actively distances Cunningham's work from Graham's psychologically inflected dance-drama. It is ironic perhaps that Martin's theorisation of kinaesthetic empathy as that which creates connections between daily life and dance, and which evolved principally in response to Graham's work, is here harnessed to assert difference and distance. Cage implies that the perception of movement in dance is unmediated, impersonal, and timeless — watching dance is nature watching nature. But as Martin and many other dance commentators have observed, 'no movement can be made by the human body which is wholly non-representational' (1966:12). There is an inter-subjective element in movement perception which is not adequately accounted for by the phrase 'psychological translation'. Douglas Dunn locating his work within the Cage/Cunningham aesthetic lineage, also grounds his assertion of the accessibility of his dancing in an appeal to a notion of 'Immediate Perception':

Dunn's Hypothesis of Immediate Perception asserts the unproven assumption that each of us has a direct line to an involuntary receiving system sensitive to the dynamics, textures, colors, temperatures, actions, images and feelings that surround us during every waking minute; that therefore, the experience of watching with interest an ant crawl up a tree is transferable to watching a dancer make a move you've not seen before (1999:41).

Dunn asserts that dancing is on a continuum with other non-theatrical things; it is not an abstraction from the everyday, as Martin would argue, but '...is something added to it' (ibid). Dunn's 'hypothesis' conflates movement in and outside the theatre. Like Cunningham and Cage, Dunn enlists a universal, ahistoric notion of kinaesthesia in support of an avant-garde artistic practice. His rhetorical strategy restates and intensifies Cage's suppression of the effects of the history of theatrical spectatorship upon the perception of movement as dance. Dunn does not seek to account for the socially and historically specific conditions of viewing that might determine the acceptance or

otherwise of movement as dance.⁴⁸ Dunn's version of Martin's theory of dance communication hypothesises 'an involuntary receiving system' and thus further dehumanises and abstracts kinaesthesia, not only in art but also in everyday life.

Yvonne Rainer has also pointed to an exclusionary dynamic operating within the Cagean aesthetic of detachment with its apolitical contemplation of the value of the everyday. In her essay "Looking Myself in the Mouth" published in the journal *October* in 1981, Rainer acknowledges her own artistic indebtedness to Cage and the considerable expansion in the possibilities of art-making consequent upon Cagean methods of non-hierarchical, indeterminate organisation. However, she is troubled by certain implications of his ideas. She cites this passage from *Silence*, a collection of Cage's lectures and writings:

The novelty of our work derives therefore from our having moved away from simply private human concerns towards the world of nature and society of which all of us are a part. Our intention is to affirm this life, not to bring order out of chaos nor to suggest improvements in creation, but simply to wake up to the very life we're living, which is so excellent once one gets one's mind and one's desires out of its way and lets it act of its own accord (Cage 1961:95).

Rainer suggests that Cage's influential poetics, with its radical rejection of the personal, of narrative and history, has an ideological force which suppresses social and political questions. Interrogating Cage's advocacy of an art of indeterminacy which might be practiced by everyone, an art existing in the gap between art and life, Rainer poses the question 'Whose life is so excellent and at what cost to others?'

To perceive the aesthetic within daily life may be a politically emancipatory act, just as the presence of the everyday within art objects and practices may presage a reformulation of traditional class affiliations of art.⁴⁹ However, Rainer's critique suggests that the dissolution of the conceptual divide between aesthetic and mundane life proposed by Cage is effected through an appeal to a disinterested aesthetic stance and that this stance, as Bourdieu has argued, is predicated upon social privilege. Rainer's critical engagement with Cage's aesthetics complicates his identification of kinaesthesia as a pre-cultural zone of perceptual freedom, which is accessible to all. She highlights a tension, also elaborated

⁴⁸ Admittedly, Dunn is not claiming to propound a new theory of dance reception but is exploiting an existing premise to particular ends. The capitalisation of terms in Dunn's text does perhaps indicate a measure of ironic distance and not a simple recapitulation of Martin's thesis.

⁴⁹ Bourdieu makes this point in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*.

by Henri Lefebvre, between the socially conservative and the utopian dimensions of the category of the everyday. It is to Lefebvre's conceptualisation of everyday life that I now turn.

3.3. Everyday life and everyday bodies as conceptual entities

Sometime in 1946, the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre discovered the quotidian. He discovered it, that is, in the sense that he proclaimed that most insignificant of categories, the everyday, to be worthy of theoretical attention (Ross 1997:3).

Kirsten Ross's editorial essay "French Quotidian" in *The Art of the Everyday* outlines the groundbreaking work of philosopher and historian Henri Lefebvre and traces the influence upon contemporary art practice of his investigation of everyday life. In a series of books written between 1940 and 1950, Henri Lefebvre foregrounded everyday life as a space of analysis. The continuing intellectual significance of Lefebvre's critique is that it identifies an undeniable body of experience — our own in relation to the society in which we live — and challenges its natural, given status. As Michael Trebitsch notes in his preface to the 1991 edition of Lefebvre's *Critique of Everyday Life*, 'The shape and content of our lives is the product of a number of decisions in which we do not participate and about which we may not be aware. It is not that Lefebvre politicises everyday life; rather he unveils its ideological structure' (1991:xv).

According to Lefebvre, everyday life is deeply ambiguous. He writes: 'It is the residuum (of all possible specific and specialised activities outside social experience) and the product of society in general; it is the point of delicate balance and that where imbalance threatens' (1984:32). Everyday life has a negative aspect, representing all that is trivial and banal, the dreary unfolding of repetitious activity, of rote existence. However, even at its most degraded, for Lefebvre 'the everyday harbours the possibility of its own transformation' notes Ross (1997:5).

Lefebvre's complex formulation of everyday life is a critical response to the objectifying tendencies of modernity. In *Critique of Everyday Life* he makes it clear that to formulate the everyday as a concept is to separate it from the continuum that it is embedded in, and so to endow it with an historical dimension. The objective of Lefebvre's critique of everyday life is not simply to produce knowledge of daily life, but knowledge of the means to transform it.

The interest in the everyday which has emerged in recent theoretical studies of the body and in a number of avant-garde dance practices has a similar critical dimension. In the

discussion which follows I will argue that attention to the body produces knowledge which has a transformative potential. My purpose here is to begin to explore the provocation which the realm of the everyday offers to dance, that is, as Alan Read writes, 'when the everyday itself is taken to be an identifiable set of practices which have more or less logic' (1993:103).⁵⁰

Although the body is not an explicit object of interest in Lefebvre's earliest writings on everyday life, in a later work, *The Production of Space* he directly reflects upon the fate of the body within the discipline of philosophy:

Western philosophy has betrayed the body; it has actively participated in the great process of metaphorization that has abandoned the body, and it has denied the body. The living body, being at once 'subject' and 'object', cannot tolerate such conceptual division, and consequently philosophical concepts fall into the category of the 'signs of non-body' (1991b: 407).

He proposes a new approach to theoretical thought proceeding from recognition of the body. The body, being both and at once subject and object, is posited as 'beyond philosophy, beyond discourse'. Theoretical thinking is beginning to take account of the store of 'non-formal knowledge embedded in arts of music, dance, poetry and theatre' (ibid), Lefebvre avers. It is to this realm of embodied, non-formal knowledge, and to the functioning of what Bourdieu terms 'practical logic', that I now turn.

The fundamental objective of Lefebvre's research into everyday life was to 'refute the distinctions between philosophical and non-philosophical, superior and inferior, spiritual and material, theoretical and practical' (1991b: 407). The everyday cannot be easily conceptualised or categorised; it may be described perhaps but as an entity its function is to obstruct the operation of objectification. The everyday impedes distillation and this is its value; its boundaries are porous; it is not discrete or autonomous. The presence of the everyday (the non-philosophical) within the realm of the philosophical precipitates an arena of theoretical thought that is beyond philosophy, argues Lefebvre (ibid).

In a similar spirit I wish to propose 'the pedestrian' as a conceptual entity. I will attempt to theorise the pedestrian as a critical term in dance discourse and as a possible site of resistance to the totalising impulse of mainstream dance history. The pedestrian is to dance aesthetics what the everyday is to philosophy; to include the pedestrian within dance is to subvert its conventional function as the outside or other of dance. The pedestrian is not an object, theme or style, but an operation. This representation of the

⁵⁰ This phrase and part of my argument here is drawn from Read's discussion of Lefebvre in *Theatre and Everyday Life: An Ethics of Performance* (1993).

pedestrian suggests that it is not reducible to the status of a supplement to existing dance practice (by way of new subject matter or new movement vocabulary). Rather I am proposing the pedestrian as a term which functions dynamically, as a 'declassifier' whose effect is to disable the binaries governing modernism in dance.

In this formulation of the pedestrian I am drawing upon Yve-Alain Bois's discussion of the notion of the *informe*, or formless, in the work of Georges Bataille. Bataille refuses to define the formless, but instead describes it in terms of its function, the work it does. The formless, writes Bois

... is not only an adjective having a given meaning, but a term that serves to bring things down (*declasse*) in the world. It is not so much a stable motif to which we can refer, a symbolizable theme, a given quality, as it is a term allowing one to operate a declassification, in the double sense of lowering and of taxonomic disorder ... It is a matter of locating certain operations that brush modernism against the grain ... these operations split off from modernism, insulting the very opposition of form and content (1997:18).

In this study the 'pedestrian' functions to confuse or disable entrenched oppositions upon which dance modernism is founded, in particular, the oppositions between dancers and non-dancers, dance movement and everyday movement and the choreographic schema and the performance. In order to further elaborate and substantiate my perception of the significance of the figure of the everyday or pedestrian body, I will now move to a consideration of the social aspects of embodiment as they have been theorised within the sociology and ethnography of Marcel Mauss and Pierre Bourdieu.

3.3.1 The embodiment of everyday life

Marcel Mauss's essay "Techniques of the Body" has been hailed as the first sustained meditation upon the ways society literally shapes human bodies. According to Levi-Strauss (1987:4), Mauss's ethnological research has had a profound impact on the orientation and development of the social sciences in the twentieth century. With "Techniques of the Body", first published in 1934, Mauss opened up the territory of body techniques and practices as a crucial new ground of inquiry into the relation between the individual and the group. For Levi-Strauss, Mauss's unique contribution to the development of the fields of ethnography and sociology was to bring together the social and psychological. Mauss's work on the body points to the necessity of research and dialogue across disciplinary divides. His linking of ethnography, sociology and psychoanalysis foreshadows the developments in interdisciplinary research and scholarship, which have come to characterise the fields of cultural studies and feminist theory in the late twentieth century.

Mauss's study outlines the manner in which societies are embodied in daily life through the imposition of a rigorously determined use of the body upon individuals. He catalogues the remarkable variety of bodily techniques across cultures, from swimming to sex, and in so doing indicates how profoundly each society is inscribed on and taken up through the bodies of its members. It is within the context of this preliminary survey of bodily techniques that the term 'habitus' is adopted by Mauss to delineate the ways in which bodies are both shaped by and expressive of social structures. The term is later taken up by Bourdieu.

Habitus is etymologically linked to both habit and inhabit. Understood as the incorporation and reproduction of socially determined parameters of bodily comportment and behaviour, habitus has a constraining aspect. However it is also that which enables and sustains communal life. It is something one dwells within, the basis of sociality and the ground of signification. In a speculative description of the constitution and elaboration of the habitus, Mauss enjoins his reader to a 'triple viewpoint'. The habitus cannot be reduced to an order of mechanical or biological necessity; neither can it be understood purely in psychological terms. Mauss describes the psychological element as a cogwheel that connects the social and the biological. In addressing the question of how this social constitution of the body is effected, Mauss points to the role of desire in the taking up or imitation of action. Bodily techniques are learned as much by imitation as through direct training or instruction. Series of actions are 'assembled by and for social authority' Mauss writes, indicating that processes of habit formation or bodily identification are psychologically and socially determined. Mauss did not develop to any great degree his notion of the role of identification in the constitution of the habitus, but psychoanalytic concepts offer some useful perspectives upon this process. Laplanche and Pontalis in *The Language of Psychoanalysis* define identification in this way:

The psychological process whereby a subject assimilates an aspect, property, or attribute of the other and is transformed wholly or partially, after the model the other provides. It is by means of a series of identifications that the personality is constituted and specified (1973:205.).

Subjectivity is formed in 'the crucible of identifications', to borrow performance theorist Elin Diamond's turn of phrase (1992:392). Identification, as psychological process, is partially unconscious, and therefore not completely or immediately accessible to reason. Aspects of valued others — Mauss's term is 'prestigious persons' — are taken up, incorporated, as the more or less unconscious bodily basis of the subject. Psychological processes of identification are substantialised and enacted through precise techniques of the

body and these bodily identifications are an effect of desire insofar as determinations of value and prestige are sensitive to both psychic and social factors.

Interestingly, in Mauss's view the habitus does not represent a unification of the psychological, biological and sociological. The habitus is constituted by three elements, 'indissolubly mixed together' and functioning as 'physio-psycho-sociological assemblages'. The term assemblage implies an incomplete synthesis; the physiological, psychological and social aspects of bodily comportment, movement and gesture may be 'indissolubly mixed' but they are neither unified nor equally weighted. This conceptualisation of habitus as an assemblage implies a degree of lability or instability. The determination of the habitus is socially mandated but not absolute in its effects. The inherent instability of the habitus-assemblage must be countermanded by ongoing practice and repeated reinforcement. The habitus is thus temporal, an activity in time, and not merely, or only, an historical structure; it is an ongoing process of embodiment not an unvarying, static form of embodied subjectivity. The automatic, habitual, unconscious mode of being characteristic of everyday life and the temporal persistence of identifying 'movement signatures' (van Zile 1989)⁵¹ is an achievement of (ongoing) practice.

In the context of an ethnographic study of the Algerian Kabyle, Bourdieu further develops the concept of habitus as a key to understanding the mechanisms by which social structures are formed, reproduced and transformed in relation to social agents. For Bourdieu, social agents are creative strategists who not only inherit and recreate but also transform the structuring structures of their social milieu. Bourdieu observes that habitus is not only the effect of social structure but is the principle of its reproduction. As Bourdieu explains, a habitus consists of

systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without in any way being the product of obedience to rules (1977:72).

The body is fundamental to the social effectiveness and temporal persistence of these structuring structures; the habitus is the means whereby the symbolic universe is incorporated and expressed by the body. Social meanings, the distinctions of social class, ethnicity and gender, are inculcated through the postures, movements, habitual gestures and expressions of daily life. Mastery of the body (bodily competence) is the process by

⁵¹ Ethnomusicologist Judy Van Zile uses the term 'movement signature' to describe the unique and persistent patterns of posture, gesture and movement which distinguish individuals (1989:9).

which social meanings are incorporated, expressed and reproduced through time. Through his or her mastery of all the trivial and seemingly innocuous details of everyday life (table manners, deportment, dress etc) the child develops the capacities necessary to act in and on the world. Bourdieu describes this process in dialectical terms as 'the appropriating of a body thus enabled to appropriate the world' (1977:89). The process by which the body is appropriated and in turn, appropriating, is Bourdieu recognises, a gendered process and a process of gendering. He writes:

The child constructs its sexual identity, a central aspect of its social identity, at the same time as it constructs its representation of the division of labour between the sexes, on the basis of the same socially defined set of indissolubly biological and sexual indices.

In other words, the growth of awareness of sexual identity and the incorporation of the dispositions associated with a particular social definition of the social functions assigned to men and women come hand in hand with the adoption of a socially defined vision of the sexual division of labour (1990:78).

Everyday bodily techniques of standing, sitting, speaking and walking are sexually differentiated and differentiating; habitus are constitutive structures which tend to naturalise and de-historicise gender and class distinctions. The acquisition of these gendered and classed dispositions occurs largely below consciousness. The process of identification is a mimetic one, involving 'total investment and deep emotional identification'.

The process of acquisition — a practical *mimesis* (or mimeticism) which implies an overall relation of identification and has nothing in common with an imitation that would presuppose a conscious effort to reproduce a gesture, an utterance or an object explicitly constituted as a model — and the process of reproduction - a practical reactivation which is opposed to both memory and knowledge — tend to take place below the level of consciousness, expression and the reflexive distance which these presuppose (1990:74).

The ideas and relations of the social world structure and permeate our perceptual apparatus, and generate 'a certain subjective experience' (1977: 87). Rejecting the notion of human cognition and perception as innate or biologically determined, Bourdieu argues that 'mental structures through which (agents) apprehend the social world are essentially

the product of an internalization of the structures of the social world'. The relationship between embodiment and perception entails social and political processes, as much as physiological ones. In emphasising the deep grammar of bodily hexis, Bourdieu identifies the crucial role of the body in all signifying practices.

Bourdieu also notes the conservative tendencies of the habitus, that is, the way it structures new experience 'in accordance with the structures produced by past experiences' (1977:60). The habitus tends to protect itself from challenges through 'non-conscious and unwilling' avoidance strategies; it seeks situations that will reinforce, not challenge its dispositions. We are unconscious of the historically sedimented nature of bodily dispositions, he suggests.

The habitus — embodied history, internalised as second nature and so forgotten as history — is the active presence of the whole past of which it is a product. As such it is what gives practices their relative autonomy with respect to external determinations of the immediate present (1990:57).

One of the implications of Bourdieu's conceptualisation of the habitus is that social or political change involves changing what one is at the level of the body. 'What is "learned by body" is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something one is', he writes (1990:73). But how is the difficult task of changing what one is to be approached? The foregoing discussion indicates the potential difficulty of intervention and the relative intractability of a politics that is always, already embodied.

In their commentary upon *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Don Miller and Jan Branson suggest that Bourdieu's notion of the habitus is not as static as it first may seem. To perceive the reproductive role of habitus as socially and politically conservative is incorrect they argue. Such a misconception stems from a failure to recognise the profoundly dialectical nature of Bourdieu's writings on habitus. They note that

Those who see inflexibility in the concept of reproduction fail to grasp Bourdieu's meaning that it is 'transformation within a mode'. These transformations concern not the reproduction of specific values, roles or relationships, but of a *very* general and variable style of behaviour, a style capable of wide-ranging change and variation limited nevertheless by the broad structure that encompasses that mode or style (1987:223-4).

Dance training is a 'learning by body' which entails the systematic cultivation of precisely defined bodily competences. These competencies, once mastered, function as more or less habitual styles of behaviour but as dancers know, these 'styles' can be modified and varied

if not completely transformed. Bourdieu's representation of the constitutive role of habitus in the life of the individual and in processes of social consolidation and social change has resonance for dancers who engage this dialectic on a regular, if not daily, basis.

3.3.2 Dancing, habitus and social change

Dance scholar Evan Alderson has asserted that the social significance of dance lies in its articulation and elaboration of exemplary styles of 'being body'. Dance training and performance provide occasion for experiment with different styles of embodiment — they are arenas for research into the constitution of habitus and ways of producing it differently. Alderson writes:

If a way of moving constructs a way of being, and if dance plays with ways of moving with the deeply serious intention of trying on ways of being, and so creating them, it also has the power to invoke those ways with particular social force.⁵²

As an art of the body, dance has a dual aspect. To represent dance experience as a play of habitus is to recognise its role as both conventional and constitutive. Citing the work of Judith Butler, Alderson notes that 'the everyday body is also performed, also constitutive and always deeply inflected by convention'. The dancing body is 'twice written'. Once we understand ordinary bodies as 'accomplishments of style', dance becomes an elaboration of that accomplishment. Dance performance intensifies and amplifies habitus and thus has the capacity to affirm styles of embodiment and valorise the social construction of the body.

Dance anthropologist Jane K. Cowan, also draws upon Bourdieu's insights concerning the reproductive nature of the habitus to raise the question of the role of individual agency in social change. She asks in what contexts individuals might become aware of the social and historical contingency of their bodies and selves. The focus of Cowan's research is the social construction of gender within the 'non-ordinary' contexts of dance and dancing. Her study is of a Greek Macedonian community in Sohos, Northern Greece where dance in both formal and informal settings is an important locus of social action and experience. According to Cowan, 'entering the dance', either metaphorically, in discourse, or literally as a participant-dancer is an inherently ambiguous experience:

Dance is associated with control by others ('being danced') but also with freedom; suffering but also release; sociability but also

⁵² From an unpublished paper, 'Dance as a Symbolic of Embodiment', presented to the IAPL conference, University of California, Irvine, April, 1990

competition; display but also exposure; sensuality but also the potential for loss of status; power but also vulnerability; expressions of individuality but also of social accountability. And the dance-event itself — that is, the ensemble of practices that compose it ...— is a place where these themes are expressed and explored (1990:21).

As Alderson states, dance calls attention to embodied human presence and focuses perception upon kinetic experience. Dance-events, which are set apart from everyday life, are occasions in which individuals experience a heightened degree of reflexivity in relation to their own bodies and movement. Cowan portrays the dance-event as both highly structured and socially dynamic. Distinguishing her approach from the structuralist methods that have dominated dance ethnography⁵³ Cowan argues that dancing needs to be approached as a process of intersubjectivity. The body in dance is not only a sign to be deciphered but is a site of experience and agency. Dance is not only a spectacle which can be subjected to semiotic analysis but is a dynamic social situation in which participants embody and explore multiple and at times contradictory ideologies of gender and class. The framing of the moving body in dance distinguishes it from the taken for granted dispositions and practices of the everyday (1990:234). Cowan suggests that the framing of the dance effects specific displacements of everyday habitus. For example, the disposition and comportment of the Sohoan woman-as-dancer, although circumscribed by social convention is not identical with that brought to bear upon and exercised within the activities and interactions of her everyday life.

Cowan describes the dance space as one in which the rules and conventions governing everyday gender behaviour may be explicitly contradicted, within certain limits. If dance is a sphere of gender exploration and transformation it needs to be recognised that the transformation it offers is 'within a mode'. Cowan:

⁵³ Cowan notes the focus on classification and identification of structural and morphological features of dances in ethnographic literature eg. Drid Williams (1978).

Dance-events are bounded spheres, and it is by pushing at or playing with this boundary between the dance and everyday life that a man finds out what it is to be a male and a woman what it is to be female. They discover, I emphasize, *not* what to be male or female 'is' in any essential or metaphysical sense, but what it means or implies given the ideas and relations of gender dominant in Sohos today (1990:236).

Dance is problematic for men and women, but in different ways. As Cowan notes, 'male and female dancing bodies are read in different, gendered ways' and dance presents different problems and pleasures for the men and women 'who both "are" and "have" these bodies' (ibid). My principle concern in this thesis study is to investigate some of the implications of dance experience for female subjects; therefore the remainder of my discussion will centre upon Cowan's insights about women and girls.

In notable contrast to Sohoan everyday life, the dance-event is a site where girls' expression of their sexuality is encouraged and appreciated.⁵⁴ However this permission to draw attention to themselves in the public arena of the dance has contradictory implications for Sohoan girls. The girl is invited, even encouraged, to act in ways that, if misinterpreted, may have severe social consequences for her and Cowan is careful not to overstate the potential freedoms of dance and dancing. Dance is an arena of creativity and innovation but also of convention, norms and sanctions (ibid: 234). The dance event may be set apart, but it remains embedded within the social relations of everyday life. She notes that,

Although the dance-event as a framed event is ideologically set apart, this frame is 'permeable'. Just as the everyday social relations enter inside the frame and affect what happens there, so can the consequences of activities inside the frame spill out into everyday life (ibid: 199).

Cowan is here reflecting upon the risks attendant upon taking up the liberties offered by dance and dancing. The social consequences of transgressive actions can negatively impact upon life outside the dance-event. Notwithstanding this caution, Cowan's discussion suggests that the experience of self transcendence which dancing provides holds particular value and meaning for women. At issue here is the interaction between

⁵⁴ Cowan notes: 'In dance-events the female individual as celebrant and dancer is invited to act in ways she would not in public contexts of everyday life. Far from being asked to deny her sexuality, in this context she is encouraged to display her beauty, energy, skill, sensuality and even seductiveness. She is encouraged, one might say, to "make a spectacle of herself" (1990:190).

everyday and dancing bodies, and processes of personal and social change. A detailed account of the methods and processes by which personal and social change might be sought and accomplished within Western experimental dance traditions must be deferred until a later chapter. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to a preliminary investigation of the relationship between everyday comportment and the habitus of the dancer within the specific setting of the radical dance enclaves of New York City during the 1960s.

3.4 Everyday movement and everyday bodies in American dance

There is nothing everyday about art. There is nothing everyday about dancing as art. And that is the extraordinary pleasure of seeing it (1965:22).

For critic and poet Edwin Denby⁵⁵ dance achieves the condition of art insofar as it is distant from daily life. To aspire to art is to escape the ambiguity, disorder and contingency of everyday events and actions.

'Seeing art is seeing an ordered and imaginary world, subjective, and concentrated' (1965:22), Denby writes in the title essay of *Dancers, Buildings and People in the Streets*. Writing from New York in the mid-sixties Denby is not insensitive to the new developments in dance practice occurring at that time. Although he insists upon the distinction between 'seeing in daily life' and 'seeing in the theatre', he recognises that daily life is 'wonderfully full of things to see' and writes appreciatively of what he perceives to be moments of dancing in daily life. He recognises and attentively records the beauty, intricacy and variety of gesture and movement in diverse settings and contexts — in styles of walking, in social dance and in the built environment of the city. In the care with which Denby describes everyday movement we might discern the perceptual acuity and critical generosity which dance critic Jill Johnson later dubbed 'a way of looking', an active attention that 'renders things performance' (1971:137). Denby remains committed to the identification and celebration of the distinctive properties of the work of art and although the everyday features in Denby's reflections upon the art of dance, its representation within his overall corpus is slight. It is with a younger generation of dance writers and reviewers that the everyday achieves some prominence.

⁵⁵ Denby was a dance critic and poet, well known, according to Banes (1983:56) for his 'appreciation of the refined dance idioms of George Balanchine and Merce Cunningham'. Mentor for many dance critics, he was credited with the founding of a new 'school' of descriptive criticism.

From the perspective of American modernism the 'everyday' enters dance as an object of significant critical interest during the nineteen sixties. According to Sally Banes, choreographic interest in the realm of the everyday and the anti-illusionist concern with movement *qua* movement was a response to new realms of philosophical inquiry emerging in post war America, specifically existentialism:

The philosophical fascinations with Zen Buddhism, existentialism, and phenomenology fit well with certain aspects of American art in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The concreteness of existence, the interest in the everyday actions people practice, the questions of identity, both individual and collective that were the topics of these philosophical systems.... were appropriate questions for modernist artists after the middle of the twentieth century (1983: xvi.).

In this account, the everyday comes somewhat stripped of the political coloration which has defined it in the post war European context. The depoliticised representation of the everyday within postmodern dance may reflect particular tendencies within dance history as discipline as Franko argues, but it is also part of a wider cultural phenomenon.

Postmodern geographer David Harvey suggests that the relative depoliticisation of modernist thinking may be traced to the unique socio-political setting in which international modernism took root in America. Whilst reiterating the broad correlation between urban experience and modernist thought and practice, Harvey argues that the specific nature of the relationship between modernity and modernism has varied considerably from place to place. The influence of intellectual and aesthetic modernism upon the social changes wrought by rapid modernisation and urbanisation was more pronounced in European centres Harvey argues. In Europe, modernisation under capitalist modes of production met with strenuous class and traditional resistance. Harvey identifies this resistance to change as both feudal and aristocratic.

The fierce class and traditional resistances to capitalist modernization in Europe... made the intellectual and aesthetic movements of modernism much more important as a cutting edge of social change, giving to the (European) avant garde a political and social role broadly denied them in the United States until after 1945 (1989:27).

Rita Felski has also commented upon the fundamental differences between Anglo-American and European engagements with modernism. In the introductory chapter to her book *The Gender of Modernity*, she notes that within European countries such as France,

Italy, Germany and Russia, formal artistic experimentation 'was frequently linked to an explicit social agenda by both practitioners and critics; radical aesthetics was intimately intertwined with avant-garde politics' (1989:23). Contrastingly, within the Anglo-American context 'modernism has often been defined in opposition to socio-political concerns, as critics have invoked the subtleties of modernist experimentation to defend an ideal of the autonomous, self-referential art object' (ibid:23).

If the dominant current of American modernism once linked an ideology of artistic autonomy with what Felski terms 'conservative and quietist politics' this nexus has been significantly challenged in the late twentieth century. The editors of *October* magazine have described the 1960s as one such period of challenge in which 'the modernist canon, the forms and categories that had defined and elucidated it, were everywhere in question' (Krauss, Michelson et al.1987: ix). This was a moment in history when artistic and political radicalism coalesced in a struggle to revolutionise cultural practices — when 'artistic practice was linked with critical theory, towards the project of social renewal and reconstruction' (Krauss 1987:ix). Arguably one of the most significant loci of artistic and social experimentation in this time was the Judson Dance Theater.

In *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theater, 1962-1964*, Sally Banes's comprehensive account of the intense period of performance experimentation centred upon the Judson Dance Theatre, the egalitarian, collaborative working style of the Judson group is characterised as a form of democracy in action. Judson was a part of, and conditioned by, a period of social foment, when the American version of democracy was fundamentally challenged and subjected to intense scrutiny. If Judson was a form of the body of democracy I would contend that this body was not harmonious or integrated (as the term egalitarianism might imply) but a site of struggle and conflict. As has been widely recognised, the Judson aesthetic revolution was inseparable from the social revolution within which it was situated. Banes's summation of the innovations of the Judson era reflects this interdependence of social, political and artistic concerns. She describes the distinguishing features of the Judson experiment as follows: commitment to democratic or collective process, the use of vernacular materials, an interest in process rather than product, dissolution of disciplinary barriers between art forms, breakdown of the barriers between art and daily life and exploration of new relationships between artist and audience.

Shifts in discursive ground throughout the twentieth century have allowed for divergent approaches to the quotidian. Performers have negotiated the link between the everyday, the social and the political in very different ways. Cunningham declared that 'Dancing can be about anything but is fundamentally and primarily about the human body and its movements, beginning with walking' (Banes 1980:6), and went on to rigorously explore

that principle through a highly technical form of dancing. In his choreographic practice the everyday is reframed through various methods of distanciation which effect a separation between dance and daily life. Rejecting in large measure Cunningham's interest in technical refinement, the Judson group drew upon and radicalised Cunningham's identification of everyday movement as the basis for dance. Members of the Judson Dance Theater embraced the 'unenhanced physicality' of the non-dancer and the spontaneity of unrehearsed and unscripted movement.

Steve Paxton and Yvonne Rainer exemplify two contrasting engagements with the various aspects of the everyday, ordinary movement and untrained performers. Rainer's is a political engaged practice. Her famous 'no' dictum restates elements of Brecht's anti-illusionist aesthetic, the political intent of which was to bring to the foreground the realm of everyday life. Rainer has written of her wariness about choreographic authority and her desire to eliminate the hierarchies that have traditionally governed dance practice (1974:109). Rainer's engagement with different ways of generating movement such as aleatory procedures, scores, game structures and task based activities facilitated a choreographic exploration which could be effected by trained and untrained performers alike. She sought to systematically eradicate hierarchical relations as they arose in different aspects of her choreographic inquiry — in the relation between choreographer and dancer, dancers and non-dancers, dance movement and other task-like or everyday action, significant and insignificant materials. In her seminal essay "Quasi Survey of Some Minimalist Tendencies..." Rainer outlines the reasons for her rejection of the dancer's specialised image in favour of an engagement with the everyday. She writes:

The display of technical virtuosity and the display of the dancer's specialized body no longer make any sense. Dancers have been driven to search for an alternative context that allows for a more matter-of-fact, more concrete, more banal quality of physical being in performance, a context wherein people are engaged in actions and movements making a less spectacular demand on the body and in which skill is hard to locate (1974: 65).

Such a perspective questions the need for systematised, codified systems of dance training; it also ascribes value to a matter-of-fact or pedestrian quality of physical being in performance.

Paxton's attraction to the everyday has a rather different orientation and intention. Paxton recently recreated a number of his early works for the White Oak Dance Company. In this

excerpt from a note to the company Paxton reflects upon his enduring interest in the realm of the everyday and ordinary movement:

It is difficult to reasonably justify this obsession (with 'ordinary movement'), because to do so requires something like an appeal to the mystical, that area which is by definition beyond words ... yet I and several of my colleagues were enamoured of the concept: and although we spoke of it, I can't recall any conversation where we managed to really pin down the allure of the ordinary. Having written that, it seems obvious that ordinary movement would have no allure. Allure was embedded in the mirrored technique classes, the accepted glamour of the dance world of the times. Ordinary movement was barely noticed activity embedded in one's environment (here, reference to the mystical, the parable about the fish being unconscious of water) (2001:37).

Paxton goes on to elucidate the function of dance technique as the means by which a dance student is enabled and empowered to give form to the 'customary dance of their culture' (ibid: 37). He describes this process of the reproduction of culture through dance as a 'precious legacy' which is embodied in 'the steps, their organisation, and the way we learn them' (ibid). Paxton's interest in ordinary movement was precipitated by a different perspective upon cultural inheritance:

Cultural legacies, however, can be confining. My inquiry was not so much about escaping the legacy of dance as discovering the source of it. Where was something pre-legacy, pre-cultural, pre-artistic? Where was ancient movement? This was the fascinating question of those days for me, and remains my interest (2000:37).

As it has been represented by Lefebvre, the everyday is complex and contradictory: it is the realm of repetition and habit, but it is also the domain and subject of utopian social praxis. The modes of attention to the everyday outlined above exemplify two contrasting forms of utopian social praxis — one concerned with articulating and eliminating domination; the other seeking within the everyday the 'last remaining vestige of lost plenitude' ⁵⁶ What has been the impact of these artistic interventions upon dance theory and aesthetics and how is the everyday registered therein?

⁵⁶ Michael Trebisch, translator's Preface, in H. Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life* (1991: xxiv).

If the everyday (movement) is present in dance does it not threaten the very identity of the dance as art work? Selma Jeanne Cohen cites structuralist Roman Jakobson⁵⁷ to argue against this view, noting that a movement's identity or intelligibility as dance movement is determined by its role in a system of relationships. It is the choreographic system or structure 'that give(s) substance to otherwise insignificant materials' (1982:34). This formal treatment of everyday movement as mere grist for the choreographic mill defuses the political potential of the notion of the everyday. When the everyday is reduced to the status of 'raw material' the productive tension between the artwork and the social, which was so formative of earlier modernist dance innovation, is dissipated.

As a category of analysis the everyday suggests the possibility of an unravelling of the modernist dream of an autonomous aesthetic realm. However it could be argued that the everyday as registered in dance discourse has been recuperated and assimilated into modernist doxa. The social and political implications of the entry of the 'pedestrian' have been refused systematic critical treatment, notwithstanding the important contribution of Banes's seminal work, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*. Even the more circumscribed issue of the influence of everyday and ordinary movement upon contemporary dance remains relatively unexamined.⁵⁸ Although the political is not completely written out of historical accounts of postmodern dance, it is registered principally as content of a limited number of explicitly political or activist works by Rainer and Paxton.⁵⁹ Insofar as the 1960s focus upon everyday movement registers at all in the standard dance history texts it has become equated with an aesthetics of function broadly consistent with the modernist 'form follows function' dictum.

3.5. *The everyday as dance/performance content*

'Nothing happens': this definition of the everyday is often appended to films and literature in which the representation's substratum of content seems at variance with the duration accorded it. Too much celluloid, too many words, too much time, is devoted to 'nothing of interest' (1996:21).

Film theorist Ivene Margulies's discussion of critical and audience response to cinematic explorations of real time representation might aptly describe responses to minimalist dance works of the 1960s and '70s. The choreographic strategies of task-based or real time

⁵⁷ 'In poetry any verbal element is converted into a figure of poetic speech', Jakobson, cited in Cohen (1982:34).

⁵⁸ Jowitt's "The Heritage of the Seventies", *Writings on Dance* #18/19, (1999) provides a brief summary of the legacy of everyday movement.

⁵⁹ Banes cites Rainer's *Convalescent Dance* presented during Angry Arts Week 1967, *M-Walk* (1969) *WAR* (1969) Judson Flag Show and Paxton's *Intravenous Lecture*, *Beautiful Lecture* and *Collaboration with Wintersoldier* which addressed issues of censorship, the Vietnam War and political corruption.

action and extended duration, which produced the everyday as dance, have been well documented. The effects of these interventions upon performers and spectators are less well catalogued.

Margulies argues that one of the paradoxical effects of minimalist strategies in art is to intensify experiences of embodiment. In the context of her analysis of the 'hyperrealist' cinema of feminist filmmaker Chantal Akerman, Margulies describes the formative influence of American experimental dance and performance art. Margulies outlines two major formal tendencies in the art practices of the 1960s and '70s, both of which were committed to engaging the spectator's awareness of his or her own physicality and perception.

In the first, an excess of information, given through a multiple input of issues, shapes, gestures and media, divides one's attention ... Simultaneity — a co-presence of events, can effect a non-directed field of spectator response, frustrating the acknowledgement of authorship and intention. Spectatorial focus is dispersed over a fractured surface.

In the second, minimalist tendency, simplified shapes, single events and series of repeated images or forms seem both to block interpretation and to mock the immediacy of apprehension proposed in modernist art. The spectator's extended gaze displaces the burden of de-centering entirely on to his or her perceptual and physical relation to the art object (1996:51).

Margulies associates the work of Simone Forti, Yvonne Rainer and Merce Cunningham with the first tendency (simultaneity and information density); Paxton's interest in the presentation of single states or images and extended duration commends him to the second category.⁶⁰ Margulies draws attention to the ways in which experimental dance works, drawing upon a panoply of 'pedestrian techniques'⁶¹ such as walking, standing still and playing games, effected change in the spectator's perception by intensifying awareness of his or her own physical presence.

Influential writer and literary critic Susan Sontag is an eloquent advocate of the minimalist experiments of the 1960s. In her essay "The Aesthetics of Silence" published in 1969 she extols minimalist art strategies as offering means for 'improving the audience's experience'. She writes that 'programs for art's impoverishment' (1969:12) that

⁶⁰ Evident in works such as *State* (1968), a walking piece which incorporated two, three minute sections of standing still and *Flat* (1964) in which Paxton's action of undressing and dressing is punctuated by a series of still poses. *Flat* was recently restaged (May 2000, Danspace NYC).

⁶¹ Paxton uses this term to describe his choreographic investigation of standing, walking etc. *Theatre Papers Series* 1 1977.

is, the deliberate reduction of artistic means may, paradoxically, lead to a proliferation and differentiation of sensory pleasures. Minimalism is an antidote to the over-stimulation of modern urban life. By clearing a space of 'silence' it offers a return to fundamental experience and a reawakening of senses blunted by excess. Deborah Jowitt also affirms the role of minimalist dance practice in the project of perceptual renewal:

Most innovative choreographers, I think, are trying to bring dance closer to the forms and processes of contemporary life, to make it more accessible to us instead of less. They do not ask that our eyes operate differently - not really - or that our brains do anything unusual; what they do require sometimes is that we be willing to relax, or change our habitual ways of approaching something that is supposed to be ART (in Livet 1978:136).

We will need to return to Lefebvre in order to investigate how shifts in a spectator's perception may become linked to a politicised aesthetics and how engagement with everyday motility may become the basis of a cultural politics.

3.5.1 Women's everyday?

Lefebvre makes scant reference to the daily lives and experiences of women. However in an attempt (according to Margulies) to ground his notion of the quotidian in social specificity, he writes: 'Everyday life weighs heaviest on women. Some are bogged down by its peculiar cloying substance, while others escape into make-believe... They are the subjects of everyday life and its victims' (1984:73).

In a recent essay entitled "The Invention of Everyday Life" (2000), Felski surveys the literature of the everyday which has proliferated and diversified from Lefebvre's investigations. She notes the predominance of negative views of the quotidian and asks: 'Is it possible to think about the everyday in ways that do simply treat it as negative or residual?' (2000:80) The negative representation of the everyday as a realm of repetition and habit, which is closely linked to domestic space or the 'sense of home', makes explicit certain assumptions about gender and women's relationship to modernity, Felski argues. Felski's objective is to develop an alternative understanding of the everyday which is more positively reflective of women's experience. She investigates the supportive function of routine and repetition in daily life and describes how habit, understood as a somatic substrate of ritualised activity, may 'strengthen, comfort and provide meaning' (ibid:81). Her discussion is grounded in three key facets — time, space and bodily modality. These terms are also suggestive of a choreographic sensibility towards repetitive tasks.

The everyday is therefore a zone of repetition, inattention, and habit. These are precisely the terms Banes employs to delineate the domain of Simone Forti's dance research.

Introducing Forti's work she writes:

The ordinary adult body is a creature of habit, unconscious responses to physical stimuli, unadventurous routines. For the most part, we travel in a kinaesthetic rut, never even noticing the remarkably intricate changes that happen when we walk or run, reach up, sit, or lie down (1980:21).

Echoing Agnes Heller's observation concerning the pragmatic necessity of habit, Banes goes on to describe the impracticality of experimentation with habitual movement and action in the context of daily life. 'To take notice or to run experiments in everyday life would crowd our consciousness with details, making us nearly dysfunctional,' she notes (ibid). This is the arena of Simone Forti's choreographic interest. The events and happenings of everyday life offer movement qualities and images that can be taken into one's own body; the dance state — Forti's term for a state of 'enchantment' or immersion in the experience of moving — is not dependent upon the dance stage. Forti's close attention to the complexities and kinaesthetic richness of commonplace movement transforms the ordinary into the extra-ordinary.

The everyday has registered in postmodern dance in a variety of ways. Under modernism, dance has developed as a highly abstracted art. Consequently dancers' engagement with the everyday is not to be sought exclusively in moments of 'real life' as it might be represented in fields such as *cinema verite*. The everyday has also provoked new approaches to choreography and has influenced quite subtle issues of dance construction and performance, such as phrasing. Artists such as Yvonne Rainer and Trisha Brown experimented with the insertion of the rhythms of mundane action into and against the condensation and acceleration of theatrical time. Within her discussion of Akerman's cinematic representation of the domestic everyday, Marguelies notes that 'the inscription of subject matter neglected in traditional film tends to involve a corrective thrust' (1996:22). In Rainer's 'pedestrian' choreography the corrective thrust entails the insertion of vocabulary and subject matter previously neglected in dance. Rainer's choreographic oeuvre is unusual in its inclusion of elements of the domestic everyday,⁶² but more significant is her insertion of the neglected 'subject matter' of everyday movement, that is, a manner of doing and a relationship to context that is associated with pedestrian motility.

⁶² For example, the incorporation of a mattress and vacuum cleaner in her performance piece and later film *This is the Story of a Woman Who...* (1973).

In *Critique of Everyday Life*, Lefebvre seeks to elucidate the conditions operating against the individual and diminishing his or her quality of life. I am suggesting that the researches of avant garde dancers such as Forti and Rainer have been directed at an analysis and transformation of the conditions diminishing the quality of life experienced at the level of the body and further, that these bodily researches hold particular interest for women. While postmodern dance focused its investigation of the 'everyday' through the body how did it address issues of social specificity, and in particular, women's experience of their bodies?

In *Terpsichore in Sneakers* Banes offers a trenchant analysis of Rainer's choreography and its impact upon subsequent dance practice. For Banes, Rainer's most radical and influential innovation was in terms of syntax, that is, the relation of one movement to the next, and the temporal equality accorded both significant and insignificant events. Banes describes Rainer's four and a half minute work *Trio A* as a dance which 'violat(es) nearly every canon of classic dance conventions (both ballet and modern)' (1980:44). Of particular note is Rainer's critique of traditional dance phrasing and her systematic elimination of repetition and variation of movement materials. *Trio A* presents a constantly changing series of movements as a single phrase. It is performed with an uninflected distribution of energy; it has no suspense and no climax. Banes credits Rainer with the creation of an entirely new mode of dance that fundamentally challenges the association of dancing with virtuosity. *Trio A* has been performed by both highly trained dancers and non-dancers, and by Rainer in different physical conditions. The realisation of the work is not dependent on specialised skills but proceeds from what I am terming a pedestrian body. *Trio A* redefines dancing as an attribute of every body. Banes:

Trio A tells us of a world in which people use their bodies with skill, intelligence, coordination and economy. The skill it embodies is an unpretentious one which, though it requires effort and concentration, does not demand any special status or training for its proper performance. The dance speaks of a healthy, direct joy in the body's capabilities, in its powers of memory and organizational faculties, as well as 'its actual weight, mass, and unenhanced physicality' (1980:53).

Rainer identified dance as a zone of creative exploration which was not dominated by men and she was drawn to it, she states, because there she was free from direct competition with them. Her relationship with dancing was deeply ambivalent however and she set about reformulating its terms and values. Part of her choreographic project

was to re-envision the subject of dance. The program notes for the March 1968 premiere of *The Mind is a Muscle* included the following statement:

If my rage at the impoverishment of ideas, narcissism, and disguised sexual exhibitionism of most dancing can be considered puritan moralising, it is also true that I love the body — its actual weight, mass, and unenhanced physicality (1974:71).

What is the social significance of an art practice such as Rainer's, which is grounded in an unequivocal love for 'unenhanced physicality' — the pedestrian body? I have suggested earlier (via Gardner) that the ballet dancer's body is not a woman's body. Is the pedestrian body a woman's body? Or, to phrase the question differently, what might postmodern dance say about and to women? De Lauretis's discussion of Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman* (1975) suggests an approach, if not an answer to this complex question. *Jeanne Dielman* is a film about the routine daily activities of a middle aged, middle class housewife. It is, according to De Lauretis, a film where the pre-aesthetic or the pro-filmic is already fully aesthetic. This is so not because of any intrinsic beauty of its images, or the harmonious composition of its frames, asserts De Lauretis.

It is so because it is a woman's actions, gestures, body, and look that define the space of our vision, the temporality and rhythms of perception, the horizon of meaning available to the spectator ... What the film constructs — formally and stylistically, to be sure — is a picture of female experience of duration, of perception, events, relationships and silences, which feels immediately and unquestionably true. And in this sense the 'pre-aesthetic' is aesthetic rather than *aestheticized* (1987:131).

De Lauretis argues that women's cinema has proposed a new optics and a new mode of address. Akerman's film, *Jeanne Dielman*, is an example of a work which explicitly addresses the spectator as female and inserts into the discursive texture of cinema a previously untheorised realm of women's experience. The work of women choreographers and dancers has similarly brought about a revaluation of the kinaesthetics of performance. In *Trio A* Rainer produces the movement and gestures of the (female) pedestrian as always, already aesthetic. Akerman's reflections upon the feminist implication of her own engagement with the everyday resonates with Rainer's pedestrian poetics.

I do think it's a feminist film because I give space to things which were never, almost never, shown in that way, like the

daily gestures of a woman ... If you choose to show a woman's gestures so precisely, it's because you love them. In some way you recognize those gestures that have always been denied and ignored (Akerman in de Lauretis 1987:132).

3.6 The changing function of technique in modern and postmodern dance

I am not a dancer. I never danced a step in my life. I hate all dancing. All I see in what people call dancing is merely a useless agitation of the arms and legs. I don't like to look at stage dancing ... I am not a dancer. What I am interested in is finding and expressing a new form of life. (Duncan 1903/1981:118)

Within the context of an idealist aesthetic tradition, the dancer is conceptualised as an instrument of an idea or transcendental value. In the daily business of making dances, she is an instrument of the choreographer. The function of dance technique in a discipline such as ballet is both positive, that is producing quantifiable skills and abilities, and also negative — reducing elements of 'personality' or idiosyncratic behaviour which might detract from or otherwise present an obstacle to realisation of the choreographic idea.

Given the importance ascribed to technique as the means by which a performer establishes authority and legitimacy in relation to a tradition, it is pertinent to reflect upon the significance of Duncan's refusal of the identity 'dancer'. As Koritz has observed, the solo women artists of the early modern dance could not fully exploit the discourse of the transcendent universal, which had become the legitimising tenet of choreographic art. As I have suggested in Chapter 2, dance technique has a sublimating function; dance technique has often been conceived as a means whereby personal, subjective aspects of embodiment are transmuted and put to work in service of a 'higher' artistic purpose. Performing their own choreographies, female artists such as Duncan and Maud Allen could not easily be seen to embody an impersonal and instrumentalist relationship to their own dancing bodies.

The audacity of Duncan's disparagement of ballet technique and her assertion that her dance did not proceed from training ('I am not a dancer') has been somewhat ameliorated by dance historians who have looked for, and found, evidence of her participation in various forms of dance training. However, Duncan's disavowal of training had an important strategic function. A considered refusal of the academic tradition and of the schism already well entrenched in her lifetime as modernist doxa between (her) 'art' and

(her) 'life', Duncan's antipathetical stance created a space for a re-conceptualisation of the role and nature of dance training.

It is the dancer's discipline and her performance of submission to tradition which are the bases of dance's claims upon the universal. Criticisms of Duncan commonly focus upon her failure to pay proper attention to the medium in which she worked. Writing in the 1940s, Katherine Everett Gilbert in "Mind and Medium in Modern Dance" argues that Duncan was more concerned with 'mind', that is with the inspiration and origin of movement in a non-material source. 'Isadora's soul expressed itself fiercely without systematic submission to the conditions of a medium', writes Gilbert (Reprinted in Copeland & Cohen, 1983:230). Gilbert is supportive of developments in modern dance if not of Duncan. She contrasts Duncan's lack of physical discipline with the systematic approach of Rudolf von Laban. Laban formulated a 'grammar of motion' that provided modern dancers with the means of disciplining and channelling 'dance libido' into objectified form. Laban introduced the principle of tension and opposition as the governing dynamic of the modern dance in contrast to Duncan who had emphasised the organic flow of movement. Dance critic Rayner Heppenstall's earlier dismissal of Duncan's movement style also centred upon the quality of flow: 'There is no control. Everything is fluid, formless, natural, free, without style, melting away...' (1983: 279).

As I have noted above, writers such as Jowitt (1988) and Daly (1995), sensitive to the critical neglect of Duncan during the latter part of the twentieth century and keen to integrate Duncan's innovations into the mainstream of dance modernism, have documented her discipline and craft, identifying the ways in which she drew upon given traditions of dance, as well as adapting extra-theatrical physical techniques. Contrary to Gilbert's negative evaluation, Daly's careful analysis demonstrates that Duncan's interest in 'flow' was supported by technique: 'Duncan's dancing body was trained to move in very particular ways' notes Daly (1995:77). Paradoxically, flow, perceived by some critics as evidence of Duncan's lack of discipline, was produced and perfected through a precise, sustained attention to the body.

Daly's elucidation of the technical underpinnings of Duncan's dance is supported by her adoption of an expanded definition of technique as 'a consistent manner in which physical movements are made' (ibid). In the context of her discussion of Duncan's training regime Daly cites Marcel Mauss's definition of body techniques as 'the ways in which, from society to society men (sic) know how to use their bodies' (Mauss 1992: 455), suggesting that dance training engages and modifies everyday habitus. Daly also credits Duncan with the promotion of a changed conception of the role and function of technique: 'In modern dance, beginning with Duncan, technique serves as a functional support beneath style' (1995:70).

Duncan projected a vision of spontaneity and freedom from restraint. It was important for audiences to imagine that Duncan was free of technical training and that her dancing was independent of choreographic structure. The overt display of technique, with its concomitant image of control and mastery of the body, was inimical to Duncan's aesthetic and she deliberately de-emphasised the role of technique in the generation and presentation of her choreography. Her appeal to the women in her audiences was related to her ability to project dancing as a possibility of every body.

Under modernism, the author function in dance has encompassed texts and bodies; the modernist choreographer not only makes dances but also makes or 'authors' bodies. Later moderns such as Graham, Wigman, and Humphrey established professional studios and schools, and founded and developed precise techniques of moving. Manning has remarked that the modern dance gradually became codified in ways which conformed more closely to the formal values of ballet. The modern dance choreographer's vision was distilled, made explicit and impersonal and thus her technique could endure through time. In the light of these later developments in modern dance, Duncan's legacy has been judged to be an ambiguous one by Gilbert, Levinson and in a different register, Helen Thomas. Thomas acknowledges Duncan's social impact but judges her influence upon dance to be limited principally because Duncan did not establish an enduring technique. Through the formulation and codification of dance techniques the second generation of modern dancers established a basis for what Thomas terms 'cultural reproduction'. Jowitt's assessment of Duncan's legacy is rather more positive however. She writes:

Duncan herself left something to choreographers of the next generation: the idea that the body itself, and not just the choreographic scenario, ought to reflect the creator's private response to the world, and could be altered to do so (1988:102).

Duncan's failure to formalise her methodology can be interpreted as yet another manifestation of her thoroughgoing critique of the reproductive and stabilising role of received traditions of body discipline and training. She rejected the division between the dancer and non-dancing others which such disciplines establish. Duncan's innovation founded modern dance as a field of inquiry into different forms of habitus. Dance technique may be a means of exercising control over the body through the stabilisation and unification of bodily dispositions; for modern dancers however it may also present opportunities to imagine and explore different fabrications of the self.

Subsequent postmodern dance has continued the process of rethinking the role of training and the relationship between training and performance production that was begun with the early moderns. The postmodern dance of the 1960s reiterated Duncan's refusal of the

identity 'dancer' as dancers and choreographers rejected the authorising process of dance training and questioned the necessity of certain long established rituals like 'warming-up'. Steve Paxton has spoken of periods in his performance career when his preparation or warm-up for a performance consisted of the walk to the theatre from the subway. The improvisation group the Grand Union also functioned in this way.

In a recent article Deborah Jowitt (1999:102) identifies three practices which have most significantly altered art dance in the late twentieth century — Contact Improvisation, Skinner Releasing and associated Release techniques, and Simone Forti's animal studies. Contact began as a selecting and framing of certain kinds of raw, generic pedestrian movement.⁶³ Release-based techniques approach training as a process of undoing cultural inscription in order to learn how to move in a balanced, easeful way that is as applicable to daily life as to dance. Simone Forti has identified herself as part of a generation of dancers 'who started thinking of movement in a generic sense and turned away from technique' (1999:14). Feeling that the techniques available did not match the sense of her own body, Forti began to look for the roots of dance behaviour and moments of dancing in the movements of the everyday world; not only in the movements of people but in movements of animals and things.

All these practices presume a breakdown of the category of the dancer as elite specialist and an opening to the quotidian. Ordered but not codified they have become important resources for performers wishing to extend and challenge their corporeal habit without engaging the stylistics of specific dance forms. These new dance practices have been introduced in the present context of the 'everyday', but they will form the basis of more detailed discussion in Chapters 4 and 5.

3.7 Who dances? The pedestrian as performer

During a visit to Australia in 1993, American choreographer and dancer Douglas Dunn remarked upon the formation and changing constituency of the postmodern dance field during the 1960s and early 1970s in New York. Dunn was a member of the Cunningham Company between 1969 and 1973 and a performer with Yvonne Rainer and Grand Union. His current choreographic work is a wry, ironic commentary upon the modern and postmodern dance heritage pursued through a highly rigorous technical approach to dancing. In his presentation Dunn first described the impact of new, 'less extended', forms of dance upon established practice. As dancers of ballet and 'highly rigorous' forms of modern dance encountered emerging forms such as Contact Improvisation — they 'loosened up their attitudes and their dancing'. He then noted the fact that many people

⁶³ See Stark Smith's description of the seminal pre-contact work, *Magnesium*, in *Writings on Dance* #21, 2001/2 (forthcoming).

who had otherwise no connection to or prior interest in dance were drawn to these newly emerging performance practices:

They were people who never would have been attracted to dance. Just as I would probably not have danced if I had not met Cunningham because he established a kind of permission for me, to not have to be a character. A lot of people were waiting for permission and they took it when they saw it. A lot of people who ... have practiced (Contact) have been very uninterested in all the other forms of dance. But if that work hadn't existed they either would have invented it or they wouldn't have danced (1994:55).

The new forms of movement-based performance emerging during the 1970s were built upon the aesthetic innovations of dancers associated with the Judson Dance Theater. In a chapter entitled "Everyday Bodies" in *Time and the Dancing Image*, Jowitt offers a detailed account of the broad ramifications of the anti-elitist ideals governing the avant garde dance of the early 1960s. The entry of the pedestrian in the form of undancerly dancers and everyday actions provoked a profound questioning of the forms and categories of received practice, both performative and discursive. Anti-elitism meant among other things that the image of the professional dancer was subject to intense scrutiny and reappraisal. Jowitt notes a widespread resistance to the inscriptive practices of modern dance and ballet. The image of the dancer as an elite specialist was antithetical to the broad-based communitarian politics of the Judson era. Performers did engage in dance training of various kinds but their purpose in pursuing technique was, according to Jowitt, to 'keep fit' not to 'become a dancer'. 'Whether trained or untrained ... the bodies tended to look like those you'd meet on the street', Jowitt observes (1988:308). The notion of the dancer as a matter of fact worker persisted even as dances became more complex compositionally and technically. Dancers 'wanted to retain vestiges of that rough-around-the-edges look, that lack of a high-powered manner, that affirmation of human vulnerability once considered so shocking' (ibid: 337).

What is the ongoing significance of the pedestrian in dance? Does it have any contemporary currency? In dance the entry of the pedestrian was an index to the radicalisation of modernist dance practice during the 1960s. Assimilationist accounts of the effects of this period of experimentation speak in terms of the expansion, diversification and renewal of art dance. But here I wish to investigate the possibility of formation of an other, non-assimilating, discourse. The effect of the entry of the pedestrian could be described as precipitating a destabilisation of the field of dance. In

this construction, the term pedestrian does not signify merely the non-dancer; rather its function is to blur distinctions, in particular, the dancer/non-dancer, trained/untrained opposition upon which mainstream practice is founded. The presentation and theoretical elaboration of the concept of the pedestrian is however an unfinished project. By the 1980s the pedestrian as a critical category had been dispersed; if it exists at all today it might be found in various new /old genres of community dance, differently-abled dance, senior citizens dance, etcetera.⁶⁴

To reiterate: we can either assume that the entry of the pedestrian is a variation upon already established practice — in which case it will be compared and contrasted to 'dance-as-we-know-it'. It is situated in terms of tradition and (usually) judged as deficient, that is, lacking in certain crucial attributes and qualities.⁶⁵ An alternative approach might be to regard the entry of the pedestrian as a moment of rupture, in which the terms which have organised and regulated the discipline of dance are rendered null and void. Understood in this way the pedestrian cannot be assimilated; pedestrian actions are incommensurate with traditional dance values.

3.8 Choreographing the Pedestrian

John Berger writes about the phenomenon of the 'primitive', the non-professional and the non-sanctioned artist in his 1980 essay "The primitive and the professional". He makes the point that the 'primitive' artist refuses the conventions of professional practice because she understands that it cannot speak her interests. She recognises that her experience cannot be rendered in the language and terms of the available tradition. In a related essay,⁶⁶ Berger discusses the work of Millet, one of a number of socially and politically conscious artists of the nineteenth century, who attempted to introduce new subject matter and new social experience into the 'old' tradition of oil painting. Berger notes that despite the painter's skill he fails in his attempt to render in oil his chosen subject matter — the peasant's experience of and relation to land. He is defeated, Berger suggests, by the optics of the visual means he employs. That relation — of labour and 'close, hard, patient physicality' — is unrepresentable within the representational conventions Millet inherited.

⁶⁴ Dunn's somewhat jaundiced view of the expansion of non-dance movement practices in the 1980s and '90s reflects a concern with the ways in which non professional and community based forms of dance have taken up the outsider role, the other of mainstream dance. This development has had a negative impact upon ongoing tradition of avant-garde experimentation, especially in terms of available financial support. Ann Cooper Albright's *Choreographing Difference* (1997) suggests another, more positive response to the dispersal of the radical category of the pedestrian.

⁶⁵ Sondra Fraleigh's summary dismissal of postmodern dance as 'non-dance' which has a limited function as a challenge to and renewal of dance is relevant here, "There are some things in dance (as in all art) which can only be done once, after which they lose our interest.... "nondance" (a term used loosely before the postmodern label became prevalent) simply defined itself out of existence" (1987:130).

⁶⁶ "Millet and The Peasant" in *About Looking*, Berger (1980)

No iconographic formula existed for representing the peasant's experience of land and to invent one 'would mean destroying the traditional language for depicting scenic landscape' (ibid: 77).

As Berger argues, the so-called naive or 'primitive' artist is not socially or politically naive. They recognise that there is power in art and also that the means of access to this power are foreclosed to them⁶⁷

The primitive begins alone; he inherits no practice. Because of this the term *primitive* may appear at first to be justified. He does not use the pictorial grammar of the tradition — hence he is ungrammatical. He has not learnt the technical skills which have evolved with the conventions — hence he is clumsy. When he discovers on his own a solution to a pictorial problem, he often uses it many times — hence he is naive. But then one has to ask: why does he refuse the tradition? And the answer is only partly that he was born far away from that tradition. The effort necessary to begin painting or sculpting, in the social context in which he finds himself, is so great that it could well include visiting the museums. But it never does, at least in the beginning. Why? Because he knows already that his own lived experience which is forcing him to make art has no place in that tradition (1980:68).

An analogy can be drawn between the 'primitive' in art and what I am terming the 'pedestrian' in dance. Although an anachronistic gesture — the term pedestrian is associated with postmodern dance and not the pre-modern — I would describe Duncan's dance as one which is predicated upon a 'pedestrian body' for the following reasons. The academic tradition of ballet is foreclosed to Duncan for reasons that have been well enumerated by dance historians. Duncan's 'primitivism', that is her naive relation to academic tradition, is over-determined by social class, nationality and gender. She worked with what was to hand. In her own reckoning, she was a non-professional; she was not a dancer. Duncan refused conventional solutions to choreographic and performative problems and sought to invent and refine her own. As John Martin writes '... it was her ideal to find for every dance key movements, as it were, from which other movements would flow as of their own accord in fulfilment of the initial impulse. Here was the discovery of the motor phrase, and the realisation of the power of movement to evolve its own forms' (1965:226). The pedestrian dancer performs her lived experience and a

⁶⁷ For Berger class is the primary determinant; sex is equally significant as an exclusionary category.

relation to (her) body which cannot be rendered in the language of the established dance tradition.

In 1967 Steve Paxton first presented *Satisfyin' Lover*, a work for thirty-seven odd performers, requiring little rehearsal, no warm up and no specialised skills. In this choreography the author/choreographer function is attenuated almost to the point of disappearance. In *Satisfyin' Lover*, the work (the score) produces 'the pedestrian' as an attentive mobilisation of the everyday actions of walking, sitting and standing. The score is silent on questions of the status or identity of performers; the dancer / non-dancer distinction is not activated; it is irrelevant to the realisation of the work.

Let us for a moment look at this distinction between dancers and non-dancers, trained and untrained. Firstly, we might note that the term non-actor, sounds so odd — amateur actor, or non-professional is the more familiar term and it has a particular value, a social value, in amateur repertory groups as well as in specialised artistic contexts. The non-professional actor as an index of the authentic is highly regarded in the field of experimental film, for example. The absence of similarly nuanced terms in the field of dance tells us something about the constitution of the identity 'dancer'.

As has been discussed in Chapter 2, the discourse of ballet is constituted by that which it excludes. The everyday is the excluded substrate upon which the discipline of ballet is founded. The everyday is the outside, the residuum. The ballet, a classical theatre, transcends everyday life and the everyday physicality of untrained bodies. The distinction between movement in everyday life and movement in dance is a foundational one. This distinction continues under modernism; art dance is the occasion for the refinement, purification and elevation of human movement. Insofar as pedestrian movement enters dance it must be altered, transformed, imbued with kinaesthetic value. Cunningham draws the distinction in this way:

Certainly everyone can leap, sit down and get up again, but the dancer makes it apparent that the going into the air is what establishes the relationship to the air, the process of sitting down, not the position of being down, is what gives the moving quality to the dancing (1982:6).

Nineteen sixties postmodernism involved a strategic embrace of the residuum. All that is cut away and excluded in the formation of the theatre dance (by which I mean both ballet and modern dance) was taken up as the revalued ground of dancing. The everyday is the space of great complexity, contradiction and ambiguity; taken up as an aesthetic ideology, it unravels the modernist narrative of purity, distillation and clarity. It also unravels or destabilises the identity of the dancer.

Postmodern dance in this view is a dance grounded in 'ordinary bodies'; it embraces the concrete, the fallen and the contradictory. Discipline and control of the body may be exercised in postmodern dance but they are not central values as they are in ballet. Also postmodern dance, however specialised an individual practitioner may be, is conceptualised as fundamentally connected to community, to shared forms of physical expression and embodiment. The dance's currency, that is, its contemporary relevance and its claims to accessibility, rest upon its connectedness to immediate circumstance. It is a local and situated practice, contingent upon variously fashioned pedestrian bodies. Jill Johnston's review of *Satisfyin' Lover* celebrates the diversity of ordinary bodies in this way:

Thirty-two any old wonderful people ... walking one after the other across the gymnasium [at St Peter's Church on West Twentieth Street] in their any old clothes. The fat, the skinny, the medium, the slouched and slumped, the straight and tall, the bowlegged and knock-kneed, the awkward, the elegant, the coarse, the delicate, the pregnant, the virginal, the you name it, by implication every postural possibility in the postural spectrum, that's you and me in all our ordinary everyday who cares postural splendour. There is a way of looking at things that renders them performance (1971:137).

In watching *Satisfyin' Lover* I am not attending to a unified aesthetic object nor to a clarified re-presented identity but I am invited, in the aesthetised context/pretext of performance, to attend closely to behaviour and to the play of habitus, in all its detailed variety. It is evident, I think, in *Satisfyin' Lover*, that the pedestrian is not a 'natural' body, a body outside of discourse. On the contrary, the pedestrian is profoundly social; its connectedness to daily life is explicit.

This choreography of the pedestrian produces an intimate space. It is not distance but proximity, the space of the salon or the studio, which promotes the perception of otherness, of the deep strangeness of the other and of the alterity within the everyday. To return to the distinction Denby makes between 'seeing daily life' and 'seeing art',

For myself I make a distinction between seeing daily life and seeing art. Not that seeing is different. Seeing is the same. But seeing art is seeing an ordered and imaginary world, subjective, and concentrated (Denby 1965:21).

In her dance criticism, Jill Johnson identifies art not only or exclusively as an aesthetic object. She writes of 'a way of looking' that transforms its object; 'seeing' is productive,

modified or charged by context. For Johnston the recognition of art lies with the spectator and the constitutive, active nature of their perception. Theatre may intensify the experience of being produced as an object and as a representation, but the figure of the pedestrian, as discussed in this chapter, is a point of resistance to this process of objectification. The choreography of the pedestrian thus makes an issue of the audience; the work is not, or not only, in the body of the performer; the work and its effects, be they perceptions of beauty, interest, aversion etc., are activated and produced between spectator and actor.

The significance of the entry of the pedestrian onto the dance stage, however that 'stage' might be conceived, means not only that (ordinary) actions are transformed and given value — this being the orthodox reading in the dance aesthetics of Selma Jeanne Cohen and others — but also that a possibility exists for a re-staging of the relation of dance to daily life.

3.8.1 Conclusion

What is the relation between dance and everyday life and what might it be? The relation is articulated through movement. The significance which Martin accords movement returns as the basis for a 'corporeal poetics' which has implication not only for dance but also for a pedagogy of the everyday or pedestrian body (Lefebvre 1991: 407). The radical revaluation of spectator consciousness projected by the Judson Dance Theater of the '60s, presaged a broad social project whereby the aesthetic is enfolded, discovered and nurtured in the realm of the everyday. What was entailed here was a profound perceptual and cognitive shift, as the stance of Kantian disinterestedness acceded to an ethos of participation and connectedness. The conceptual isolation of dancer and spectator consequent upon notions of aesthetic detachment were abandoned. When attention is interwoven with action, and action is completed with awareness, the mundane movements of daily life may be apprehended as the embodiment of an elementary beauty.

Under modernism the whole field of human movement and everyday life was a potential resource for dance, whether that be by a process of abstraction and transformation, or by its functional relationship to context — the so-called institutional theory of art (Banes 1998). Through these processes ordinary human movement was aesthetised and brought into a hierarchical relation, a binarised system of value. A more politicised account of the compact between the quotidian and the aesthetic, associated with postmodern dance, inverts the relation. Mindful of Lefebvre's critique we could ask how the aesthetic sensibility towards, and apprehension of, movement fostered in certain recent dance practices might be returned to enrich and enhance the practice of everyday life.

Chapter 4: Choreographing Haptic Space

4.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the relationship between vision, space and gender and the role of new dance practices in the revision or reconfiguration of this relationship. In Chapter 3, I began to explore some of the social implications of choreographic engagement with ordinary movement. I suggested that the postmodern interest in pedestrianism has significance beyond the field of dance aesthetics and beyond the circumscribed moment of performance. My concern in this chapter is to attend more closely to the subjective, perceptual effects of performative experimentation with everyday movement. I will utilise the concept of haptic space to offer a differently focused setting for further exploration of the social and political implications of postmodern dance practices.

The work of cognitive psychologist James Gibson provides a theoretical framework for a consideration of the reflexive relationship between perception and the social world. In contrast to traditional accounts of the senses as passive conduits or receptors of data, Gibson presents the sensory perception system as active and organised in terms of goals. In his book *The Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems*, he describes the senses not in the conventional manner of discrete organs, isolated in terms of specific function,⁶⁸ but as networks or systems which actively seek information from the environment. Conceiving of the senses in this way presents a challenge to concepts of the body which represent it as a bounded coherent entity, separate from the world.

The sensory-perceptual networks (the auditory, the orienting, the taste-smell, the visual and the haptic) are classified by Gibson according to their modes of activity, not by modes of conscious quality. Thus, his analysis emphasises looking, listening and touching, and not seeing, hearing and 'feeling touches'. Sensory-perceptual systems function across the body-world boundary, looping between inner and outer realities as they co-ordinate both perception and action. Furthermore, the information furnished by the perceptual systems is not 'raw' but is ordered, and is experienced as a form of the world. An example from Gibson's research on visual perception will clarify this point.

Introducing his notion of 'ecological optics' Gibson notes, 'Instead of making the nervous system carry the whole burden of explaining perception, I wish to assign part of the burden to light itself' (1966:222). Gibson describes the various ways in which the structure of light

⁶⁸ This representation of the senses is evident in everyday concepts of the five senses, each linked with a discrete organ and mode of operation, that is eyes, ears, noses, tongues and skin, which see, hear, smell, taste and feel.

conveys information. I will not elaborate on the technical aspects of Gibson's thesis other than to note, for later discussion, his emphasis on the *materiality* of light. In Gibson's account of vision, the eyes are an apparatus for detecting variables in the structure of ambient light; light falling upon the world's surfaces scatters, refracts and reflects, and so conveys information about contour, texture, spectral composition and the transformation of intensity in light.

Gibson describes perceptual experience as both structured and structuring. The perceptual systems are adaptive; they are subject to social and cultural variation and can be 'educated' and refined. There is a predictive aspect to perceptual function. Perception works by learned responses and this learning is a socio-cultural process. Semiotician and film theorist Teresa de Lauretis has drawn on Colin Blakemore's and R. L. Gregory's studies of visual perception to articulate a view of sensory perception as a social semiotic. That is to say, semiosis is defined by de Lauretis as 'coded expectations, patterns of response, assumptions, inferences, predictions and ... fantasy' is at work in sensory perception (1984:56). According to de Lauretis, perceiving is a process of semiotic production, that is, meaning making. This understanding of the semiotic dimension of sensory-perceptual processes will be brought to bear upon my discussion of the sensory investments of particular dance genres.

The insights of James Gibson concerning the nature and function of the sensory-perceptual systems have significance for a number of dance practices. His work has provided a support for dancers' creative exploration of the interaction between movement, perception and bodily change. Gibson's theorisation of perception has also been important for the development of alternative dance and movement pedagogies.⁶⁹

Gibson defines the haptic system as follows:

The sensibility of the individual to the world adjacent to his body by the use of his body will here be called the haptic system. The word haptic comes from a Greek term meaning 'able to lay hold of'. The haptic system is an apparatus by which the individual gets information about both his environment and his body. It is the perceptual system by which animals and men are literally 'in touch' with the environment (1966:97).

The concept of haptic space proposed in this chapter bears some resemblance to the notion of the kinesphere, which has been a useful conceptual device in both dance pedagogy and

⁶⁹ Pam Matt notes that Barbara Clark found in Gibson's discussion of muscle function a validation of her approach to ideokinetic movement re-education (Matt 1993:69). Gibson has also been cited by dancer Steve Paxton and movement educator Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen.

choreographic exploration. The term kinesphere is associated with movement theorist, educator and choreographer Rudolf von Laban (1879 -1958) who employed the concept as an initial template for understanding the relationship between 'the architecture of the human body and its pathways in space' (Laban in Bartenieff 1980:23). Irmgard Bartenieff, founder of the Laban Institute of Movement Studies, New York, summarises the notion of the kinesphere as follows:

By extending the farthest reaches of the length, width and depth of the body in the upright position, a sense of the three-dimensional space around it is created. We call that reach space around the body the kinesphere (1980:250).

According to Bartenieff, the personal 'kinesphere' is our means of access to the larger or general space. Movement within the kinesphere produces particular spatial experiences or 'spatial tensions' which are transposed to the perception of 'general' space. For dancers the kinesphere has furnished a practical means of synthesising kinaesthetic/phenomenological and visual/architectural apprehensions of space. It could also serve to delineate the approach to the senses and spatiality that I am pursuing here under the rubric of 'the haptic'. However, haptic space is my preferred term, principally for its stronger evocation of the tactile engagement with space.

This chapter has two aspects. The first focuses upon the role of the senses in socially constructed mechanisms of representation. The dominant role of vision in models of subjectivity and in theories of spectatorship is discussed, and some alternative theorisations are introduced. I then turn to a consideration of some aspects of spatiality in contemporary dance practice. The haptic apprehension of space will be contrasted to spatialised vision. I will argue that the reevaluation of sensory ratios, which has occurred in alternative dance practice, offers a different relationship to, and experience of, space. The choreography of the haptic undermines the traditional association of vision with masterful occupation of space.

4.2 The dominance of visuality in the Western sensorium (and some alternatives).

How to sense and make sense of other cultures? This is the central issue of *The Varieties of Sensory Experience* (1991), a diverse collection of essays brought together by anthropologist David Howes. The book charts a new field of study, the anthropology of the senses. As described by Howes, this is a field and an approach which is concerned with the ways in which different societies use, combine, develop and value the senses. In this

context the senses are regarded not as passive windows on the world but as active shapers and bearers of culture.

Howes introduces his book by noting Western societies' overwhelming dependence upon visual and verbal faculties for their experience of the world. He argues that 'it is only by developing a rigorous awareness of the visual and textual biases of the Western episteme that we can hope to make sense of how life is lived in other cultural settings' (1991:3). Howes also expresses the hope, 'that the wisdom gained by plunging into the realm of the non-visual senses ... can help to liberate us from the hegemony which sight has for so long exercised over our own culture's social intellectual and aesthetic lives' (ibid: 4). How is this revaluation of sensory modalities to be achieved? How might we 'make sense' of the other?

My interest here is not with that traditional object of anthropology, the 'other' culture, but with the otherness of a particular micro or sub-culture that I will term, rather imprecisely, 'new dance'. One of the enduring legacies of the modern dance tradition and an important part of its continuing vitality is its commitment to a process of revaluation and rebalancing of the sensory order of our own culture. As I have discussed in Chapter 3, the project of perceptual renewal has been central to modernist dance exploration. Modern dance artists have systematically explored and reevaluated the sensory modalities at work in dance. In so doing modern dancers and choreographers have contributed to a developing critique of the hegemony of vision in Western aesthetics and more broadly, in Western culture. Dance has played a significant, if under-recognised, part in what Martin Jay (1986:19) has termed the 'anti-visual' discourse of twentieth century thought. I cite Howes's book in this context because it, unlike any dance text that I am aware of, asserts the necessity of experimenting with other ways of sensing the world while acknowledging the difficulty of the undertaking. Perception is not value-neutral; the sensory order is bound up with the social and cultural order in ways which render it resistant to change. To represent the dancer's labour as merely a bio-mechanical achievement, a matter of muscular and nervous control, is to insist on a disjunction between the body, the self, the social and cultural. With this kind of representation, and it is quite common in dance teaching texts,⁷⁰ the significance of the dancer's labour, its particular contribution to culture, is denied.

Howes's introductory essay, "To Summon All The Senses" begins with an incisive critique of the visual reductionism of Western canons of aesthetics. The origin of the hyper-visual aesthetic of contemporary Western cultures can be traced, in Howes's view, to the invention of linear perspective by the fifteenth-century painter Leon Battista Alberti. A more detailed historical account of the privileged role of vision in the West would have to

⁷⁰ See Hammond (1984), Laws (1984) and Vaganova (1969).

include consideration of such things as the rise of modern science and the Gutenberg revolution in printing.⁷¹ But suffice it to say that vision was accorded an especially powerful role in the modern era.⁷²

In the first part of this chapter I will outline some of the effects of the dominance of visual paradigms as they are evidenced in dance aesthetics, theories of the subject and the politics of gender.

While cultures vary greatly in their exploitation of the senses, most manifest some bias, emphasising certain sensory expression and excluding others. A particular sensory mode will be privileged; another will be suppressed. The identification of the social implications of these kinds of hierarchical differentiations between sensory modalities has been a major area of inquiry within contemporary feminism. A number of prominent French feminist theorists (Kristeva, Cixous, Montrelay, Clement, Duras, Irigaray) have drawn associations between ocularcentrism and dominant forms of masculine identity.⁷³ Martin Jay cites Irigaray in his analysis of the broad contours of the anti-visual critique:

More than any other sense, the eye objectifies and it masters. It sets at a distance. In our culture the predominance of the look over smell, taste, touch and hearing has brought about an impoverishment of bodily relations (Irigaray quoted in Jay 1993: 493)

The traditional privileging of vision in the Western hierarchisation of the senses effects a devaluation of touch and a concomitant devaluation of the body. The privileged and powerful sense of sight is in developmental terms a second order sense, grounded in and dependent upon the primary, proximity senses of touch, taste, smell and kinaesthesia.⁷⁴ The primacy of vision in the West is thus achieved via a kind of repression of the proximity senses, those senses most tied to and associated with the infant and maternal bodies. Philosopher and dance theorist David Levin, echoing feminist critiques of vision, has argued that the relative neglect of dance in philosophical discourse is an effect of

⁷¹ Walter Ong discusses the profound effects of the development of writing and print in his book *Orality and Literacy* (1982). Writing restructures consciousness as hearing dominance yields to sight dominance: 'Since the shift from oral to written speech is essentially a shift from sound to visual space, here the effects of print on the use of visual space can be the central ... focus of attention' (117).

⁷² In his comprehensive study of modernity and vision, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought* (1993), Martin Jay traces the history of Western attitudes towards sight, noting the significance of vision in the early modern era. Jay closely analyses the anti-visual discourse of contemporary French thought in this work which is attentive to visual practices as well as discursive representations.

⁷³ A useful anthology of French feminist writing which includes the work of Le Doeuff, Cixous, Wittig, Montrelay, Clement, Kristeva and Duras is *New French Feminisms* ed Marks, E. and De Courtivron, J. (1980).

⁷⁴ Movement educator and therapist, Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen makes this observation in "The Active Nature of Perception" reprinted in *The Senses, Feeling and Action* (1993).

'patriarchal rejection of the sensuous body'. He notes that 'philosophers have, in one way or another, denied the reality of the body's sensuous presence' (Levin 1983:89). Thus dance ranks low in the Western aesthetic hierarchy; it is an art of women and children, of the 'primitive', of the other. This negative perception of dance obtains, even if, as in its mainstream manifestations, dance seeks to conform to the dictates of a hyper-visual aesthetic.

However, the sensorium is not totalising, nor is it fixed (Ong 1967).⁷⁵ Sensory valences shift, and there are usually exceptions to the dominant sensory model existing in a society at any given time. In our society alternatives to a visually dominated sensorium are present in the practices, methods and philosophies of a number of new dance forms. David Howes asks: 'What is the world like to a culture that takes actuality in less visual, more gustatory or tactile, auditory or olfactory terms than those to which we are accustomed?' (1991:6) My question would be: What is the world like to an individual who takes actuality in more tactile and kinaesthetic terms than those to which we are accustomed? What is her or his experience of embodiment? How does she 'know' the world? The question of the sensory models inherent in and developed by specific forms and styles of dance practice will be taken up more fully later in this chapter, but let us consider for a moment the example of Contact Improvisation.

Contact Improvisation is a movement practice and a dance form. Its organising principle is that two partners stay in contact while freely moving, giving and taking each other's weight. It is a practice which at certain key moments suppresses visual perception as a primary source of information and orientation in the world in order to privilege the tactile and the kinaesthetic. In training, the Contact dancer works to reduce his reliance on vision so that he may develop more finely discriminated and powerful kinaesthetic awareness. An example is the practice of Standing Still.

Standing Still entails observing the sensations involved in balancing. As a training practice Standing Still is sometimes taught on its own for periods of up to one hour. It is also used as a preparation for dancing and in those settings its duration will be much reduced. As a student at Dartington College, England during the 1970s I was introduced to Contact Improvisation, and what was then a still evolving body of training practices, through Steve Paxton. In interviews published in the *Dartington Theatre Papers* (Series 1, 1977 & Series 4, 1982), Paxton provides very detailed accounts of the practice of Standing Still, articulating the process, its perceptual effects and reflecting upon some of its social

⁷⁵ In Ong's usage the sensorium is 'the entire sensory apparatus as an operational complex' (1967:28).

implications. The following description of the process of Standing Still is an amalgam of my own recollections of class experiences and Paxton's observations and statements.

At the beginning we are invited to come to standing in a balanced way so that our base of support is firm and easy. Our feet are bare; the soles of the feet are open and wide against the floor. Our attention is drawn to the contact between the soles of our feet and the surface of the floor. We are invited to gently close our eyes as Paxton begins to direct our attention through our bodies: 'thinking up through the skeleton, bones balancing upon bones; allow the outside of the body to be soft, feeling support through the skeleton; softening the outside, letting go of all but the deep anti-gravity muscles close to your centre, that are holding you upright'. The words Paxton uses are relax, soften, let go. His words guide our perception and induce a state of deep relaxation.

At this point Paxton says: 'In the midst of standing still, something else is occurring and the name for that is the small dance'. The 'small dance' is the sensing of the delicate balancing movements which occur in standing. Awareness of the subtle but incessant movements of falling in and out of balance is normally masked in daily activity. Paradoxically, in the suspension of activity which is Standing Still, our experience of movement is intensified. Our eyes are closed for the duration of the 'Stand', whether that be for five or forty minutes and this reduction of sensory information from the visual system facilitates and amplifies kinaesthetic perception. At the end of the 'Stand' we are invited to open our eyes very slowly, keeping the focus soft so that peripheral vision operates. Paxton has described Standing Still as 'the most opening experience for dance' (1977:6). It is such, Paxton suggests, due to the depth, clarity and precision of the kinaesthetic experience it offers to the dancer. It can be done anywhere; it requires no special equipment or preparation. It is close and available to anyone who cares to practice it.

If Contact Improvisation at times suppresses vision it also encourages a very particular form of visual perception. Contact Improvisation is a duet form of movement improvisation which confounds the verticality and frontal orientation of traditional theatrical dance. It is remarkable for its use of 360-degree space and three-dimensional pathways in space.⁷⁶ Training exercises have been explicitly designed to disorientate the visual system. Peripheral vision practice prepares the Contact dancer for the disorientation of moving in non-perspectival space and entails activities such as an exercise described by Paxton as 'moving your head in all directions around your body by twisting, curving and

⁷⁶ In her account of Contact's movement style Cynthia Novack utilises Labananalysis. Here she outlines the distinctive spatiality of Contact:

"Contact Improvisation is one of the only dance forms to organise itself almost entirely within the icosahedron, a crystalline form with twenty-four points (break dancing is another). Many dance forms relate far more to the vertical axis running up and down through the body, focusing on the independent upright figure" (1990:12).

stretching your spine'. As Paxton observes, this peripheral vision exercise 'gets the eyes and the mind used to watching things other than the horizontal horizon' (1977:8).

Paxton has evolved a distinctive pedagogical language which addresses and invokes specific perceptual experience. In the peripheral vision practice described above he leads the dancer into experiences of visual and kinaesthetic disorientation by inviting them to 'let the room go past your eyes' (ibid). Paxton identifies peripheral vision as a form of visual practice which both reflects and supports a particular mode of relating to the world. Here he contrasts peripheral vision to other modes of visual practice:

For many people vision is a kind of tool which reaches out and grabs things ... It's a probing instrument. For other people it's a receptive instrument ... peripheral vision training is partly to allow the world to enter, because it is softer, not so much a tool as focus is. Peripheral vision is more apt to allow you to hear and feel (1982a: 4-6)

Paxton has also spoken in some detail of the often unappreciated but vital perceptual role of the skin. In Contact Improvisation the skin is a crucial source of information. 'I find I am hanging by my skin', Paxton notes, 'and relying on its information to protect me, to warn me, to feed back to me the data to which I am responding' (1982b: 17). The Contact dancer learns to respond to kinaesthetic and tactile cues with great rapidity, ease and subtlety. In a Contact duet the dancer is reliant on a highly refined awareness of touch; in a very real sense she resides in her skin.

The skin affords a specific experience of and access to space; it is an apprehension of haptic space, an awareness of the kinesphere, which Paxton characterises as spherical:

The sphere is an accumulated image gathered from several senses — vision being one. As if, quickly looking in all directions gives me an image of what it might be like to have a visual surface all over my body, instead of skin. The skin is the best surface for the image, because it works in all directions at once (1982a:6).

This perception of the skin as an all-seeing surface, responding to and articulating spherical space is an effect of long immersion in movement practices which challenge habituated patterns of visual and kinaesthetic processing. In Paxton's own artistic development *Standing Still* emerged after a long period of research into pedestrian movement. As he explored ordinary, everyday movements of standing, walking and sitting he found standing to be 'more and more unpedestrian'. He has observed that standing is

'very rarely done in a kind of pure state — walking and sitting are more common' (1977:6). Paxton has at times chosen to define practices such as Standing Still and peripheral vision exercises as methods of 'detraining', the principle object of which is to remove obstacles to perception. Detraining entails working against the unconsciousness of daily habit and 'getting rid of the masks that we have, the social and formal masks, until the physical events occur as they will' (ibid:2). These processes of detraining and retraining of the perceptual dispositions of the dancer produce the subject of Contact as a pre-cultural organism, a 'becoming animal',⁷⁷ according to Paxton:

I stress that dancers are people not in the social sense but in the animal sense in this kind of dancing, that they are masses and bodies and sensations ... They should be there as animals, as bundles of nerves, as masses and bones ... touching the other bundle and letting that be the work (1977:2).

Ironically perhaps, given Paxton's avowedly pre-cultural stance, Contact has had significant artistic and social impact over its nearly thirty year history. Cynthia Novack's *Sharing the Dance: Contact Improvisation and American Culture* (1990), details the inception of the form in the context of the 1960s avant garde and counter-culture, and its subsequent evolution through the 1980s. Although the contexts in which Contact Improvisation may be practiced has changed somewhat today, it is interesting to note that Contact developed in the United States during the 1960s and '70s essentially as a participant form, a dancing people did, not a dancing they watched. In its reliance upon immersive touch — moment-to-moment, body-to-body contact — Contact Improvisation has attempted to create and inhabit a world ordered by a sensory ratio unlike that of the dominant culture within which it has evolved. But, as Bourdieu and others have argued, the sensory is bound closely to the social and cultural. It may be that the new sensory order heralded by Contact Improvisation may not be sustainable outside of the particular socio-political circumstances which supported its early development. In the 1980s a more presentational and performance oriented style of Contact Improvisation emerged. Aspects of Contact-based partnering skills have entered mainstream dance practice and have become a requisite part of some mainstream dancer's skill base.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ For an insightful account of Contact Improvisation, which employs the theoretical framework of Deleuze and Guattari, see Mark Minchinton's "Delirious Notes towards improvisation as a body without organs", *Writings on Dance* # 10, 1994.

⁷⁸ Nancy Stark Smith, a highly respected teacher of the form, has observed that Contact has no set pedagogy; the open-endedness of the form lends itself to diverse applications. For Stark Smith, the current plurality of practice is something to be celebrated. For Stark Smith's historical overview of Contact Improvisation see "Contact Improvisation Today" in *Writings on Dance* #21 Summer 2001/2. (Forthcoming).

Novack has traced the historical development of Contact Improvisation as a dance form and as a practice, outlining the changes it has undergone in terms of a wider social movement. She summarises Contact's socio-cultural significance as follows:

Contact improvisation as the embodiment of a political period, the '60s, reveals a certain legacy. It signifies the struggle throughout the '60s to create alternative organisations for dance, both social and artistically... The difficulties encountered attest to the power of social structures to limit cultural invention, but the experiences which were and are being created continue to hold forth other possibilities. Contact improvisation constituted one part of a larger cultural preoccupation with the body emerging in the ~60s ... 'Body' became something to be experienced 'from the inside', (and was) seen to represent and create a sense of self that was sensual, physical, and physically intelligent (1990:232).

A 'sense of self that (is) sensual, physical and physically intelligent', writes Novack —how different from the Cartesian notion of the self as 'pilot of the (body) ship', or the self theorised as a place of seeing, as a detached spectator of the world.

4.3 The spectator subject

As David Howes has observed, one of the many, far-reaching cultural repercussions of the new technologies of seeing developed in the arts and sciences at the dawn of the modern era was the emergence of a distinctive style of subjectivity, a distinctive way of apprehending the world. The modern era witnessed the emergence of the modern subject, both producer and product of an ocular and logocentric world view. This modern subject is characterised in Robert Romanshyn's *Technology as Symptom and Dream* (1989) as a 'spectator self'. Romanshyn describes how,

within the landscape of linear perspective vision the self becomes a spectator ensconced behind his or her window on the world, how the body, now divorced from this self, becomes a specimen, and how the world, as a matter for this detached and observing eye, becomes a spectacle (1989:31).

This description of the modern subject as a spectator has more than metaphorical significance. Marx Wartofsky has developed a persuasive theory of visual perception which prioritises the role of representation in the constitution of human vision. Wartofsky

describes human vision as an artifact, a product of human activity, which evolves in culturally and historically specific ways. It 'has a history'. Thus vision, what we see and how we make sense of what we see, is not reducible to the physiology of the visual system or to the physical optics of light. Wartofsky summarises his view of the historicity of human perception and cognition as follows:

It is not only human knowledge that changes or develops historically, but the means of acquiring this knowledge or the modes of cognition, which change as well. In all of these modes... representation plays a fundamental role (1980:132).

Wartofsky attributes a large degree of plasticity to the biologically evolved structures of the visual system. The natural basis of the human visual system has been transformed by our own modes of visual representation, he argues. Seeing the world perceptually, for example, is a product of a particular mode of visual praxis — looking at pictures. In this sense visual activity is not purely 'mentalistic', Wartofsky argues, and in his account of the socio-cultural constitution of vision he adopts the term 'visual posture' to underscore the bodily investment of visual praxis. Bodily posture is a framework of meanings; it represents a 'range of intentionalities or dispositions to act or respond in a certain way' (ibid: 134). A visual posture is a disposition, an aspect of habitus.

The visual posture Wartofsky investigates is that of *watching*. The two contexts of watching Wartofsky examines in this study are the closely related contexts of theatrical performance and pictorial representation. His proposition is that specific forms of representation require and impose specific visual postures. These visual postures effect a fundamental transformation of practically orientated visual intentionality and behaviour. The human visual system has functionally evolved in adaptation to practical activities of a biological sort. The visual processes which are important in these practical life activities — of actively directed search, orientation and identification — are transformed in aesthetic contexts into a radically different mode. The intention of vision is changed as perceiver becomes spectator. Watching as a particular form of visual activity is an effect and requirement of the conventions of viewing that are associated with dominant forms in Western art — the proscenium arch stage in theatre and the rectilinear, fixed canvas in painting.⁷⁹ Visual postures are subject to historical transformation, as an example from the development of classical ballet as a form of theatrical entertainment will demonstrate.

⁷⁹ John Martin has suggested that the assumption of this 'visual posture' may be an impediment to the kinaesthetic apprehension of dance. Approaching dance as an aesthetic object predisposes the viewer to focus on the static elements, at the expense of movement (1965:22).

The Western classical ballet tradition dates its origins to the 16th and 17th centuries and today still bears the trace of that era's fascination with vision, reason and geometric order.⁸⁰ In the opening chapter of *Downcast Eyes*, Martin Jay outlines the honoured place of the visual in French culture since the time of Louis XIV and Descartes (1993:49-50). This early modern period was particularly significant in the historical development of the art of ballet. It was a period which marked the beginning of a process of professionalisation of ballet with Louis XIV's founding of the Royal Academy of Dancing. It was also the period in which a new model of theatrical presentation, the proscenium arch stage, became established throughout Europe. The development of the proscenium arch stage advanced a new representational device and a new technology of seeing. Dance historian Susan Foster has outlined the impact of this innovation in theatre architecture in terms of a transition from an allegorical to a pictorial aesthetic (1986:121). This transition entailed an operation of 'verticalisation', as the dance was raised from the horizontal plane into the vertical, the picture plane. This process of verticalisation has far-reaching social and political as well as aesthetic implications.

In *Theatre Space as a Cultural Paradigm*, Michael Hays argues that analysis of theatre and performance space provides insight into the relationship between the ordering principles of the theatre event and of society at large. The non-Italianate stages of the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth centuries were marked by their 'two-dimensionality'. According to Hays, this configuration of the stage allowed for and corresponded to simultaneousness in the events and phases of the drama. Hays here describes the socio-political significance of the transition from the non-Italianate stage of the late sixteenth century to the proscenium stage:

Instead of enclosing the action in a single space, each event was given its own place and value ... Events were portrayed as simultaneous and given separate space because they were homologues of a collective reality in which a number of social and political possibilities coexisted in open and direct conflict...

This form for the stage came to an end at the same time that a new social order did away with many of the conflicts that had provided the context for the theaters of the age. The proscenium stage developed as the representative form for a social and

⁸⁰ The ballet developed in the royal courts of Europe, most notably that of Louis XIV, and arose out of lavish theatrical spectacles which staged and celebrated sovereign power. The *ballet de cour* reflected a cultural fascination with power and vision, and the relationship of one to the other. In Western dance history the *ballet de cour* is unique in its particular constellation of power, (geometric) proportion and moving bodies. However, the aesthetic ideals embodied in the *ballet de cour*, the high premium placed upon visual experience – clarity of line, legibility, precision etc. – are still very much the determining ideals of the ballet form today.

political model which was imposed by absolute monarchy on a polyvalent and disordered society (1981: 6-7).

The new spatial organisation of the stage instantiates a new social and political economy, and a new social subject.⁸¹ It also supports the gradual emergence of the choreographer as principal author of the dance event. Foster describes the early court performances as supporting a 'polyphony of discourses' (1986:144). The different elements of the event were brought together through a process of collaboration between poets, composers, ballet masters, scenic designers, machine makers and costumiers. The dance once framed by the proscenium arch began to cohere as a bounded form; diverse elements were drawn together into a unified, coherent and bounded space and time. The dance, elevated and framed, presented 'perfected pictures of human society' articulated through a set of ideal bodily forms.⁸² Mirroring the pictorial conventions of Renaissance painting, the proscenium arch stage placed man as a spectator subject at the centre of the universe.

To summarise: A mode of representation, such as the convention of linear perspective, embodies rules for the construction of representational artifacts and corollary rules for the normal viewing of such artifacts. Thus art works impose a 'visual scenario' as the convention of normal viewing. When a visual scenario, such as linear perspective, is adopted as a widely accepted convention of visual activity, it begins to inform our ways of seeing beyond the range of representational artifacts. In Wartofsky's view, the practice of watching theatrical performances and of viewing painting has had just this effect — we regard the world outside the theatre or the picture frame in theatricalised and pictorialised ways.⁸³ Wartofsky's theory of vision prioritises the role of the artifact in the production and reproduction of dominant ways of seeing. Linear perspective thus secures as it naturalises a particular representation of the world.

4.3.1 The spectator subject as a man of vision

The conceptualisation and construction of the self as spectator may have arisen from aesthetic practice, and this conceptualisation has in turn profoundly influenced aesthetic

⁸¹ Foster summarises this epochal shift as follows: 'Where the court dance encouraged the audience to contemplate humanity in relation to a universal order, neoclassical ballets celebrated individual and societal accomplishments. The human being as a gifted maker of things in the world became the focus of the dance' (1986:144).

⁸² For a detailed discussion of the choreographic conventions and modes of representation in Renaissance and 'neo-classical' dance see *Reading Dancing* Susan L. Foster (1986) and Mark Franko *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body* (1993).

⁸³ To the objection that theatre-going and art gallery attendance are elite minority activities and therefore less influential than Wartofsky's claim in determinations of visual posture I would suggest that the forms of representation discussed here are pervasive. These conventions (eg the persistence of the ratio of the picture frame, vertical presentation, perspective) have been incorporated into new visual technologies - photography, cinema, television and Internet technology.

theory. In *Staging the Gaze*, Barbara Freedman investigates the cultural production of spectatorship and its concomitant impact upon understandings of the human subject. She draws upon Albrecht Dürer's famous woodcut of the draftsman at work, *Man Drawing Reclining Woman*, in her discussion of the notions of 'right and erring spectatorship' (1991:1).

The concept of right spectatorship represents a model of aesthetic experience and also a principle or structure which legitimates and regulates access to particular subject positions. As is depicted in Dürer's woodcut, the development of linear perspective initially required the support of a structure, a grid, which fixed the painter's eye upon its object.

Freedman's discussion of Alberti's grid can be linked with Wartofsky's observations concerning the relationship between dominant forms of representational practice and particular visual postures, to suggest that the grid functions as a pedagogical device which founds a distinctive form of visual praxis. This visual praxis has implications, not only for pictorial and theatrical representation, but also for understandings of social relations. As Wartofsky notes, a feature of the style of watching, or visual posture, depicted here is the relative detachment of the spectator from that which is being watched. A window interposed between artist and model, Alberti's grid intensifies and isolates optical experience. This device amplifies the natural power of the eye to survey from afar as it de-emphasises other non-visual sensory experience.

Freedman argues that the concept of right spectatorship underpinning Western aesthetics, and so lucidly represented by Dürer, authorises particular subject positions in ways which are at least in part a function of gender ideology. The spectator subject is a man of vision.

Since this famous woodcut documents the development of the painter's perspective, we usually identify with the artist's point of view. In the process however, we identify with the male as the appropriate bearer of the look, the female as the appropriate object of that look; we identify with reason against sexuality, activity over passivity, and seeing instead of showing (1991:2).

Freedman notes that a number of visual cues underwrite our identification with the painter. The draftsman is pictured seated in the dominant right hand side of the image. The model is lying down; her unclothed body fills the left hand frame and threatens to overflow its bounds. The voluptuous curves of the reclining woman's body are echoed in the curve of distant hills. The painter-draftsman sits erect at his desk; behind him is a tightly pruned, potted tree. The verticality of his posture is reinforced by the lines of viewing rod and tree. She occupies the horizontal axis.

These visual cues secure and authorise the subject, and encourage 'the equation of right spectatorship with a controlling patriarchal perspective' (ibid). Freedman's analysis highlights the role played by vision in the production and maintenance of sexual difference. This image depicts the formation of a sexually differentiated economy of vision, and links it with a powerful epistemological model — one which masters the world and its objects through the interposition of a disciplinary frame.

Freedman invites us however to read Dürer's woodcut from another perspective.

Once we adopt the woman's perspective, the picture neatly reverses itself. The woman lies comfortably relaxed; the artist sits upright, rigidly constrained by his fixed position. The woman knows that she is seen; the artist is blinded by his viewing apparatus, deluded by his fantasy of objectivity (ibid: 2).

Freedman describes this image as theatrical; it lends itself, she suggests, to the reversal she has effected. When the theatrical dimension of the image is activated it functions as 'an interactive trap or strategic decentering that breaks down distinctions between the observer and the observed' (ibid: 1). The theatrical, Freedman argues, is that which renders a steady position of spectatorship impossible. It undermines and confounds the fantasy of a unified, fixed spectator self. Theatre, and theatricality, 'evoke an uncanny sense that the given to be seen has the power both to position us and displace us' (ibid) and therein, Freedman asserts, lies its subversive force.

The woman, voluptuously present, and 'know(ing) she is seen', deflects the objectifying gaze. Knowingly showing herself, the performer exercises some measure of agency within a set up which may not be of her own choosing. She may not be in control of socially constructed mechanisms of representation but her presence may exceed its frame.

Freedman, like Wartofsky, makes connections between pictorial and theatrical representation, arguing that these modes of representation are governed by the same core assumptions. However, Freedman also highlights the gender conventions governing certain dominant modes of spectatorship. She explores the theatrical frame and the performer-spectator relationship for possibilities of gender subversion. In celebrating the subversive potential of the theatrical gaze, her attention is focused upon the instability rather than the constancy of visual systems of representation.

4.4 The role of the senses in the formation of the subject — the eye and the skin.

In psychoanalytic theory the genesis of the individual subject has also been conceptualised in overwhelmingly visual, specular terms. Jacques Lacan posits the 'mirror stage' as a crucial, if not the founding moment in the formation of the ego. Speaking of this moment, Elizabeth Grosz observes that: 'The child sees an image of itself as an organised and integrated totality' (1990: 38). However, this image of unity is 'in contrast to the turbulent movements that the subject feels are animating him' (Lacan 1977:2). The infant exists in a state of physiological immaturity; he is immured in 'motor incapacity and nursing dependency' (ibid). His body is an uncoordinated, fragmented aggregate, a *corps morcele*, a body-in-bits-and-pieces.⁶⁴ Vision is the powerful tool by which the nascent ego self triumphs over the immature and chaotic body. The child pointing to its own image in the mirror cries out in delight 'That's me!' In this moment the power of the eye secures the 'I'. The mirror is the stage which sets in play the drama of 'I' and 'me'

The primacy of the visual in this stage of subject formation is not surprising, Grosz argues, 'if we understand the genesis of the ego as a specifically social process, one that is culturally and historically variable in its structure' (1990:38). Elaborating on the significance of vision in the genesis of the modern Western subject she notes,

Of all the senses, vision remains the one which most readily confirms the separation of subject from object. Vision performs a distancing function, leaving the onlooker unimplicated in or uncontaminated by its object ... The child's recognition of its own image means that it has adopted the perspective of exteriority on itself (ibid:38).

The visual bias of Freudian and Lacanian accounts of the subject has implications for feminism and Grosz has identified this bias as a focus of feminist opposition to, and critique of, psychoanalytic theory. She writes,

Lacan's ocularcentrism – his vision-centredness – in complicity with Freud's, privileges the male body as a phallic, virile body and regards the female body as castrated ... we should note here that the female can be construed as castrated, as lacking a sexual organ, only on the information provided by vision. The other sensori-perceptual organs would have confirmed the presence of

⁶⁴ It is beyond the scope of this discussion to examine the psychoanalytic accounts of the genesis and nature of the ego in any detail, but I am struck by Lacan's characterisation of the immature, infant body as a *corps morcele*. This is an image of dismemberment, of a corpse and not a living body; it is an image which conflates flesh and death. This metaphor, of the body-in-bits-and-pieces, betrays not only an ocularcentric bias, but also an allegiance to a medical discourse which is suspicious of the body's own claims and needs.

a female organ instead of the absence of a male organ (1990:39).

From a phallogentric perspective, women's bodies are judged to be lacking, incomplete, and this 'natural inferiority and inequality' has been used to explain and justify the unequal social status of women. Because of the ways in which misogynist and patriarchal thinking has used fixed concepts of the body and notions of biological determinism to denigrate and restrict women, feminists have been wary of ascribing to women any special or distinctive relation to the body.

Whilst I am aware of the dangers of essentialising women's experience, I want to suggest that dancers' active engagement in and cultivation of the body and the senses can be valued as a distinctive and creative tactical response to a body-denying patriarchal culture. In the field of modern dance, dancers and choreographers, predominately female, have been deeply engaged in the development and refinement of their bodies' potential for skilled movement and they have pursued this development by focusing upon the socially devalued and denigrated senses of touch and kinaesthesia. A striking feature of the dance they have developed through this inquiry is the degree to which it is grounded in, and expressive of, these previously devalued senses, not to the exclusion of the visual, but in a revised relation to it. The place and role of vision is no longer dominant in this revised sensory ratio.

In her discussion of the ocularcentrism of psychoanalysis Grosz concedes that other kinds of perceptual identifications are possible although she states that 'only the simultaneity afforded by sight confirms the integrity of a cohesive self and body' (1990:39). In her view 'none of the other senses have this ability to perceive "synchronically", in a non-linear and non-temporal fashion' (ibid:39). But perhaps it is a matter of practice. Phenomenological accounts of subjectivity emphasise the role of embodied experience in the formation of the self. Writing from this phenomenological perspective, Drew Leder, in his book *The Absent Body*, reminds us of the powerful interaction of cultural belief and social practice, of how they are mutually engendering structures. He cites this example:

Our cultural belief in the dissociation of mind from body leads to an increase of dissassociative practices; we are encouraged to abandon sensorimotor awareness for abstracted mathematical or linguistic forms. This in turn intensifies the day-to-day experience of mind as disembodied, confirming the initial cultural premise (1990:52).

If we tacitly accept that the eye and the I are twinned, that sight alone engenders a (mistaken) sense of a unified self and we have no experience or practice which challenges sight's hegemony then it might seem nonsensical or mere whimsy to state as I have done above that a Contact dancer experiences herself on and as skin. But this identification of self and body is a result and an achievement of practice. The whole of the dancer's skin surface is alive with sensation and her sense of self and her intelligence comfortably dwell there. She practices this awareness.

Grosz's more recent discussion of the role of sensory perception in Freud's accounts of ego formation complicates and enriches the ocularcentric story of subject formation briefly outlined above. In *The Ego and the Id* Freud presents an account of the structure and form of the ego as a 'corporeal projection' of the libidinally invested surface of the body. The subject only gradually acquires a sense of unity and identity as the result of processes which construct the ego and Freud explicitly links such processes with perceptual experience:

The ego is ultimately derived from bodily sensations, chiefly from those springing from the surface of the body. It may thus be regarded as a mental projection of the surface of the body, besides, as we have seen above, representing the superficies of the mental apparatus (Freud in Grosz 1994:34).

In Grosz's summary, 'the ego is something like a "psychical callous" formed through the use of the body' (1994:37); 'it is a consequence of a perceptual surface; it is produced and grows only in relation to this surface, implying that the ego is a "skin ego"' (ibid:32). Grosz stresses that the process of libidinal investment of the body surface is socially mediated. The psychical interior is constituted in such a way that it accords with the meanings ascribed to the sexed body in all its historical, cultural and social particularity. The skin ego is sexually marked.

If the ego may be construed as a 'skin ego', Contact Improvisation suggests itself as a possible site of intervention or resistance to processes of normative gender inscription. Novack's research indicates that Contact holds deep appeal for both women and men precisely because it attempts to dissolve binarised forms of sexual and social identity. In Contact Improvisation training practices the psycho-sexual aspect of touch communication is systematically de-emphasised. Novack observes that 'Steve Paxton's association of touch with biomechanics and the forces of gravity ideologically separated the dance form from direct psychological and sexual encounter' (1990:166). Sexualised attention, what Paxton dubs 'the gland game', is regarded as potentially dangerous in a form which plays with

momentum, weight and speed of response in sometimes precarious encounters with falling bodies. Some of Novack's informants stated that Paxton's clear articulation of the boundaries of the form gave them the freedom to experience the many bodily pleasures it offers — of holding someone, carrying someone ... and I would add, the reciprocal pleasures of being held and being carried, of supporting another's weight and being supported. Contact offers intimate but non-sexual forms of touch communication. In Contact, experiences of falling and catching, sliding down and pressing against another person, sexuality is present, and bodies are marked by gender, but in more ambiguous, less dichotomous ways than that of daily life.

Howes has also posed the question of whether it is possible to *think* in touch. He observes that 'the idea of touch as a medium of intelligence seems foreign to us because of a long established Western bias in favour of sight' (1991:10). This visual bias is not a disembodied intellectual commitment. Our faith and belief in the power of vision as the most informative and trustworthy of the senses is practiced daily and woven tightly into the fabric of our lives.

According to James Gibson, the 'sense of touch' is an extremely elaborate and powerful perceptual system. In many respects the haptic system parallels the visual system; muscles and skin co-operate with gravity to furnish precise spatial perceptions — of depth, contour and texture, for example. The haptic apparatus incorporates receptors that are distributed all over the body. In Gibson's view, the pervasiveness and anatomical diversity of the haptic system contributes to the subjective dominance of vision in spatial perception. The centrality of the haptic system in the initiation and co-ordination of movement also tends to mask its perceptual function. Gibson writes: '(The haptic apparatus) is so obviously involved in the control of performance that we are introspectively not aware of its capability to yield perception; we allow the visual system to dominate our consciousness' (1966:134). To argue, as Gibson does, that the cultural dominance of vision has some physiological determinants, is not to discount the many incisive critiques of vision and visuality that have emerged in disciplines as diverse as philosophy, anthropology and feminism. Within certain biological limits, the sensory perceptual apparatus is adaptive and variable; at issue are the social meanings that are ascribed to the different senses.

4.4.1 Founding the subject in the play of gravity.

Dancer and kinesiologist Hubert Godard, also opposing the dominance of vision in psychoanalytic theories, locates the founding moments of subjectivity in the tactile exchange between mother and child. As I noted in Chapter 3, Godard's reconceptualisation of kinaesthetic communication is contributing to a radical rethinking of dance aesthetics

and theories of dance reception.⁸⁵ I am returning to Godard's theorisation of the bodily basis of subjectivity in order to investigate more closely his engagement with the haptic dimension of human experience.

Godard explicitly critiques the dominance of the mirror stage in Lacan's theorisation of the symbolic construction of identity and focuses instead upon the infant's experience of gravity. Godard's analysis highlights the successive changes in the child's orienting or gravitational system, which in his view are 'equally responsible for organising the future character of (her) autonomy' (1996:15). Focusing upon the developmental process by which a child gradually negotiates her relationship with gravity, that is, as she learns to roll, sit, walk on all fours and stand up, Godard notes that the way 'the child is carried and supported through this process (in spatial terms) will have as much influence as the child's relation to the carrier' (ibid). Godard's theorisation of the significance of movement in the constitution of subjectivity integrates phenomenological and psychoanalytic insights with the in-body researches of dancers. It is the specificity of each person's 'tonic dialogue', that is, their mode of engaging the gravitational field, which is at the heart of the dance experience and forms the basis of its poetics. Godard notes:

The essential task of the tonic muscles is to inhibit falling, to maintain one's verticality. In order to make a movement, these muscles have to release, and it's in this release that the poetic quality of the movement is generated. The movement will be invested with authority in a way that is more or less moving, depending on the greater or lesser degree of tonic inhibition (1996:18).

The release which initiates movement is the ground of dance's communicative force, argues Godard; and it is the 'poetic charge' conveyed in the moving body's transition between states that is of primary interest in dance, not its forms. Clarifying this distinction, Godard notes the preoccupation in classical dance with a 'universe of lines and forms', to the exclusion of relational aspects of movement. Ballet's focus on 'form' is contrasted to new modes of dance practice such as Contact Improvisation whose organisation of 'deep communication between kinespheres' goes beyond surface touch to engage the 'tonic musculature of the other' (ibid:18).

The work of American child psychiatrist Judith Kestenberg is one of Godard's points of reference in his theorisation of subject formation. Kestenberg applies Laban's method of

⁸⁵ Hubert Godard and Laurence Louppe have brought dazzling insight to contemporary dance theory through their synthesis of French critical theory and radical dance practice. They lecture in the Department of Dance at the University of Paris VIII and some of their work is available in translation in *Writings on Dance* #15.

movement analysis to the study of the psycho-motor development of babies and young children in relation to the psycho-motor preferences of their parents. Her analysis of the developmental patterns of infants has also been significant in the evolution of Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen's Body-Mind Centering. Body-Mind Centering is an experiential study of the major systems of the body — skeletal, muscular, neuro-endocrine, and circulatory — in conjunction with the developmental patterns that underlie human movement. It is an innovative approach to movement education and re-education, which has become an important resource for dancers and others interested in new movement experience, applications and understandings. Like Godard, Cohen identifies the process of perceptual-motor development as critical to subject formation. Cohen speaks in the following passage of the importance of the first year of life.

This is when the relation of the perceptual process (the way one sees) and the motor processes (the way one moves or acts in the world) is established. This is the baseline for how you will be processing activity, either in receiving or expressing, throughout your life (1993:99).

Cohen has developed detailed methods of activating and elucidating these fundamental perceptual-motor processes. Her work has influenced choreographic and performance practice as well as stimulating reflection on processes of training. For Cohen, movement education involves understanding the nature of what she terms 'the mind of the body'. In its broadest sense this is a process of

identifying, articulating, differentiating and integrating the various tissues of the body, discovering the qualities they contribute to one's movement, how they have evolved in one's developmental process, and the role they play in the expression of mind (1993:1).

Cohen's approach to movement re-education and training problematises the terms 'body' and 'mind' and provokes questioning as to what 'it' is that is being trained. For Cohen, the body is a profoundly mutable system, governed by a complex web of structures and processes, each of which is subject to the mind's attention and intention. Analysis of the organisation and quality of a body's movement affords insight into cognitive and perceptual processes, states Cohen. In her view, all movement is the physical manifestation of mind. Movement changes according to where a person is 'putting her mind'; that is, the quality of a person's movement reflects the nature of the body tissue from which movement is initiated and expressed. Cohen has described the body as being like sand,

which forms and re-forms in relation to the play of the wind. 'It's difficult to study the wind', she notes, 'but if you watch the way sand patterns form and disappear and re-emerge, then you can follow the pattern of the wind, or in this case, the mind' (1993:11).

Dance styles and genres are forms of culture which embody specific perceptions of space, gravity and time. Following Cohen's conceptualisation we might describe dance styles as distinctive 'forms of mind'. Cohen associates stylistic differences in dance to underlying perceptual and motor preferences; dance styles are supported by and tend to amplify a particular range of body systems and developmental patterns. A dancer, or anyone else for that matter, might choose to extend the 'mind of her body' beyond the confines of a given dance style or habit of comportment by explicitly bringing her attention to bear upon different body systems as she moves.⁸⁶

As noted above, movement is governed by both conscious and unconscious mental processes; the psycho-motor preferences which govern our movement and perception are established early in life, and function largely below consciousness. Cohen's project has been to bring awareness to these psycho-motor preferences and to extend our capacity to experience the distinctive qualities of the different systems of our bodies. Body-Mind Centering is an experiential anatomy which trains students to 'think' their bodies through different structures and systems. In "Moving from Within", Cohen speaks of the process and effect of initiating movement from specific places in the body.

I can tell where someone is initiating from, by watching the type of movement that emerges ... This summer there were over sixty students who studied with me during a fifteen hour week of classes. By the time we finished most people had the facility to change the place of initiation from the container (skeletal-muscle system) to the contents (organs/glands/soft tissue) — and to very specific areas of the contents. They were also able to perceive the different mind-states and feelings which emerged depending on the place of initiation. Sometimes the room would feel heavy, or light, sometimes spatial, inner-directed and so on. As we change from one body area to another, the mind of the room changes. All of a sudden you pick up a change in the quality of the room (1993:10).

⁸⁶ Cohen's "Dancer's Warm-Up" details a systematic approach to developing a wide range of movement skills and qualities. She suggests, for example, that 'initiating and expressing movement through the skeletal system brings out the inherent qualities of clarity, effortlessness and form', while initiating movement through the muscular system draws out qualities of 'vitality, power and dynamics of meeting, overcoming, yielding to and balancing resistance' (1993:15).

Cohen's concept of the body has an affinity with philosopher Moira Gatens's notion of the imaginary body which was discussed in Chapter 2. In these frameworks, the body is not conceptualised as a fixed entity but may be experienced as a process, a complex intertwining of historical, physical, symbolic, chemical, emotional, and metaphorical structures and forces. In Cohen's practice of Body-Mind Centering, subjectivity is theorised as a patterning of the deep structures of bodily comportment, motility and perception. These psycho-motor patterns may be brought to awareness and the possibility exists, through the mobilisation of attention and imagination, of practicing oneself differently. As Cohen's observations indicate, these explorations of 'body-mind' produce tangible, if subtle, alterations in spatial experience — 'the mind of the room changes'. The theoretical work of Hubert Godard and the practical researches of Cohen suggest new ways of thinking about the nature of dance and movement experience. The semiotics of dance is articulated and registered at a sensory-motor level; this is where we might look for evidence of new dance's impact upon processes of social and cultural change. I will return to this question in the concluding sections of this chapter.

4.5 Choreographic implications of the critique of vision

For the early modern dance choreographers the act of choreographing was a process of discovering or inventing movement. They did not begin, as the ballet choreographer does, with an already established technique and style of moving, but shaped the dancer's body and movement to the specific expressive needs of each new dance they made. In modern dance the processes of training the body and evolving a technical vocabulary for the purpose of training have been inextricably linked with the creative process of making dances. In the ballet, the two activities — training, that is, mastering the established technique, and choreographing — have become functionally discrete. The ballet technique and vocabulary logically precedes the creative action of the choreographer. In modern dance, the role of technique is somewhat differently conceived:

(Modern dance) concentrates — as a point of definition — on constantly rediscovering dance ... As a consequence, there are modern dance techniques but not one modern dance technique. Because of this, modern dancers study the human body and its movement potential. In this process of scientific study and aesthetic experiment, they produce a view of dance (and dance technique) that has more to do with learning how to move than with unquestioned imitation of movement styles or the

incorporation of a codified movement vocabulary. Technique in modern dance is less a means for establishing a vocabulary of movement than a preparation of the alert, alive and responsive body (Fraleigh 1987: 104-5).

Sondra Fraleigh's description of the role and place of technique in modern dance points to an important principle at the heart of the creative process in modern and postmodern dance choreography. The 'discovery stance' which characterises modern dance began with the early pioneers of this tradition and their disposition to work from individual resources in self-conscious opposition to established aesthetic models. The visions, insights and feelings they wished to communicate called for new, more individually defined modes of physical expression. They began with their own bodies.

In the late 20th century the dancer's bodily knowledge is supported and supplemented by insights and methods drawn from a number of innovative body therapies, the most well known amongst them being the Alexander technique, Feldenkrais and Todd alignment or ideokinetic methods. These body disciplines harness neuro-physiological energies in pragmatic but powerfully transforming ways. Common to all three is an emphasis upon the client's/student's subjective experience of movement. These disciplines do not propose an ideal body against which an individual measures and orders her appearance and actions. 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 coordination, fluency, efficiency, ease and enjoyment of movement. These methods have implication beyond their immediate therapeutic impact upon individuals. When transposed to the dance stage, the image and experience of embodiment cultivated through the practice of these techniques is a challenge to the classical aesthetic ideal, which would represent the dancer's body as a perfected object. Ideokinesis, for example, is unlike traditional dance trainings in the emphasis it places upon tactility and proprioception as the primary means of learning. The ideokinetic method does make use of visual perception, but in a somewhat paradoxical way. The dancer utilises her visual imagination as a route to and stimulus of kinaesthesia. The dancer meditates upon a visual image of her body or 'sees' herself in action in her mind's eye. She then allows the image to recede and dissolve into her flesh. The effectiveness of the technique is grounded in a neuro-physiological fact, namely, the ability of a mental image to generate motor response and concomitant kinaesthetic feedback⁸⁷ A dancer trained in these, what we might call 'internal' techniques brings to the stage a precisely tuned bodily

⁸⁷ For a concise account of the neurological basis of ideokinetic method see Nancy Udow's "The Use of Imagery in Dance Training" *Theatre Papers*, Series 2, 1978.

knowledge and a set of values and interests which reflects a sensory organisation very different from that of the classically trained dancer.

A critique of ocularcentrism has been occurring at a tactical, practical level in dance since the early 1900s and this critique, as Copeland pointed out some years ago, has implications for feminism.⁸⁸ In modern dance the question of possible resistance to the processes of visual objectification has been at issue since Duncan's early attacks upon the nineteenth century ballet, with its emphasis upon spectacle and virtuosic display. The dancer cannot however deny the important role of visual perception in performance; nor can she disavow the specific impact and effects of the sight of her moving body. Dance is, amongst other things, an art of the visible and to dance, within the context of the Western theatre tradition, is to be seen as 'body'. The pertinent question is: What is the dancer's active response to seeing and being seen?

Vision and visual representation cannot be abandoned by the dancer but must be reclaimed and redefined in ways other than that prescribed by previous structures of seeing. The new dance strategies discussed in this chapter have been directed towards a disordering of the visually dominated sensorium so that other, culturally neglected senses might be experienced more fully. For the exploratory postmodern dancers the dance stage can become an intimate, haptic space where the subtle nuance 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 may be actualised, for the viewer as well as the performer.

In dance, as in other arts fields, the question of vision goes beyond the issue of content to take in the parameters of visual experience. What is at stake is not merely the question of what is seen on the dance stage, but how we see and where we look. Most importantly, dancers have brought new challenges to the perennial question of the nature of embodiment. In dancing they ask: What is it to be (a moving) 'body'? What is it that is being seen?

4.5.1 Unsettling the spectator subject

If the humanist subject could be said to be pictorially rendered in Renaissance art and in classical ballet, a post or anti-humanist subject might be witnessed at play in the work of Merce Cunningham. Cunningham's dances resist the framing, the perspective and the habits of viewing imposed by the proscenium arch stage. Cunningham speaks in the

⁸⁸ See Roger Copeland's "Towards a Sexual Politics of Dance" (1982).

following quotation of a reconceptualisation of space, and the space of the stage, as reflected in the complex, multi-focused dances he produces.

In classical ballet as I learned it, and even in my early experience of the modern dance, the space was observed in terms of a proscenium stage; it was frontal. What if, as in my pieces, you decide to make any point on the stage equally interesting? I used to be told that you see the centre of the space as the most important: that was the centre of interest. But in many modern paintings this was not the case and the sense of space was different. So I decided to open up the space to consider it equal, and any place occupied or not, just as important as any other. In such a context you don't have to refer to a precise point in space. And when I happened to read that sentence of Albert Einstein's; 'there are no fixed points in space', I thought, indeed, if there are no fixed points, then every point is equally interesting and equally changing.

I began to work in that direction, for it opens up an enormous range of possibilities ... The space could be constantly fluid instead of being a fixed space in which movements relate. We've grown up with ideas about a fixed space in the theatre to which spectator and dancer refer. But if you abandon that idea you discover another way of looking (Cunningham 1985:17-18).

Cunningham's project was to shift the focus in dance performance onto the physical realities and articulations of the body matter-of-factly engaged in the act of moving. The stage space was reconceived as a field of activity rather than a hierarchically organised frame for a fixed representation.

The exploration of the structure and nature of spectatorship is a fundamental ground of theatre and performance of all kinds and a subject of enduring interest to choreographic and theatre artists. Influenced by Cunningham's innovations, a new generation of choreographic artists continued to investigate the role and function of the spectator as condition and ground of performance. The strategies explored by new dance artists in their search for alternatives to traditional audience-performer relations involved the examination, unsettling, and in some cases dismantling, of the place of the spectator. To name just a few of numerous performance examples: Trisha Brown's *Roof Piece* (1973), Twyla Tharp's *Dancing in the Streets of Paris and London, Continued in Stockholm and*

Sometimes Madrid (1969) Simone Forti's events and happenings including *See Saw*, *Hangers* and *Huddle* (1961) Steve Paxton's *Lecture on Performance* (1968); and the improvisational work of the Grand Union (1970-'76).⁸⁹

Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s artists were involved in an exploration of the limits and possibilities of the 'theatrical' as they sought to re-negotiate the place and meanings of the body in the theatre frame. The proscenium stage was eschewed in favour of more ambiguous sites; that is sites such as gymnasiums, galleries, loft studios, parks, rooftops and streets where the boundary between watcher and watched, the dancer and the spectator was less assuredly demarcated. The contract, often breached, but conventionally governing relations between dancer and spectator, with each adhering to his or her 'proper' place and role, is supported architecturally in a proscenium-style theatre by a clear separation of house and stage. In the non-theatre spaces used by performing artists in the 1960s and 1970s this 'contract' could not so readily be assumed or activated. The relation between performer and spectator was subject to revision. The inviolability (invisibility) of the spectator self was threatened and undermined. In the absence of what dance historian Lena Hamnergren has termed the 'disciplining kinaesthetics of the auditorium'⁹⁰ the identity of an artwork and its claims to autonomy were also under threat. The staging of dance outside the theatre frame makes explicit the process by which dance images and spectators are mutually constituted. In these postmodern dance experiments, the structure of seeing which produced both the artwork and the spectator subject as given, autonomous 'spaces' was destabilised.

The concept of haptic space offers a way of conceiving the body as inevitably intertwined with space. As Gibson argues, perceptual systems operate across the body-world boundary; haptic perceptions of touch and kinaesthesia are produced in between the inside and outside of the body. One effect of postmodern spatial exploration in dance was to reconfigure the spectator-performer relation in haptic, rather than visual terms. The notion of haptic space challenges the dominant representations of world-body boundary and the figure-ground relationship of traditional proscenium stagings.

⁸⁹ In Australia, the Sydney based Dance Exchange company is notable for its sustained exploration of non-theatrical settings for performance, especially during the mid to late 1970s. Dance Exchange performances were situated in a range of outdoor spaces, including the roof of a parking lot and on a Sydney Harbour ferry, in art galleries, lecture theatres and gymnasiums. Dance Exchange's work of the 1970s is documented and discussed in *Writings on Dance* #18/19, (1999).

⁹⁰ Hamnergren uses this phrase in her imaginative reconstruction of the experience of the spectator at Isadora Duncan's 1906 performance in the Ostermalmsteatern in Stockholm, in *Choreographing History* (1995).

4.6 Spatialising practices in contemporary dance

We perform our movements in a space which is not 'empty' or unrelated to them, but which on the contrary, bears a highly determinate relation to them: movement and background are in fact, only artificially separated stages of a unique totality. Goldstein (1923) cited in Merleau-Ponty (1962:138)

...it is clearly in action that the spatiality of our body is brought into being. By considering the body in movement, we can see better how it inhabits space (and moreover time) because movement is not limited to submitting passively to space and time; it actively assumes them. Merleau-Ponty (1962:102)

In the view of French essayist Paul Virilio, dance is one of the most important sites of contemporary inquiry into the relationship between bodies, space and place(s). Dance articulates and proceeds from a recognition of 'the mysterious complicity between the animate and the inanimate' (Virilio 1994:54); it registers the diverse ways in which space and time are 'actively assume(d)' by social subjects. Dances exist as tangible, if ephemeral, artifacts that record and embody spatial experience. Choreographies might thus be regarded as spatial stories, nets or combines, which register and express precise perceptions of movement, location and displacement.

The choreographing of space is not the sole prerogative of dance however. Bodies and spaces constitute and recreate one another in the countless actions of everyday life. Walking, for example, is a fundamental choreography, an inscription and shaping of bodily comportment and movement that is full of social and political implications, as Michel de Certeau's reading of 'walking in the city' would confirm.⁹¹ But how complex an activity walking is and how difficult to track.

Analysis of the spatiality and motility of the body has been conducted in various fields. Proxemics, Edward T. Hall's analyses of interpersonal space, and Laban analysis are two disciplines that have most directly informed contemporary performance practice.⁹² Rudolf von Laban developed a system of movement notation and also a means of mapping movement qualities, by describing what might seem to be those most elusive and

⁹¹ See Michel de Certeau's "Walking in the City" in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984).

⁹² Proxemics is the study of the culturally specific social and psychological boundaries that govern interpersonal interactions in concrete spatial terms. See E.T. Hall *The Hidden Dimension*. (1969).

ephemeral aspects of movement — qualities of flow, of intensity and of dynamic. He formulated a system of movement analysis now known as Effort Shape or Labananalysis. Laurence Louppe, French dance theorist and critic has this to say about Laban's concept of spatiality:

Laban saw the body as a sort of score, essentially arranged by what he calls 'effort', in other words the displacement of weight ... this displacement of weight organises an interior cartography, and at the same time a geography in which the relationship between space and time already comprises an architectural space. When he talks of 'effort shaping' he means constructing space with one's weight, with the displacement of one's weight (1994:36).

The space of our bodies is known only through displacement, that is, through movement, as we fall into gravity to take a step. Irmgard Bartenieff has also commended walking as an excellent subject for movement and spatial analysis. A complex total body action, walking, she writes 'is at the root of all environmental shaping activities' from the instrumental to the symbolic (1980:205).

A study of the relationship between moving bodies, spatiality and the constitution of the social might well begin with the quotidian action of walking, as noted by Mauss. The intentionality and self-consciousness of performed movement presents however a distinct opportunity. Dance performance, unlike 'natural' walking, offers insight into the manner in which a society and a culture explicitly represents itself to itself. Performance practices articulate specific insights concerning the social production of space and re-present these percepts within the relative confinement of the space of a stage (however broadly that stage might be defined).

4.6.1 Are dancers 'space eaters'?

The phrase 'dancers are space eaters' is that of American postmodern choreographer, Lucinda Childs. It is cited in "For Available Light", Susan Sontag's lexicon of Child's work, and more recently has reappeared in a local setting as the title of a biennial dance event held at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art (1996).

Sontag writes:

Dancers are travelers, 'space eaters' (Child's words), using up a given space in a patterned, comprehensive way ... The more space the better. Dancers are pulled along a line; and their

relations are conceived as parallel, perpendicular etc. Dancers are always, indefatigably, going somewhere. In a state of non-imploing urgency, they never stop; though they may go into movement-absence, they do so in order to repopulate the space (1983:10).

Against Sontag's conception of dancing as a linear projection across space, consuming as it travels, I am investigating the notion of a choreographic practice which produces and inhabits haptic space. In an interview with dance historian Daniel Dobbel, Paul Virilio comments upon the colonising force of certain forms of performance. He observes a new aesthetic tendency in certain contemporary dance contexts, namely a new preoccupation with and absorption in space. This choreography of spatial 'preoccupation' (what I am terming 'haptic') is contrasted with earlier, territorial impulses in the art of dance — historical but still extant dance practices that enact discourses of conquest.⁹³ Deborah Jowitt makes a similar observation in discussion of avant-garde choreographers of the 1960s '(who) wished to democratise space, and ... were more interested in inhabiting it than in dominating it' (1988:333).

Among the works cited by Jowitt is an early piece by choreographer Lucinda Childs, *Street Dance* (1964), in which Childs chose not to direct the audience's attention in the usual way, through the invention, choice and shaping of dancers' movement in space, but guided it verbally. Childs and another performer were in the street, blending in to the ambient movement and occasionally pointing out particular items of interest. The audience was stationed at the windows of an upstairs loft from where they were directed by Childs pre-recorded voice to attend to various objects and architectural details in the street below. In this work the audience's spatial perception was intensified almost entirely by the choreographer's words.

Also investigating new ways of producing and perceiving dance, Trisha Brown used the landscape and architecture of unusual performance sites. Her early works included *Group Primary Accumulation* (1972) performed on rafts floating on a lake in Minnesota, *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* (1970), which was exactly as the title describes, and the previously cited *Roof Piece* (1973) which took place over an eleven block radius on roofs in downtown New York. In all these works, the site of the performance contributed significantly to the production, definition and reception of each dance. In the environmental pieces of Brown, Childs and others, the figure-ground relationship, so strongly inscribed in conventional theatre settings is put under scrutiny; 'the figure can

⁹³ Lincoln Kirstein describes ballet in precisely these terms in his "Classic Ballet: Aria of the Aerial", where he writes, 'Ballet simulates a conquest against gravity of aerial space' (1983: 238).

merge with the ground or call attention to it, losing some self-importance along the way' writes Jowitt (1988:333).

Jowitt discerns a political sensibility in the spatial explorations of many postmodern dance artists. The postmodern rejection of the proscenium arch stage was linked with a perception of the hierarchical distinctions operating in such spaces — 'foreground and background are not just locations in space' (ibid). Postmodern experimentation with new performance sites proceeded from a recognition that stage spaces are densely coded with social meanings and bear specific aesthetic and cultural values.

Space and movement bear a highly determinate relationship to one another. Two levels or registers of spatial experience are implicated in the production and reception of dance performance. The first level of description, opened up in the earlier parts of this chapter, concerns the experience of spatiality at the level of the body. How does the dancer experience the spatiality of her own body and how is that experience supported or challenged by the spatial practices and narratives of her chosen dance genre? The second level of spatial experience concerns the social and political relationships which particular forms of dance practice establish with the world, both in pragmatic terms — which space, where and who has access to it — and in terms of broader conceptual questions of the social production of space. I am concerned here to indicate some of the ways in which the exploratory spatialising practices of dance impact upon the social and political meaning of spatiality.

A performer's peripheral vision practice, for example, disrupts the figure - ground relationship for the dancer as 'he watches the room pass' (Paxton 1977:8). Cunningham's commitment to an aesthetic of multiplicity leads him to a democratisation of the space of the stage. His dances, like field compositions, challenge habits of viewing imposed by the proscenium arch stage and invite the spectator to relax her focus and engage her peripheral vision. The spatialising practices of dance provoke distinctive perceptual responses and strategies; they also embody distinctive political judgements and insights. A further illustration will clarify this point.

Proponents of ballet have identified the genre as a universal form of dance, citing as evidence ballet's global dissemination from centres of European imperial power. This geographic colonisation is mirrored in the internal dynamic of the ballet. Its masterful occupation of space and its rigorous control of body and movement might also be regarded as a form of colonisation.

If, as suggested above, ballet colonises place it may also colonises the bodies of dancers. In a recent interview with critic Deborah Jowitt, Australian choreographer Russell Dumas describes the impact of ballet training upon the perceptual disposition of dancers:

Ballet ...is a technique that is designed to be perceived at a distance. It's akin to semaphore signals. Ballet is about certain extremes and (for a ballet dancer) the subtlety of something like Trisha Brown's involvement with transition is likely to be lost and not even recognised as movement. Techniques like ballet put railway tracks through the sensibility.... you end up with this very peculiar distortion in perception (1997:7).

Dumas's point is that there is an intimate connection between perception and practice. 'How you see movement is how you learned it', he observes (ibid:7). Ballet is not unique in its formative effect upon perception, he argues, but it is a particularly powerful technology of the body. Begun in childhood, its effects are thoroughgoing and long lasting.

Ballet training is directed towards mastery of the spatial exigencies of the proscenium stage. Countering the early modern dancers' critique of classical dance as 'unnatural', Lincoln Kirstein has argued that ballet is the most natural way of moving on the proscenium stage, meaning that it is a refined and highly evolved response to the stringent demands of that place. The classical dancer's body is thus defined by achievement of the greatest degree of frontal legibility as established in the 'turn out', by a commitment to the vertical, to clarity of line, lightness and speed. The representational conventions governing the functioning of stage presentations of ballet are literally incorporated, taken up as part of the dancer's bodily comportment and kinetic disposition.

If, as A.K. Volinsky (1983:255) asserts, classical ballet is the most perfect expression of the principle of verticality, modern and postmodern dance could claim to be dance genres that redress the imbalance by giving articulation to the horizontal plane of existence. I am reflecting here the characterisation, widespread during the thirties, of modern dance as an earthy, gravity-bound art. Also relevant in this context are a number of rare but notable instances of 'horizontal' choreography, for example Trisha Brown's *Primary Accumulation* (1972) and Australian dancer Eva Karczag's *Rolling Dance* (1976).

Karczag's *Rolling Dance* is a 15-20 minute improvisation exploring the momentum of rolling as generated by different points of initiation in the body. Karczag pours her weight from one side of her pelvis to the other; she pushes off through her feet, or lets her shoulder lead the action. Sometimes she releases her weight fully into the floor; sometimes she pushes down into it to precipitate a forceful roll through space. With connections to Contact training exercises the work is conceived as a duet between the dancer's skin, her weight, and the surface of the floor. More recent examples of horizontal choreography are Russell Dumas' *Cargo Cult* (1997) and *Traces* (1998), which incorporate substantial floor-based material. In these two works phrases of movement developed in the vertical plane

are transposed to the horizontal. The dancer's task is to attempt to maintain the dynamic or tensional structure of the original phrase in a very different gravitational setting.

Moving in the horizontal, the dancer subverts the perspectively organised spatial field of the traditional dance stage; she deconstructs the co-ordinates upon which perspective vision depends. However to occupy the horizontal plane is to invite a precise risk. Rotating the axis 'proper to man' the dancer invokes dangerously liminal corporeal states; the horizontal is the plane of vulnerability and pleasure, associated with infancy and illness, sleep and sexuality and death and decay (Krauss 1985 & 1997). The vertical and the horizontal planes are charged with meaning in dance representation, as well as in daily life. Furthermore, as Barbara Freedman argues in her analysis of Dürer's woodcut, these fundamental axes around which human life is structured and lived, are gendered. When a dancer occupies the horizontal axis, with *intent*, her action is a challenge to the aesthetic convention and representational economy of the dance stage.

How we move, how we inhabit our bodies, our attitudes towards and understandings of the fact of our embodiment, our attention to our physical being; all this shapes and informs our perceptions of the world and affects our action in it. The act of perception is not a simple response to sense data; it is an act of meaning. Perception entails the making of meaningful wholes or patterns and it is experience dependent. If practice informs perception, then by changing practice, by challenging our habitus, that is, our bodily and attitudinal dispositions we may challenge, disrupt and move on our perceptions. Performance training is vitally concerned with these kinds of transformative processes. Dance students learn to actively assume space and time according to and sometimes in resistance to, the cultural legacies available to them. The modality and style of their assumption of space may be masterful occupation, but it may also be haptic preoccupation; they may learn to consume space or to inhabit and be 'moved' by it.

Dance training, considered as a spatial practice, is a means whereby specific apprehensions of space and time are embodied and expressed. The history and genealogy of a practice will influence the kinds of kinetic possibilities and modes of embodiment the dancer may have access to.

4.7 Spatialising practices and places of performance.

The space of performance is a transient, one might say, in the words of philosopher and dance theorist Suzanne Langer (1953), 'virtual' space, produced by, through and within the movement of a body or bodies. Performers create the space of performance through the presence and absence, movement and stillness, sounds and silences of their bodies.

We are not concerned here with a simple binary relation, that of the container, the theatre/viewing place, and the contained, the performance event, though certainly that

relationship can be profitably studied and is one of the important objects of dance and theatre history. In twenty-first century Australia the place of dance performance may be a proscenium arch stage in a State funded performing arts facility but it may equally be a decommissioned factory or a church hall. Pertinent in all these contexts is the development and mobilisation of distinctive spatialising practices, that is, the ways in which the order of a given place or site is confirmed or transformed through the practice of danced movement. A distinction must be made between the space and place of performance and here I will draw upon the work of writer Michel de Certeau. The contrast established by philosopher Merleau Ponty of phenomenal space, the spatio-temporal dimension as created in movement, and geometrical space deduced through scientific abstraction, is recast by de Certeau as a distinction between space and place. In an essay entitled "Spatial Stories", published in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life* he describes the difference between spaces and places as follows:

The law of the proper rules in the place; the elements taken into consideration are beside one another, each situated in its own 'proper' and distinct location, a location it defines.

A space exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus, space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalise it and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities.

In short, space is a practiced place. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers (1988:117).

De Certeau foregrounds the temporal dimension of spatiality and reverses the customary assumption that 'place' is a structured space. Space is not a prior condition of 'place', he argues, but is the outcome or product of activity. Space is a form of practice that produces and transforms place. Acts of performance proceed from a practiced apprehension of place. Performers exercise a distinctive practical logic in their apprehension and skilful manipulation of the disciplining kinaesthetics of places.

Dana Reitz, an improvisatory performer, in describing her work process, speaks of 'reading' the performance place, of creating with it and of playing a space, exploring its spatial

acoustics and volumes.⁹⁴ In shaping a work for performance she is concerned with the modulation of her audience's perceptions — of space, duration, velocity, volume and distance. She will draw her own and her audience's attention close in to her kinesphere and then send her attention and energy way out with a single gesture of her arm, hand or eye. These skills in reading, playing and tuning places can be cultivated and developed. They are crucial performance skills, predicated upon an enhanced kinaesthetic apprehension of space.

As de Certeau observes, a spatial order 'organises an ensemble of possibilities and interdictions' (1988:117); the dancer actualises certain possibilities of a given place. The order of place is not only architecturally determined but is also established through the history of its usage, embodied, in the case of theatrical dance, in traditions of stagecraft and choreographic design. The dancer may in dancing intensify and reify the order of the performance place, but he, like de Certeau's 'walker in the city', may unsettle the established spatial order and mobilise other possibilities. Cunningham's intervention into and reworking of the spatial dynamics of the proscenium stage space is a case in point. Trisha Brown's exploitation of 'neglected' zones of buildings such as exterior and interior walls in her celebrated early works *Walking down the side of a building* and *Walking on the Wall* (1971) are another. Laurence Louppe identifies a number of spatial preoccupations in Brown's early *Equipment Pieces*,⁹⁵ which have continued to figure significantly in later work:

the decentring of the body's weight in relation to gravity, bringing about an alteration in the perceptions of the dancer as well as the spectator — thus a role both heuristic and poetic given to the weight of the body, here deliberately unsettled from its habitual distribution; a reconsideration of all 'scenography', whether urban, human or symbolic; and a preference for neutral, floating spaces, unexpected interruptions, reversals and vertigos (Louppe.1996:8).

Louppe's description underlines the perceptual impact of Brown's spatial interventions. The body's relationship with gravity (its 'tonic dialogue') is made exquisitely, and at times awkwardly tangible by the dancers as they negotiate movement in a suspended horizontal plane. In this example, the challenge to and effect of the dancers' spatialising practice upon the spectator's habit of viewing and their experience of place is quite explicit. I will now briefly consider some of the gender implications of dancers' engagement with the haptic system in terms of the spatial dispositions it facilitates and supports.

⁹⁴ See "Situated Knowledge. An Interview with Dana Reitz", Elizabeth Dempster *Writings on Dance* #7. Winter (1991: 23-37).

⁹⁵ So called because the dances utilised specialised equipment - harnesses, pulleys, ropes etc.

4.7.1 Gender, spatiality and movement.

Iris Marion Young's groundbreaking essay "Throwing like a Girl" brings a phenomenological perspective to the analysis of female bodily comportment and movement. The paper takes as its starting point the observation that in everyday life men and women move differently from one another. In her analysis of women's spatial experience and behaviour, Young suggests that female comportment (throwing, jumping, running etc, *like a girl*) arises from a lack of practice in using the body in performing tasks (1990:154). Young argues that sexual specificity engenders a particular kind of bodily practice or set of practices, which in turn produce particular modes of embodiment. Young undertakes a detailed analysis of women's restricted spatiality, noting that,

Women fail to make use of the body's spatial and lateral potentialities. Men more often move out toward a ball in flight and confront it with their own counter-motion. Women tend to wait for and then react to the approach ... women often approach a physical engagement with things with timidity, uncertainty and hesitancy. Typically we lack an entire trust in our bodies to carry us to our aims (1990:146).

Young identifies three aspects or modalities of 'feminine motility' that together define a 'woman's experience of her own body as a *thing*,' (ibid: 147). At the heart of all these spatial modalities is contradiction; the woman exhibits an *ambiguous transcendence*, an *interrupted intentionality* and a *discontinuous unity*. 'Ambiguous transcendence' is demonstrated when a girl or woman refrains from using her whole body to accomplish a task, such as throwing a ball — 'Only part of the body... moves out towards the task, while the rest remains rooted in immanence', Young observes (ibid:148). The second aspect of female comportment, 'inhibited intentionality', describes woman's distrust of her own body's capacity to engage and connect with things in the world. In physical tasks that require directness and co-ordination of the whole body, women frequently fail to organise in terms of their intended aims, and thus move in a contradictory way. Young:

By repressing and withholding its own mobile energy, feminine bodily existence frequently projects an 'I can' and an 'I cannot' with respect to the very same end (ibid:149).

The third aspect of female motility discussed by Young is the female body's 'discontinuous unity' with both itself and its surroundings (ibid:150). Citing Maurice Merleau-Ponty, she argues that for the body 'to exist as a transcendent presence to the world', that is, to be a *subject*, 'it cannot exist as an *object*.' (ibid). Merleau-Ponty writes: 'In order that we may be able to move our body towards an object, the object must first exist for it, the body must

not belong to the realm of the "in-itself"(1962:139). Young concludes by stating that 'for feminine existence, the body frequently is both subject and object for itself, at the same time and in reference to the same act' (1990:150). For a woman, the body is both object and subject; it cannot exist entirely as a unity confronting a world.

Modalities of female bodily motility are identified by Young in overwhelmingly negative terms, that is, as constrained, spatially restricted and inhibited. Young argues that the disabling self-consciousness that underlies these modalities can be attributed to the specific historical condition of women. Particularly pertinent to the focus of the current chapter is Young's observation that 'woman' is constituted as a 'spectacle', as an object to be looked at and therefore 'the 'feminine subject posits her motion as motion that is looked at' (1990:150).

Young's description of the way female subjectivity is lived and practiced at the level of the body in Western, urban society has been criticised on the grounds that it valorises masculine bodily comportment and activity. One of the effects of Young's engagement with phenomenological perspectives in "Throwing like a Girl" is the reproduction, to some degree, of the gender assumptions implicit in that philosophical tradition. In her essay, women are, once again, judged against male standards and attributes. A number of insightful critiques have suggested that the modalities which Young defines as restricted, ineffective or incompetent, are in need of reevaluation. Susan Best's essay "Driving Like a Boy: Sexual Difference, Embodiment and Space" undertakes such a re-evaluation of female spatiality and comportment. Best frames her critique of Young's paper with a reflection upon the sometimes-fatal consequences of certain aggressive forms of masculine spatiality — when 'driving like a boy' leads to injury and death, for example. In the following passage, Best takes issue with Young's representation of women's 'ambiguous transcendence':

Woman is not wholly in control of her body. This is the implication of Young's argument and this constitutes woman's peculiar positioning in space. She is constituted as the ground and not the bounded, discrete figure. This openness to space, or continuity with it, is surely what Young describes, somewhat negatively, as the drag of immanence (1999:96).

Best argues that continuity or inherence in space could be interpreted as a *positive* attribute of women's relationship to and mode of access to the world. She proposes a reconceptualisation of immanence in space by recourse to more colloquial meanings of the

term: as indwelling, inherent, pervading. She attempts to reconceptualise 'the suspension of masterful being' that the notion of inherence in or continuity with space suggests.

Rather than 'failing' to distinguish figure from ground, women have a heightened capacity for intertwining text and context and for the appreciation of embeddedness ... The capacity to move between immanence and transcendence could enable a kind of critical engagement/detachment that allows new modes of existence to take place (ibid: 100).

The modalities which Young associates with masculine comportment, that is, transcendence of the body and masterful occupation of and projection across space, are highly valued in certain genres of theatrical dance. The haptic emphasis of new dance practices and their preoccupation with space 'immediately adjacent to the body' (Gibson 1966) might cast these forms as 'feminine', as immured in immanence and spatially constrained. Attention to the body and its motion may be immobilising and productive of spatial restriction, as Young claims, but my analysis of the haptic system suggests a contrary view. I am arguing that systematic attention to the realm of the haptic may entail a critical (and feminist) engagement with the history of spatial practice in dance and furthermore that this engagement allows new modes of the aesthetic to emerge.⁹⁶

4.8 Conclusion

'I see only through the touching of the light'.
Irigaray (1993: 112)

The movement researches being conducted in Contact Improvisation, in Body-Mind Centering, and in contemporary choreography have furnished examples of practices which are unusually sensitive to the haptic dimension of human experience. These body disciplines and explorations lend conceptual density and perceptual acuity to poststructuralist accounts of the bodily basis of the subject. They also offer vibrant kinaesthetic experience to feminist critiques of the gender bias underlying the cultural dominance of vision. I have suggested above that new dance practices have a distinctive contribution to make to the reconceptualisation of vision. I will conclude my discussion of the relationship between touch, vision and movement with a further example from practice.

⁹⁶ Rosalyn Deutsche makes a similar observations in her essay "Agoraphobia" in her book *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (1996) where she describes the feminist reframing of the aesthetic in terms which engage previously excluded subjective or 'private' concerns such as the body, sexuality, etc. This reframing, according to Deutsche has effected a reconfiguration of the public sphere.

In her book *Textures of Light: Vision and Touch in Irigaray, Levinas and Merleau-Ponty*, Cathryn Vasseleu takes issue with Martin Jay's characterisation of Luce Irigaray as an anti-visual theorist. Vasseleu argues that rather than denigrate vision, Irigaray is attempting to reconceive it in more productive terms. Against the charge which has been leveled at Irigaray, that she is simply reversing the terms of the patriarchally determined binary logic (valorising touch over sight) Vasseleu argues that Irigaray is not simply denying or rejecting vision but fundamentally reconceptualising it. Vasseleu shows how Irigaray develops an alternative theory of vision by developing an alternative notion of light. Rather than simply reducing vision to touch, Irigaray emphasises the touch of light on the eye, what she calls the texture of light.

Vasseleu describes texture as

a disposition or characteristic of anything which is woven into a fabric, and comprises a combination of parts or qualities which is neither simply unveiled or made up. Texture is at once the cloth, threads, knots, weave, detailed surface, material, matrix and frame. Regarded in this way, light is not a transparent medium linking sight and visibility. It is not appropriate to think of light as a texture either perspectivally as a thing, or as a medium that is separable from things (1998:12).

Conceived of in this way, light's texture or materiality challenges the traditional notion of vision as a distancing sense. If vision is founded on touch, then the split between mind and body, between the sensible and the intelligible, between subjective and objective, between the dancing body and the detached spectator can no longer be maintained. As Vasseleu states: 'An elaboration of light in terms of texture stands as a challenge to the representation of sight as a sense which guarantees the subject of vision an independence, or sense in which the seer is distanced from an object' (1998:13).

Irigaray's theory resonates with Gibson's insights concerning the materiality of light. As I noted in the introduction to this chapter, according to Gibson, light is structured and information rich; it carries precise knowledge about the world, its texture and form. The work of dancer Lisa Nelson offers an example of a way in which these understandings about the relationship between tactility, vision and kinaesthesia might be actively practiced. Nelson is a long time collaborator with Steve Paxton, and close associate of Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen. She has also identified James Gibson as a significant influence upon her ongoing research into the relations between perception, image, action and desire. Nelson's understanding of desire underscores the semiotic dimension of perceptual experience:

When I talk about desire, I am thinking about how we interact with the environment. Perception theory and the behaviour of animals and human beings acting in the environment indicate that upon perceiving something we may simply want to approach it or withdraw from it. Where we place ourselves in an environment is a function of that desire (1996:11).

For Nelson, the relationship between perception and action, movement and desire, is at the heart of theatre and dance experience. She is concerned to understand how the production of images connects people with their senses and her performance research centres on the effort to 'make visible the activity of making meaning'. As she notes, 'which sense you approach it (the image) from produces a particular experience' (1996:14). Nelson describes her own approach to vision as kinaesthetic. Reflecting upon a period of intense involvement in videoing dance, Nelson speaks here of the impact of the camera upon her awareness of the operation of vision:

I became completely consumed with seeing how I composed my vision. I discovered that I didn't see visually, I saw kinaesthetically. I found that I organize the feedback that I get from the physical pattern of my seeing — the feeling from the muscles that move the eyeballs, the action of the lens, the sensation of changing focus from near to far; the myriad of muscles around the eye, the pressure on the eyeballs to change the shape of the lens (1996:9).

Provoked by this experience Nelson undertook a series of experiments with vision and subsequently developed a number of studies in visual perception. An experience of one of these studies is recounted below.⁹⁷

Nelson begins by establishing the location of the retina, midway between the temple and ear. In contrast to a more familiar experience of activity at and around the surface, as the eyes seek and probe, in this study I am invited to imagine light falling upon my retina deep in my skull. I close and open my eyes. The timing of this movement is governed by the movement of my desire. I am instructed to follow the movement of my own attention. When I open my eyes, light touches my retina and I allow an image to form and resolve. When the image decays, that is when I lose interest, lose desire, I close my eyes and move on, by rolling to another position or changing the angle of my head on my spine. The

⁹⁷ I have undertaken workshops with Lisa Nelson in Melbourne and Sydney during 1993 and 1999. This study is drawn from the earlier workshop.

sequence of events is repeated and sustained for as long as it lives in my body. This activity is a rare opportunity to enter into the nature of my own seeing. I experience in a palpable way the form of my own desire as I move towards and away from an object of perception. Nelson distinguishes different modes of visual practice, contrasting a visual posture of detached seeing and an active, kinaesthetically engaged looking. These modes are equally available, she suggests, but they have different commitments and different trajectories:

I find that when I shift into vision, just looking at light and form,
I don't have any desire to move. I reach an absolutely still point.
It doesn't activate my desire to interact. It's like this soft open
place and I don't need to move. However, when I am actively
looking through my environment with all my senses and I see
something that attracts me, then that's a stimulus to move (1996:
9).

This description of haptic engagement with vision offers a provocative reconceptualisation of the operation of sight and vision in the context of performance and an expansion of the modes of reception which are available there. As Nelson suggests, in viewing dance I may choose to adopt the visual posture of 'watching pictures' (Wartofsky 1980) and with it a stance of aesthetic distance. However when I watch kinaesthetically, the personal and subjective and the sense of my own embodiment impinges upon the aesthetic. Between my watching body and her dancing body is the texture of light; it both interconnects and differentiates us. This texture of light is a form of her body experienced within and animating my own.

Chapter 5: Ideokinesis, the Release aesthetic and Eva Karczag's teaching practice.

5.1 Introduction

This chapter takes a close look at another dancing body and the pedagogy which supports its development. In Chapter 2 of this thesis, I considered the structuring imaginary of classical ballet. Here I revisit some of the questions and issues initially outlined in the context of ballet training. The movement practices under discussion in this chapter are based upon the active structuring and direction of the imagination; the question of the imaginary dimension of movement and dance experience is thus a particularly apposite one. In this chapter, an account of the imaginary body of Release is developed through an examination of the theories, beliefs, fantasies and images that structure and regulate ideokinetic practice.

My investigation of the governing imaginary of ideokinesis and Release dance also encompasses a consideration of its social dimension. The forms and styles of corporeality which are cultivated and valorised in ideokinetic and Release practice are analysed for their implications in the re-imagining of gendered habitus. Unlike the discourse surrounding classical ballet, that of ideokinesis is notable for its absence of explicit reference to questions of sexual difference. One of my objectives in this chapter is to elucidate the gendered dimension of the ostensibly gender-neutral practice of ideokinesis.

Throughout the chapter I will use the term ideokinesis as a kind of shorthand to refer to a broad range of techniques and practices which have developed from the pioneering work of American educator Mabel Ellsworth Todd. The distinctive, one could say, *defining* aspect of Todd's work is the use of visualisation to effect neuromuscular change. A number of descriptive, identifying terms such as kinaesthetic education, Todd alignment, Release work, image work and ideokinesiology have evolved at different times and in relation to different institutional contexts, but at the core of all these practices is the use of visualisation and imagery to enhance kinaesthetic experience and to bring about change in the body's alignment and movement.

The term ideokinesis was coined by Lulu Sweigard, who studied with Todd at Columbia University in the late 1930s. It is a useful term insofar as it succinctly describes a

practiced relationship between mind and body, between idea and action. Sweigard has defined ideokinesis as follows:

ideokinesis is derived from kinesis, motion, here defined as physical movement induced by stimulation of muscles ... and ideo, the idea, the sole stimulator in the process ... defined as a concept developed through empirical mental processes (1974:7).

I do have some reservations about the term however, particularly with regard to the primacy it ascribes to conscious, directed mental processes. The role of perception, desire and attention in the experience are, it seems to me, suppressed, and the term perpetuates a Cartesian notion of a division between an active mind and a passive body, even though the practice of the technique may have the opposite effect. But more of that a little later.

In contrast to both the academic transmission of classical ballet and the techniques of modern dance which have developed in the context of choreographic artists' work, the practice of ideokinesis or Todd alignment has a more complex and problematic relationship to performance. Neither a codified system of training like ballet, nor the product of an individual artist's choreographic project, Todd alignment first emerged in the period between 1900 and 1930 as one of a number of radical new theories of the moving body.

In an essay entitled "The Body in Theory" (1996), British dance historian Michael Huxley surveys a diverse range of practice-based body theories which emerged in the early years of the twentieth century. According to Huxley, there was intense theoretical and conceptual interest in the phenomenon of the moving body in this period. The moving body was a site of vigorous debate within a range of artistic, spiritual and scientific discourses and a plethora of theories, proposing various forms of reconciliation between these apparently competing views of the body, developed across divergent fields of artistic and physical practice.⁹⁸ Within this diverse array of body practices and theories, Huxley distinguishes the work of Mabel Ellsworth Todd and F.M. Alexander as researches that were not discipline specific, but were oriented to the elucidation of the fundamental principles underpinning all motor activity.

⁹⁸ Huxley groups the new body theories of the modern period according to discipline, enumerating those theories specifically devised for dance, such as those of Duncan and Laban, theories related to physical education and body culture (Per Ling's Swedish gymnastics and Eugene Sandow's body building regime), those with a musical or rhythmic basis, such as the Dalcroze system of Eurhythmics and the system of Biomechanics developed in the theatre practice of Vassily Meyerhold.

As Huxley has observed, the new conceptualisations of the body proposed by Alexander and Todd initially evolved in therapeutic contexts. Practices were heuristically derived as therapeutic responses to specific instances of physical dysfunction and injury. One of the striking aspects of the personal histories of both Mabel Todd (1874 -1956) and her pupil and colleague Barbara Clark (1889-1982) is the extent to which their early lives were marked by illness, constitutional weakness and injuries which threatened their mobility.⁹⁹ In her early twenties, Todd sustained a serious injury to her spine which left her paralysed. This accident, coupled with a bleak medical prognosis, propelled Todd's discovery of the motivating power of imagery. Todd devised a method of meditating upon images and through this process she gradually taught herself to move again. I recount the story of Todd's paralysing injury and her subsequent recovery of full mobility as a dramatic introduction to the question of the relationship between the ideokinetic process and everyday life. The central premise of Todd's pedagogy was that a reclamation and reformation of daily life could be achieved by directing attention through the body in the form of images. Derived from the study of anatomy and physiology, the images utilised in Todd alignment encapsulate complex information in simple forms that can be easily incorporated into the body. The anatomical image is a way of thinking *through* the body.

One of the strengths of Todd's alignment method is its simplicity and the fact that it proceeds through everyday capacities. Todd, Clark, and other practitioners, have stressed the fundamentally pedestrian and accessible nature of an approach to movement education that relies on the use of mental imagery. The use of imagery represents a technique and like any technique employs methods and skills which are only acquired over time. However, the basis of this work lies in common human experience. In daily life in order to accomplish a task we simply focus upon an intention, be it to walk to the door, to turn the handle to open it, etcetera. The complex neuro-muscular co-ordinations required to accomplish these actions occur below consciousness. The intention, or the *image*, organises action. The term 'image' as employed in ideokinetic practice encompasses a range of mental processes, including but not restricted to visualisation — an image may be a sensation or feeling, for example. Here are two 'images' from the work of André Bernard: imagine the vertebral heels (spinous processes) softening and dropping; think of the fold behind the knee getting softer and deeper (Bernard 1997:32). This capacity to

⁹⁹ Pam Matt details the early life history in "Mabel Ellsworth Todd and Barbara Clark - Principles, Practice and the Import for Dance". Unpublished MA dissertation. University of Illinois, 1973. According to Matt, Barbara Clark suffered from a slight neurological impairment and frailty as the result of rheumatic fever and mild polio. Todd had a similarly difficult start in life. After suffering a serious illness in infancy the doctor's prognosis for Todd was lifelong invalidism.

form and clarify intentions (images), and to focus attention, which underpins all action in everyday life, is harnessed and strengthened in Todd's ideokinetic method.

The practice of Todd alignment has been represented as co-extensive with everyday life.¹⁰⁰ It is so in at least two respects. First, as noted above, the method employs and builds upon non-specialised, everyday abilities. Secondly, the technique effects change in fundamental postural patterns and thus directly impacts upon everyday comportment and movement. As formulated by Todd, ideokinesis is a method of movement re-education which directly addresses and seeks to transform the deep structures of bodily hexis. In Chapter 3 of this thesis, Bourdieu's conceptualisation of the habitus as the bodily substrate of culture was outlined. It was suggested that social and political change involves transformation at the level of the body. The ideokinetic process offers a pragmatic means whereby the construction of a different habitus may be effected. In the chapter at hand this proposition will be examined in some detail, beginning with an analysis of the conditions that support bodily change — as those conditions of possibility have been identified by Todd and other practitioners of ideokinesis. The method is distinguished by the pedagogical significance it accords to the haptic and aural dimensions of bodily experience. The role of these distinctive modalities of teaching and learning will be discussed in a case study focused upon the teaching practice of dance artist Eva Karczag. The case study also provides the context for consideration of the application of ideokinetic and Alexander techniques to processes of dance making and performance.

The new theories developed by F.M. Alexander and Mabel Todd began to play a significant role in dance practice during the 1960s. As I have outlined in Chapter 3, during this period the practice of dance as a theatre art was subjected to a thoroughgoing, if short-lived, critique. The status and nature of dance works and the identity of the professional dancer were challenged as new value was accorded to everyday movement. Dancers associated with a small but very articulate postmodern dance community were questioning the function of dance technique and looking for principles and theories of movement that had a broader application than replication of a particular style. The philosophies and methods of Todd and Alexander provided this breadth of approach. These methods have come to play an important part in the development of an alternative dance aesthetic. The contours of that aesthetic — which I am terming the Release aesthetic — are mapped in this chapter.

¹⁰⁰ Ideokinetic practitioners Mary Fulkerson (1982), Nancy Udow (1978) and Joan Skinner (1996) have described ideokinetic practice in these terms.

Part of a broadly defined field of new dance practice which has grown out of 1960s postmodern dance, Release has established links with practices such as Contact Improvisation and Body-Mind Centering, principally through a number of influential artists/teachers.¹⁰¹ In addition, a number of dance artists, including Joan Skinner, Mary Fulkerson and Nancy Topf have developed detailed dance pedagogies and new forms of performance based exclusively upon the principles of anatomical release.¹⁰² The practice of ideokinesis is not confined to the field of experimental dance however. Over the last forty years ideokinetic methods have become established within the dance academy as a supportive adjunct to more traditional forms of dance training. The evolving Release dance aesthetic is quite diverse and dancers, who have been formed in a range of traditions, including mainstream disciplines such as ballet, are drawing upon Todd alignment/ideokinesis in their training, choreography and performance.¹⁰³ The investigation of ideokinesis undertaken in this chapter will span both aspects of its development — its evolution as a method of movement education applicable to many forms of dance, and its role as a generator of new modes of dance production and performance.

The inquiry will proceed through an analysis of a number of influential teaching texts and will include reference to the work of Mabel Todd, Barbara Clark, Andre Bernard, Eva Karczag and Mary Fulkerson. My own training has been with first generation students of Barbara Clark — Mary Fulkerson, Nancy Udow, John Rolland, Nancy Topf and Pam Matt. Some reference will also be made to the philosophy and methods of F. M. Alexander in recognition of this technique's influence upon the evolution of Release dance and upon some of the individual artist-practitioners discussed here.

In summary, in this chapter I will seek to develop an understanding of the implications of transposing the principles and methods of ideokinesis, originally developed in educational and therapeutic contexts, to artistic practice. The case study of Eva Karczag provides the primary setting for this analysis. By examining one dance artist's integration and interpretation of Mabel Todd's body philosophy I hope to elucidate broader issues concerning the ideokinetic approach to dance training. I will ask in what ways ideokinesis

¹⁰¹ For example, Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen cites Mabel Todd and Barbara Clark as significant influences upon the development of Body-Mind Centering. Mary Fulkerson who developed Release Work in Britain was one of the participants in the first concert of Contact Improvisation held at the John Weber Gallery New York in June 1972.

¹⁰² Developed over some twenty years these approaches, including Topf Technique, Skinner Releasing and Fulkerson's Release Work, have coherent, if open-ended methodologies.

¹⁰³ The artist-teacher Eva Karczag whose teaching practice is documented in this chapter is a case in point. Karczag's early training and first professional performance experiences were in classical ballet. Her later experience encompasses modern and postmodern dance. She also has a long established engagement with various Eastern in-body disciplines such as the meditative movement practice, Tai Chi Chuan.

challenges conventional understandings of the nature and function of dance training. The figure of the pedestrian returns as I examine the relationship between ideokinetic method and everyday life as it is represented in ideokinetic literature and in the teaching practice of Eva Karczag. Where the notion of a choreography of the pedestrian featured in my earlier discussion of postmodern dance, in this chapter the concept of a *pedagogy* of the pedestrian is proposed as a potentially useful way of rethinking the relationship between daily life and dancing.

5.2 Radical Theories of the Body

As noted above, historian Michael Huxley has described the Todd alignment and Alexander techniques as 'radical theories of the body' (1996:87). Here I wish to briefly consider the question of what it is that is 'radical' about Todd's and Alexander's work as I begin to link their practically oriented 'theories' to body theories developed in other disciplinary settings.

Whatever their differences (and in the details of practice these differences are quite significant), the Todd and Alexander techniques share a number of core principles. The first is that the mind and body, the mental and the physical, are regarded as functionally indivisible. Todd and Alexander were committed to the practical implementation of a non-dualist philosophy. This commitment links them with an 'orphan line' of 'anomalous thinkers' (Massumi 1992:5 and Grosz 1994:11), who have questioned the terms within which the dominant Western tradition of Cartesian dualism is framed. The seventeenth century philosopher, Spinoza, is one of these anomalous thinkers who has had an important influence upon twentieth century poststructuralist accounts of the body. Grosz summarises key elements of Spinoza's monist philosophy in the following passage:

Spinoza's most fundamental assumption is the notion of an absolute and infinite substance, singular in both kind and number. If substance is infinite and non-divisible, it cannot be identified with or reduced to finite substances or things. Finite things are not substances but are modifications or affections of the one substance, modes or specifications of substance ... Thus, whereas Descartes claims two irreducibly different and incompatible substances (for example extension and thought, body and mind), for Spinoza these attributes are merely different aspects of one and the same substance, inseparable from each other. Infinite substance ... is as readily expressed in

extension as in thought and is as corporeal as it is mental (1994:11).

Todd's method of postural reintegration resonates with Spinoza's conceptualisation of an indivisible, underlying substance. Todd's 'practical theory' is based in the belief that 'the mind and body are not separate entities, but one process with several functions inseparably interdigitated' (1953:13). In *The Hidden You*, Todd develops this theme:

We now know that brain, nerves and muscle activity are inseparable. One does not act without the other. Mind and matter can no longer be divorced but must be studied as different phases of a single, vital and incredibly complicated situation. We should conceive of the 'mind' then not as a thing that does something, but as a name for things that we perceive to be happening (1953:207).

One of the things that are happening in ideokinesis, and in Alexander technique, is a sustained and precise mobilisation of thinking. In Todd's view, thinking is not confined to reasoning or cognition, but is an activity which involves the whole psycho-physical organism; thinking is conceived as an activity which encompasses 'remembering, planning, judging, believing, doubting, wishing and feeling'. 'The whole body is active in thinking, all its systems co-operate in this activity', Todd declares (1953:207).

Todd's identification of the corporeal basis and effects of thinking has been supported by neurological research, validating her claim that for every thought supported by feeling, there is a neuromuscular response.¹⁰⁴ For Todd, the imagination, or 'the inner image' is 'a form of physical expression', of which movement is its reflection. Thus, according to Todd, imagining entails a process of embodiment; the image is a form of body. Recognition of the dynamic relationship between thinking, imagining and movement (neuromuscular activity) provides theoretical support for Todd's radical view of the role of thought and representations (images) in the constitution and transformation of the body-mind complex.

Alexander, like Todd, has elaborated a non-dualistic theory of the relationship between thought, body comportment and action. His method also emphasises the bodily effects of directed attention and is based upon a perception of the interconnectedness of the psychological and material aspects of human experience. He writes:

¹⁰⁴ Research cited by Todd includes that of Sir C. S. Sherrington, *Integrative Action of the Nervous System* (1906) and Margaret Washburn, *Movement and Mental Imagery* (1916).

I refrain as much as possible from using such terms as 'postures', 'mental states', 'psychological complexes', 'body mechanics', 'subconscious' or any of the thousand and one labelled concepts which have, like barnacles, become attached to the kind of education to which we have been subjected. Instead I prefer to call the psycho-physical organism simply 'the self' and to write of it as something 'in use', which 'functions' and which 'reacts' (1990:162-3).

These theorists of the body have identified comportment and movement as forms of the self, as modalities of the thinking body. One of the implications of their theories is that thinking is a productive force which both holds us in place and which mobilises us. Thinking fixes and stabilises the self, but also produces movement and change¹⁰⁵ This apprehension of the materiality and productivity of thinking, or consciousness, common to both systems, is the key to the techniques' impact upon embodied habitus. For both Todd and Alexander, consciousness and matter are indivisible; a change in one process or modality inevitably resonates throughout the whole organism — a new way of thinking can transform a way of moving, and vice versa.

Alexander technique and Todd alignment both directly address the deep structures of sociality, that is, how bodies are enculturated and how social relations are expressed in posture and movement. Both theorists worked to develop an understanding of the effect of thought upon the functioning of the nervous system; they asserted that misguided and damaging ideas governing the social construction of bodies needed to be countered by more scientific, systematic approaches and representations. As Todd notes in *The Thinking Body* the relationship between the individual and the social body is often encapsulated in forms of moral injunction. To 'stand up straight' or to 'have backbone' is an index of moral rectitude, for example. Posture expresses a social relation; it is a sign and measure of an individual's 'standing' in the world. According to Pam Matt, Todd was impressed by the automatic character of response to postural admonitions and images. The fact that the structural configuration of the body is as responsive to the imposition of an idea as it is to other impinging physical or chemical forces suggested to Todd the feasibility of an image-based method of improving alignment. Todd also recognised that altering postural patterns reconfigures one's experience of and relationship to the world in ways which may be personally challenging. Todd writes:

¹⁰⁵ People imagine that their bodies are disobedient and unreliable in carrying out their wishes, whereas nothing could be further from the truth. Our bodies get terribly confused because of the conflicting demands that we make of them all the time in our muddled, confused contradictory wishes', writes Alexander teacher Walter Carrington (1994:17).

Thus a person who has been holding his chest high, in response to some notion of duty or brave front, feels when told to disregard his chest in accordance with better mechanical adjustment, that he is losing some of his moral force by so doing (1937: 40).

Writing in a period when the high lifted chest associated with military bearing was a dominant postural paradigm,¹⁰⁶ Todd is aware of the disciplinary effects of posture, and recognises that changing deeply established patterns of bodily comportment entails changing the constellation of the social self. She attributed much of the difficulty experienced in changing posture through imagery to the feeling of familiarity and comfort associated with habitual postural patterns, however poor, to which the student had become adjusted. Recognising the powerful inertia of established patterns of bodily use, Todd devised a method whereby, through her hands, a teacher could suggest and direct new lines of support in a student's body. The 'table work' procedures, as Todd originally named them, function as a dynamic intervention against the unconscious determinations of bodily habit. The 'hands on' work in Alexander technique similarly provides stimulus to and support for the student's desire for bodily change. These procedures will be discussed in more detail below.

Todd has a marked interest in the relationship between the body's structural organisation and movement, and the unconscious. In *The Thinking Body* she represents the unconscious as a force, generally unavailable to normal waking consciousness, which may distort organic function producing emotional imbalances, stress, fatigue and pain. However, the unconscious is also that which supports and facilitates positive psycho-physical change. Her method has evolved as a technique of the body whose goal is to supplant the unconscious effects of the investment of power. This investment of power is effected through the operation of socially and familiarly mandated behaviours and postures; Todd proposes a more consciously determined and self-directed re-investment in the body.

The notion of the unconscious thus has a dual function in ideokinesis. In the form of bodily habit, it is conceptualised as an obstacle to change. But it is also regarded as a productive, potentially transforming force, which can be directly harnessed in processes of movement re-education. The ideokinetic process places particular value upon unconscious

¹⁰⁶ Todd describes the main characteristics of military posture as follows: 'He has formed expensive habits of using organic energy. The result of this may be seen by the way in which the adult habitually reacts when told to "stand straight". He responds by doing various and often grotesque things with the upper parts of his body... he thrusts back his shoulders, lifts and expands his lower ribs, pulls in his chin, and stiffens his neck' (1937:163).

processes, that is the *forgetting* or letting go of the conscious direction of an image or intention. Todd has stressed that the new integrations supplanting or modifying established psycho-physical co-ordinations cannot be willed, but happen in a below-conscious or off-conscious mode.¹⁰⁷

The overcoming of a deeply ingrained, unconscious habit is also a primary objective of the Alexander technique. According to Alexander, the process of bodily re-education is a demanding one, requiring considerable time, patience and skill on the part of both teacher and student. Alexander outlines a two stage process of change: the first stage entails 'the inhibition of the instinctive direction of energy associated with familiar sensory experiences of wrong habitual use'; the second stage involves 'the building up in its place of a conscious direction of energy, through the repetition of unfamiliar sensory experiences associated with new and satisfactory use' (1990: 40-41). Alexander describes the process of directing energy out of familiar and into new and unfamiliar paths, as a means of 'changing the manner of reacting to stimuli'. This process implies an ever-increasing capacity on the part of both teacher and student to 'pass from the known to the unknown' (ibid: 41).

This movement from the known to the unknown inverts the premise of the exercise-based regimes which were the preferred methods of physical therapy and postural improvement in Alexander's and Todd's day. In the early part of the twentieth century, systems of muscle-based exercise were regarded as the principal means whereby the body's movement and function might be known, controlled and improved. However, for Alexander and Todd, the principal function of conscious control or direction of the body in processes of postural reintegration and motor learning is to inhibit habitual response. For Todd and Alexander, the conscious inhibition or disruption of voluntary action is a crucial phase in the transformation of habitus. The establishment of new patterns of alignment and co-ordination of movement is best left to unconscious processes, and to 'the wisdom of the nervous system', as Lulu Sweigard later termed it (1974:3).

Moving into the unknown is also somewhat antithetical to conventional dance pedagogy. Learning to control the body and to manage its effects upon others are central objectives in many forms of dance training. In a conventional dance training setting, the unknown, that is, the unconscious, habitual state of the body is gradually brought under control and into consciousness. Susan Foster has described the dancer's slowly acquired knowledge of movement as an ability 'to translate the proprioceptive sensations of movement into

¹⁰⁷ Nancy Udow has described the harnessing of off-conscious or receptive modes in ideokinesis in "The Use of Imagery in Dance Training" (1978).

hypothesised images of how that movement looks and feels to another' (Foster 1986: xvi). The dancer learns to bring her embodied experience under conscious control, in order to effectively formulate and direct movement representations. The value accorded to 'not knowing' and 'not doing' in the methodologies developed by Todd and Alexander, coupled with their commitment to a process of continuing change, raises provocative questions as to their implication for dance training and performance. How might 'not knowing' be the basis for a performance practice? And what challenges to authoritative dancing are presented by a commitment to the systematic inhibition and suspension of familiar ways of moving? Unsurprisingly perhaps, improvisation has been a preferred modality for many Release dancers, including Karczag.

Some dance practitioners have represented the objective of ideokinetic and Alexander techniques as a release of repression so the body becomes free from social conditioning and habitual modes of moving (Goldberg 1996). Although Alexander and Todd both write about the deleterious effects of socially imposed poor habits of use, neither suggests that there is a natural or pre-discursive body. Both have questioned human ability to apprehend the 'natural'. Todd, for example, writes: 'How can we know what is a natural way? It may be merely a way that has become habituated to us ... The habitual way may not be the natural way' (1937:281).

Todd and Alexander recognise the historical specificity of human bodies, which are formed and re-formed in concrete social circumstances. Both describe their techniques in terms of the production and diversification of habit, and not its elimination. In the concluding paragraphs of her last book *The Hidden You*, Todd cites author Harry Wieman on the productive aspects of habit formation:

One of the best habits to form is the habit of forming habits in. This is growth, this is progress. Growth depends upon forming this ever greater number supremely generative, regulative habit. By forming new habits all the time and adding them to the old, the individual progressively increases the range and fullness of his interaction with the total environment. Thus he increases the abundance of his life (in Todd 1953: 248).

The distinction I am highlighting here between the elimination and the proliferation of habit is pertinent to any consideration of the impact of ideokinetic processes upon dance production and performance. If ideokinesis is represented as effecting a *tabula rasa*, a body outside of culture, so to speak, significant questions arise as to how it might function productively as a dance training and performance practice, which is, as performance

theorist Elin Diamond defines it, both a 'doing' and a 'thing done' (1996:1). Rather than representing ideokinesis as a means of release from social constraint and from dance style and genre, it would be more productive to describe these methods as disciplines or discourses in the Foucauldian sense. Once Alexander and Todd techniques are recognised as disciplines which produce specific forms of knowledge and forms of 'the self', some of the logical difficulties, averred to above, of applying them to performance are overcome. As forms of power/knowledge, ideokinesis and associated Release techniques function not only as critiques of dominant forms of practice but as new constructs of bodily knowledge and dance expression.

The vitality of Todd's practice-based philosophy might be exemplified by an image utilised in her early teaching and documented by Barbara Clark: 'An atom is never in stagnation, there is always action. The body is composed of atoms. Each is always free and in motion if allowed to live its natural life' (Clark in Matt 1993:30). Todd represents the body as an activity or process, which functions as a co-operative, self-regulating network of forces. What emerges in Todd's focus upon energy and movement is a sense of the body's 'will to power', to use a Nietzschean term. The sovereign self, master of the body, has no place in Todd's methodology: 'I' do not know or control the process of movement and change, the thinking body knows. 'It moves' she states: 'When conditions are right, movement takes place. "It moves", exactly as "it snows", "it rains" "it hails" '(1937: 281). Alexander employs a similar turn of phrase stating that, 'when conditions are right ... the right thing does itself, the right thing does itself (1990:12).

For Foucault, knowledges and techniques of the body produce specific capacities and powers. In ideokinetic and Alexander practice, one of the possible effects of the sustained focus of attention upon the body is an experience of a profound integration of intention and action such that 'It' happens. This 'It' — an experience of flow apparently outside of or beyond conscious determination — is not outside of a power/knowledge nexus, however. It is important in the context of this thesis study that this experience be represented as the outcome of a specific kind of cultural labour. It is not merely a revelation, consequent upon the clearing away of social distortions and obstacles, of a pre-existing, natural state of bodily unity. The state of integration and movement flow achieved through ideokinesis or Alexander is an effect of practice; it is produced within the terms of a particular form of bodily knowledge. Todd describes ideokinetic power/knowledge in the following way:

Knowledge is the way to conservation and a more efficient use of human energy. The thinking body stands, moves and

performs its skills through knowledge of the natural forces in its dynamic balances (ibid:295).

Todd alignment functions as both critique and construct. The new construct rewrites the old, but this process of rewriting bodily comportment and action is ongoing, never completed. The aim of the method is not mastery of the body, nor a state of perfect alignment, but the enhancement and elaboration of experiences of moving, in daily life and in specialised movement activities alike.

In the foregoing discussion I have broadly indicated some of the ways in which the theory and practice of ideokinesis departs from dominant understandings of the body-mind relation. I will now proceed to a consideration of the details of ideokinetic practice.

5.3 Introduction to the practice of ideokinesis

Mabel Todd began to develop her unique system of postural and movement re-education in the late 1900s. She established studios first in Boston, later, from about 1925, in New York City where her technique of 'natural posture', as she first described it, was taught. In the development of her concept of 'natural posture' Todd drew upon a background in biology and physics, which she had enthusiastically and intensively studied in her teenage years. Applying principles of mechanics to the analysis of posture and movement, Todd concluded that the condition of balance of the skeletal structure, that is, good posture, 'implies freedom from strains, absence from stress, a readiness for action, a mobility — the opposite of fixity'. 'You don't hold anything, everything is in flux' (in Matt 1993:15) is how she once expressed her understanding of postural integration.

If Todd's dynamic concept of posture was radical for her time, her approach to the improvement of the body's alignment and movement was even more challenging to accepted notions and methods. Todd believed improvement could be made 'by thinking continuously of a familiar motivating picture', that is by visualising images. In her book *A Kinaesthetic Legacy*, Pam Matt summarises Todd's teaching method as follows:

Todd's process of postural education took place through a procedure she called the 'table work'. In a typical lesson, the pupil dressed in a loose-fitting kimono. The skeleton or pictures from an anatomy book were shown to illustrate how an aspect of skeletal balance could be related to a law of mechanics. The pupil was taught to locate the area being discussed in his own body or helped to understand the principle through practice of

an appropriate exercise. An image would be suggested as a simple metaphor for the ideas which had been explored. Finally, the pupil reclined on the table and was guided by the teacher's touch to concentrate more precisely upon the location of the image and its action ... As the lesson concluded, the results were discussed, or considered before a mirror. Finally, imagery was suggested for practice in rest or in simple movement, as a way of maintaining the new awareness of better balance in daily life (1993:16).

As outlined here the process involves four stages — intellectual clarification of anatomical principles, introduction and repetition of the image, touch, which indicates lines of direction and support within the body and consolidation through dialogue, repetition and application in movement. But perhaps this account over-emphasises the role of cognition. Todd often used a statement made by a child during one of her lessons to help clarify the nature of the process. The child said: 'Now I understand. First you see it, then you think it, then you forget it, then it happens' (in Matt 1993:15). Although the work entails a precise focusing of attention, the mind does not finally control or direct the unfolding process. The mind is not the doer, but the witness, an interested bystander you might say. Furthermore, as Pam Matt observes, 'to work correctly with the visualisation process' is not easy; 'there is a discipline to be mastered in learning to allow, rather than force a neuromuscular response' (1993:17).

One of the effects of this disciplined direction of the imagination is that movement becomes mindful, that is, imbued with the quality of thought. The body becomes light and mercurial. But if the body is changed, so too is the mind. The ideokinetic process challenges western concepts of a dualistic mind-body relation. The mind, no longer 'pilot of the body ship', to use a Cartesian metaphor, merges or dissolves into flesh.

Todd's work has been developed and applied in diverse settings — in physical education and physical therapy, in dance and movement education, and in choreographic practice. Students of Todd such as Sweigard and Barbara Clark took the work in new directions, evolving methods appropriate to group or class situations. André Bernard, a student of Barbara Clark and later an influential teacher at New York University, developed an alternative to the 'table work' method whereby students' reliance on a one-to-one relation with the teacher was reduced.

The work has also evolved as a dance practice in its own right. 'You don't hold anything, everything is in flux', Todd has said. The appeal of Todd's philosophy and methods for dancers is perhaps embodied in this statement. It communicates the vitality and flexibility of her thinking about the body and over time it has come to encapsulate one of the primary aesthetic values of the new, ideokinetic or release-based dance. From the earliest days of her practice in New York City, dancers and other performing artists were drawn to Todd's work and to the work of her students, Sweigard and Clark. In the late sixties and early seventies many of Barbara Clark's students in New York and at the University of Illinois were dancers of the postmodern persuasion. Pam Matt, who studied with Clark during this period, writes here of the impact of Clark's work upon many developing dance artists:

Barbara gave many... young explorers of post-modern dance a further sense of fascination with simple pedestrian movement. Working from inside, with the play of imagery upon kinaesthetic awareness ... they endeavoured to (move) efficiently and without tension... they were challenged by the complexity of moving simply (1993:72).

The beneficial effects of ideokinesis upon bodily alignment and dance and movement performance have been widely acknowledged. The technique has developed over some ninety years and has been subjected to scientific scrutiny and in that context judged to have clear, that is, objectively measurable, effects. Lulu Sweigard, as part of her doctoral work at Colombia University, undertook empirical research which established the fact that the mental processes entailed in ideokinesis tangibly change the body's structure and neuromuscular functioning.¹⁰⁸ However, this materialist focus upon quantifiable physical result has led to a certain suppression or under-valuation of other aspects of the work.

Sweigard's contribution represents one important line of development from Todd's original research, a line concerned with economy and efficiency, and marked by a certain conservatism. According to Pam Matt, Sweigard's desire for the work to be credible within the academy led her to dismiss certain methods and approaches as 'unscientific'. Todd was also concerned that her work should enjoy not only academic credibility and institutional recognition, but that it might reach a wide public. Matt suggests that these concerns about recognition and accessibility brought about a degree of self censorship influencing not only the representation of the method (as a science), but also the choice

¹⁰⁸ The outcomes of this empirical research are documented in Chapter 16 of Sweigard's book *Human Movement Potential* (1974:172-219).

and range of imagery that teachers employed. There is another line of development however. Barbara Clark and her students are among those who have taken the work into more open-ended creative explorations of kinaesthetic experience and it is this territory which I think is most challenging for new dance exploration. It is this area that is taken up in the work of Eva Karczag.

5.4 Genealogy of the methods: Todd Alignment, Ideokinesis and Release.

The lineage of the ideokinetic method extends over almost ninety years. As noted above, Todd developed her system of postural re-alignment during the late 1900s and established her first studio for the teaching of the method around the beginning of World War 1.¹⁰⁹ Between 1928 and 1931 she taught within the Physical Education Department at Teachers College, Columbia University. In her period of tenure at Columbia, elements of Todd's methodology were clarified and made more widely available through the publication of a syllabus entitled *The Balancing Forces in the Human Being* (1929). This text was the basis of Todd's later book, *The Thinking Body* (1937). Despite a commitment to the dissemination of her method of postural reintegration, Todd was resistant to any codification of her discoveries. In her Preface to *The Thinking Body* she notes how she had delayed setting down the material, not only so that she could be confident that her ideas had been validated (after almost thirty years of practical application) but so as to prevent the 'premature appearance of a "school" or "system" which so often spells the end of a creative process'.¹¹⁰ Although the principles and methods elaborated by Todd now enjoy quite widespread institutional recognition, ideokinesis continues as a somewhat unregulated practice. There is no system of certification, no centralised process of accreditation; there is no academy or school of ideokinesis or Todd alignment.

Melbourne-based teacher and performer Jane Refshauge studied intensively with André Bernard at New York University during the 1980s. She now teaches ideokinesiology at the Victorian College of the Arts secondary school and is one of the most experienced teachers of the method in Australia. Refshauge, who is also a certified teacher of the Alexander Technique, regards ideokinesis as a practice which must be taken up on one's

¹⁰⁹ Many of Todd's first clients were wealthy society women who were supporting the war effort by undertaking voluntary work in hospitals. They sought Todd's assistance in managing the physical and mental toll of the hard work and long hours to which they were unaccustomed (Matt 1973:6).

¹¹⁰ Despite her concerns about academic respectability Todd did not find the university environment conducive to what was largely creative investigation. According to Pam Matt, 'Todd was bored with the usual academic preoccupation with matters of methodology and was unable to think in terms of limiting, segmenting, defining and manipulating her approach according to experimental models' (1973:10).

own account. In Refshauge's view, the transmission of ideokinetic knowledge cannot be codified or formalised; the pedagogic model to which it most closely conforms is that of apprenticeship whereby the student attaches himself or herself to a master teacher. The lineage of the technique can be easily traced in this way, from Todd to Sweigard and Clark; from Sweigard to Irene Dowd; from Clark to Bernard, and later 'apprentices' John Rolland, Pam Matt, Nancy Topf and Mary Fulkerson.

Todd and Clark both had a deep commitment to making the ideokinetic method available to anyone who wished to practice it. Recognising there was something very accessible and simple in a process based upon thinking in images, Clark promoted a non-proprietary, egalitarian relationship to the method she had helped to develop — her maxim was 'each one, teach one'. This commitment to communicating ideokinetic practice is also evident in the production and dissemination of practically oriented books and manuals. Texts written by Todd, Clark and their students have become important resources for the transmission and diversification of the technique.¹¹¹

Another distinctive aspect of the pedagogy is the emphasis some practitioners have placed upon body-to-body transmission of knowledge. Todd's method is grounded in certain abstract principles derived from her analysis of the play of forces upon terrestrial bodies. Some teachers, such as Sweigard and Rolland, stress the abstract, objective and impersonal character of ideokinetic knowledge. For others, the manner in which these physical 'realities' are realised and negotiated through the body of the teacher has deep pedagogical import. The teacher's 'use', to borrow an Alexander expression, is an inseparable part of the pedagogical communication. For Clark, the efficacy and richness of the transmission of bodily experience is directly related to the degree to which a teacher is attentive to and accepting of her own body. The insights communicated through ideokinetic teaching are not dependent upon the *perfection* of a particular teacher's bodily alignment and use. On the contrary, in her role as an exemplar of the method, what is important is the freedom of movement the teacher achieves within the constraints given by her own constitution and structure.

The importance Clark places upon the intersubjective communication of bodily experience has its roots in her early childhood experience. Clark's recollections of her

¹¹¹ Todd's and Sweigard's books are still sought after references; Clark wrote and published five manuals including one designed for children. Irene Dowd, Sweigard's successor at Juilliard has published a series of papers on ideokinetic method in *Contact Quarterly*, Mary Fulkerson has published two short works on release, the first manual style *The Language of the Axis* (1977) and *The Move to Stillness* (1982) that extended Release principles into choreographic exploration. Her book on Release is currently in production. John Rolland's *Inside Motion* (1984) is another widely used text.

early family life are illuminating for their vivid representation of her developing sense of self, embedded in and constituted by intimate physical relationship. She writes:

We lived with my grandmother, and my aunts and uncles were always coming and going. I don't think of myself as 'I' or 'me'. I am a product of those people. They put themselves into me. They loved me, taught me, showed me how to do things on my own.

Mother used body movement in relaxation or centering — she did not realize that what she was doing then, I would be active about now. It is the awareness of touching a part of the body with the fingers or combining the hands by putting one fist into the hollow of the other hand interchangeably ... She made much of pat-a-cake with the children. And she never seemed to be effected by monotony. I think her rhythm was so natural that all of this was enjoyment to her (1993:8).

Clark's distinctive sense of the process of self-formation, evolving through relationship with the bodies of others, is also registered in her accounts of her early studies at Todd's Boston studios. Here she describes Mabel Todd:

When anyone said 'Miss Todd' the inflection in his voice stayed high. It brought an image to mind of great pleasure, such as having a lesson or hearing her talk. Her touch, her voice, her glance all carried a feeling of particular concern. Her body was buoyant and she was light on her feet ... She had the build of an athlete, without the corners. It gave her the appearance of great supple strength that simply oozed over you. Her touch was light, yet penetrating. There was a firmness and balance with gentle fingers centered through her back. Her strength went into you.

and Miss Galbraith, another of the teachers at Todd's Boston studio:

She was in her seventies through the years I knew her. Miss Galbraith was very devoted to Miss Todd and a very good example of Todd's principles. Her figure was like a young woman's. Her rib cage was very relaxed and easy and she used her pelvic muscles extremely well. Her shoulder action was beautiful for a woman her age and her spine was beautifully aligned. She could walk very easily like a bear as she

demonstrated for me. It involves stepping the feet almost into the hands as one walks on all fours (ibid:20).

The intimacy and affection of Clark's descriptions of the bodies of her teachers is striking, as is the fact that she is writing of the vitality, grace and strength of women who might otherwise be described as 'elderly'. Pam Matt's recollection of her own studies with Clark also highlights the pedagogical impact of the teacher's physical presence. Matt describes her first meeting with Clark in 1971, in the company of a small group of graduate dance students. She writes: 'We rested, centered and absorbed the feeling of buoyancy Barbara's body so clearly expressed' (1993:3). Clark was eighty-two at the time and she continued to teach vibrantly through her body well into her eighty-seventh year.

Notwithstanding the important supplementary role of the teaching manuals and reference books mentioned above, the practice of Todd alignment is in key respects an embodied tradition, passed from the body of the teacher to the body of the student. This mode of transmission links ideokinetic practice to long established dance traditions. 'What you know is who you have danced with', states choreographer Russell Dumas, articulating a commonly held view that a dancer's authority or lack thereof is directly related to the provenance of his or her embodied knowledge.¹¹²

Despite Todd's teaching, writing and research in the area of physical education during her time at Columbia University, her influence upon that field has been minimal. It is in the fields of dance training and education that Todd's work has had greatest impact. Clark, in particular, was renowned for the poetic, kinaesthetically sensitive nature of the image language she employed in her teaching. The kinaesthetic acuity of her teaching made it immensely attractive to dancers. The influence of a number of articulate and active teachers located in major centres of dance education and training — Sweigard at Juilliard, Bernard at New York University, Clark at the University of Illinois, Fulkerson at Dartington College and the European Dance Development Centre, Arnhem, Rolland at School for New Dance Development, Amsterdam — is also a significant factor in the almost exclusive association of Todd alignment/ideokinesis with contemporary dance practice.¹¹³

In a special "Release" issue of the *Movement Research Journal*, choreographer and dancer Mary Fulkerson presents a brief historical account of how ideokinetic approaches to the

¹¹² Personal communication, May 2001.

¹¹³ By contrast, Alexander technique has strong links with instrumental and vocal music training and to performance and actor training.

body and movement became significant in the development of new dance practice. In Fulkerson's opinion, it was Joan Skinner who invented the concept behind Release Work.¹¹⁴ Skinner had danced with Graham and Cunningham; she had also studied Alexander technique and wanted to apply the understandings gained in that practice to dance training and performance. Skinner began to experiment with integrating imagery with movement exploration in her teaching of dance technique and composition at the University of Illinois between 1966 and 1967. She worked intensively with a group of interested dance students including John Rolland, Nancy Udow, Pam Matt and Mary Fulkerson; Marsha Paludan was Skinner's teaching assistant. On Skinner's departure from Illinois this group began to work with Barbara Clark. As Fulkerson states '(we) applied Clark's pedagogy of anatomical images to the process Skinner had developed, of going from stillness to moving' with the support of kinaesthetic imagery. Skinner continued to work with the Release process and later named her unique and systematic methodology the Skinner Releasing Technique (SRT) to identify its specific emphasis and distinguish it from other more general usages of the term 'release'.¹¹⁵ Fulkerson was resident in Britain during the 1970s and 1980s and also developed a distinctive form of Release work, which has had a significant impact upon the evolving 'new dance' aesthetic in that country and in other parts of Europe.

In Australia, the postmodern dance company Dance Exchange has been an important vehicle for the transmission and dissemination of information about ideokinesis and Release work. In 1976, Karczag, who had studied with André Bernard, Nanette Hassall (a dancer with Cunningham and a student of Sweigard and Fulkerson) and Russell Dumas (also a student of Bernard and dancer with Twyla Tharp) returned to Australia to form Dance Exchange, a company devoted to the expansion of the parameters of choreographic and performance practice. In Sydney and Melbourne, during the late 1970s, the company offered public workshops in alignment and Release-based movement, Contact Improvisation and composition. Members of the company also taught in a range of institutional contexts including teacher training colleges and university architecture and music departments. Later, during the 1980s, Dance Exchange hosted tours of visiting Todd alignment teachers John Rolland and Pam Matt. Mary Fulkerson taught a series of workshops in Release-based dance in 1980, which also had significant impact upon subsequent interest in Release-based dance in Australia.

¹¹⁴ According to Fulkerson, Skinner adopted the term 'release' in recognition of its meaning in Graham technique as a 'return to centre'. The Release issue of *Movement Research Journal* also features an article on Graham use of the term 'release' (1999:6-7).

¹¹⁵ See Dempster's "The Releasing Aesthetic: An Interview with Joan Skinner" in *Writings on Dance* #14 (1996).

Ideokinetic method is now represented within the curricula of a number of tertiary dance and performance training programs in Australia, albeit in a relatively modest form as supplement or therapeutic adjunct to the principle techniques of ballet and 'contemporary'.¹¹⁶ This representation has been achieved largely through the efforts of a small number of individual teacher-practitioners associated with the early outreach work of Dance Exchange. Within these dance institutional contexts ideokinesis has a place as an effective approach to body awareness and injury prevention but it is not generally regarded as a dance technique in its own terms. The professional workshop detailed below represents one of the very few dance contexts in which ideokinesis features as the primary movement discipline.

5.5 Introduction to the case study

Observing in stillness and in moving. Let your mind extend throughout your body. It's as if every cell has a mind. This is a thinking body.

Eva Karczag 'Image score' (1994)

What is the imaginary body of Release and what are its conditions of possibility? My investigation of these questions will be organised around certain key elements of ideokinetic method and my discussion of these elements will be embedded within an account of Eva Karczag's teaching practice. The primary resource for the investigation is a detailed transcript of a workshop conducted by Karczag entitled *Explorations Within the New Dance Aesthetic*. The structure of Todd's two books, *The Thinking Body* and *The Hidden You*, suggests a precedent for this embedding of analysis and description within an instructional framework. In Todd's books, thinking *about* the body is closely interwoven with thinking *through* the body. Todd's analysis of the body as a material structure, subject to gravitational force, is interwoven with reflections upon its social presence and meanings. These sociological and philosophical reflections are intercut with invitations to the reader to engage different bodily modalities by changing posture and picturing images.

For some commentators Todd's mixture of factual information, images and suggestions for practice presents severe obstacles to comprehension (Matt 1973:27). 'She writes like a dancer not a scientist, more artistically and mystically than clearly' was one reviewer's

¹¹⁶ This term requires more detailed discussion than is possible here. In the Australian context it serves as an umbrella term to delineate an eclectic mix of dance styles and techniques which are and might include Cunningham, elements of Graham or Humphrey-Limon. It may also refer to pop cultural forms of dance.

response to the initial publication of *The Thinking Body* (ibid:12). However, Todd's incitements to move and change, and the non-linear complexity of the structure of her books, are consistent with her overall premise about the stultifying effects of fixity in posture and habits of thought.

André Bernard has suggested that Todd's texts are 'difficult' because she writes kinaesthetically; she addresses the reader's body from an experience of her own body. Todd's direct and insistent address to the body of the reader produces an implicated mode of reading and an active engagement with her text. In the following study I interpose description and analysis with transcriptions of Karczag's teaching texts or 'scores'. These texts are drawn from a corpus of image scores or scripts developed by Karczag over a number of years.¹¹⁷ These scores are addressed to the body of the student and are designed to elicit kinaesthetic response. By reproducing them in the body of the thesis I am hoping that they may speak to the reader in ways that amplify, move and enrich the argument being pursued here. I also recognise that their inclusion here may present certain obstacles to comprehension as the thesis argument detours through an experience of moving.

5.5.1 The workshop

Eva Karczag is a choreographer, dancer and teacher who currently lectures at the European Dance Development Centre (EDDC), Arnhem, The Netherlands. Karczag's background exemplifies the diverse influences that are at play in the Release dance aesthetic. Karczag's early dance training was in classical ballet, she has practiced the movement form Tai Chi Chuan for over twenty years and she has extensive professional performance experience which encompasses ballet, avant-garde and experimental dance. She has been a member of leading groups in the field of experimental dance, including Strider (U.K 1973-'75), Dance Exchange (Australia, 1976-'79) and the Trisha Brown Company (New York City 1979-'85). She is also a certified teacher of the Alexander technique. Her work as a teacher and performer is based on a 'synthesis of release, improvisational and body awareness techniques'.¹¹⁸

Karczag's 1994 tour to Brisbane, Perth and Melbourne was the second hosted by Ausdance and sponsored by the Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council, through the Visiting Teacher/Masterclass program. Ausdance (formerly the Australian Association of Dance Educators) is a service organisation broadly concerned with matters of dance

¹¹⁷ Further examples of Karczag's 'body scores' can be found in *Writings on Dance* #14, (1996).

¹¹⁸ As described in workshop flyers.

education and arts advocacy. Their invitation in 1992 to sponsor an initial teaching tour was a new initiative for this erstwhile conservative organisation and suggests a changed perception of 'new dance' by that body. Karczag's first Ausdance tour represented a mainstream acceptance, albeit educationally defined, of work that had not previously been supported or promoted. The workshop component of the tour was advertised through *Kinesis*, the association newsletter; information was also circulated directly to tertiary dance institutions and other arts organisations.

Karczag has privately organised and self-funded two previous tours and has an established and committed following in Melbourne. Her influence as a teacher and performer dates back to the early Dance Exchange residencies (in 1976 and 1978) and her introduction, along with Nanette Hassall, of the techniques and practices of Todd alignment, Ideokinesis and Contact Improvisation to Australian dancers. Three of the participants in the 1994 workshop had previously travelled to Arnhem to study with Karczag at the EDDC.

The workshop was held at Dancehouse: Centre for Moving Arts, an artist run studio and performance space located in inner city Melbourne. Dancehouse was established in 1992 as a venue and base for the work of independent dance artists and receives financial support from the Australia Council for the Arts, Arts Victoria and local government agencies. The Dancehouse venue and some of the tour expenses were covered by government subsidy, but a significant portion of the costs were financed by the participants who paid approximately \$250 each for the two week workshop.

A core group of ten people attended the full two-week course, but numbers fluctuated from day to day from a low of twelve to a high of eighteen. Three men attended — a professional actor and a dancer-choreographer, both in their late thirties, and a younger man who was a recent graduate from a tertiary dance institution. In previous tours, a combination of weekday, evening and weekend classes were offered; in 1994 a daytime class only was offered. Within the group, two sub-groups could be discerned: an older group of peers, people in their late thirties and forties who have been involved in and connected with this style of dance and body work since the early 1970s, and a younger generation of professional dancers, women in their twenties, several of whom are employed in modern dance companies (Danceworks, Tasdance, Dance Exchange). In the older group a further distinction can be made between those who have undertaken training in mainstream dance techniques and those who have come into dance through forms like Contact Improvisation or through involvement in body work and alternative body therapies.

Of the core group, the majority (eight) has spent time training, studying or performing in overseas dance centres (New York and London); most have attended previous workshops with Karczag and other visiting teachers (Simone Forti, Deborah Hay, John Rolland, Lisa Nelson, Dana Reitz) and several are regular travellers to New York. In a sense the workshop was a gathering of the Melbourne chapter of an informal international network; it was an opportunity for local practitioners to study and dance together.

In the ten minutes or so before the class begins people are sitting or lying comfortably on the floor or stretching. There is some quiet conversation but no vigorous activity in evidence, and no structured 'warm-ups'. There appears to be an unspoken agreement on pre-class conduct, normative within this dance sub-culture — that it be quiet and self-contained, as individuals begin the process of inward focusing. Just as there is a certain conformity in behaviour there is a marked degree of conformity in choice of clothing. The 'new dance' costume is soft, old, comfortable — tracksuit pants, T-shirts, layers of loose fitting clothing, bare feet or socks. One of the effects of this choice of clothing is that it contributes to an appearance of fluidity and fullness of movement and a blurring of outline.

5.5.2 Who is the teacher and what is she or he doing?

I was teaching a course in modern dance at Dominican College in San Rafael. The first day I met the girls I talked to them about kinaesthetic awareness. I told them that as they watched me talk they could tell a lot about what was going on in me. They could do this simply by watching how I held myself, and at exactly what instant I shifted my weight. They could sense these rhythms and tensions, they could sense how what they saw, felt ... The kinaesthetic sense has to do with sensing movement in your own body, sensing your body's changing dynamic configurations. But it's more than that. I can remember just waking from dreams and still having a sense of the dream landscape not only in my memory but in my limbs as well (1974:30-31).

Simone Forti describes the potent role of the teacher's body in kinaesthetic learning. She also notes that kinaesthetic experience may be stimulated by internal cues, by dreaming and imagining. The ideokinetic method harnesses both these processes. It emphasises the role of imagination in the stimulation and co-ordination of movement and locates the imaging process within a supportive framework provided by the teacher's bodily presence.

As Barbara Clark's evocative descriptions of the bodies of her teachers suggest, ideokinetic methods can produce powerful identifications with the feeling of movement in another's body.

Alexander teacher Walter Carrington has commented upon the important function of the teacher's 'use' in the communication of bodily experience within an Alexander class. He writes: 'You (the teacher) are working on yourself in order to transmit sensory experiences' (1994:97). Joan Skinner also emphasises the teacher's ongoing engagement in Releasing as the key to effective transmission of bodily knowledge and experience. She states,

If you're not practising it as a practice in your life, don't teach it because it's a living, breathing process and as you're teaching you're releasing. Not that you are going into the floor and giving yourself the work, but you are in a releasing state as you're teaching (1996:25).

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, postmodern dancers have drawn upon and adapted the methods and insights of techniques such as Ideokinesis/Todd alignment and Alexander in their development of alternative approaches to dance training. In contrast to the traditional pedagogical setting for dance, of studio with mirrors, of teacher demonstrating in front of the class, the primary medium of instruction in these 'alternative' practices is not visual, but aural and tactile. Students may be asked to attend closely, to listen to, to watch, and to touch another's body and although the student is not explicitly engaged in the modelling or imitation of action, processes of kinaesthetic empathy or 'identification' play a role in these pedagogical settings. This assertion of the importance of identification in ideokinetic process is seemingly at odds with a prevalent view of Release techniques as pedagogies which value individuality and personal discovery. Release work is regarded as a non-imitative, creative approach to dance, through which dancers find their own way of moving, a moving which is unique to them. And yet it is recognised that ideokinetic and Release techniques do produce a distinctive, if broadly defined, style of moving. Asked to describe the new dance aesthetic in bodily and kinetic terms, Karczag responds:

There's a certain kind of freedom to the moving, a certain ease; there's a certain *allowing* of things to happen and a looseness, a loose jointedness. But within that, people do many, many different kinds of work. I don't think there is one particular way of moving but, having worked within a certain strata of dance

society, I do see that there are familiar attributes, and values, certain qualities. There is a particular use of flow; there is a particular use of weight even when that is disrupted or disjointed (in Dempster 1996:14).

I will argue that the body of the teacher, how she moves, and thus how she gives form to ideokinetic and Release principles, is a significant factor in the constitution and transmission of the Release aesthetic. This is so despite the fact that overt demonstration of movement is rare in ideokinetic teaching practice. In certain institutional settings the pedagogical authority of ideokinetic method is grounded in appeals to abstract, universal principles. In the scholarly work of Lulu Sweigard for example, the bodily balance achieved through ideokinesis is presented in objective, impersonal terms as the most efficient and effective response to the action of gravity upon human skeletal structure. However, as I have argued in the previous chapter, the way a person comes to live her relationship to gravity is established through intimate, inter-subjective processes. The initial achievement of bodily balance and its re-constitution through the process of ideokinesis cannot be construed in mechanical terms alone. The inter-subjective, identificatory aspect of ideokinetic method, so pronounced in Clark's recollections of Todd's teaching, is a crucial factor in its pedagogical transmission and effectiveness.

John Rolland has noted the similarity between ideokinetic and developmental processes. He writes: 'The process of ideokinesis is very similar to the natural means by which an infant first learns to pattern movement in the neuromusculature'. In Rolland's view, the primary difference between 'the natural learning of movement by infants' and the ideokinetic learning or repatterning of movement skills is the degree of guided conscious effort entailed in the latter process (1984:8). The presence of a teacher, that is, of a supportive model or guide, is significant in both these contexts of motor learning.

As noted above, the verbal and the tactile are the primary vehicles of instruction and transmission in ideokinetic contexts. Karczag's teaching material is communicated through 'hands on', through occasional physical intervention, and through spoken word. These elements of her teaching practice will be considered in detail below. However, Karczag also teaches persuasively and powerfully through her moving body. Close, if indirect, attention is paid to Karczag as an exemplar and skilled practitioner of the 'new dance' or Release aesthetic. She does not present herself as a model for imitation, indeed she actively avoids demonstrating movement, but she has a highly developed kinaesthetic intelligence and her physical presence is compelling. We read her body, we attend to her

movement as she teaches; we watch how she sits, stands, walks, how she touches, how, occasionally, she dances within a class.

5.5.3 Overview of the structure and content of the classes

The class is three hours long, from 10am to 1pm. The first week is more formal in structure and anatomical in focus and each day follows a consistent order of activities of warm-up, introduction of materials, skeleton study, and partner work, concluding with an extended period of improvised moving. Karczag describes this first part of the workshop as Awareness Work, the function of which is to introduce and guide people towards a particular experience of embodiment.¹¹⁹ The focus of Awareness Work in week one is on the haptic apprehension of space — making space in the body and bringing awareness to various structures and sets of relationships within the body. Significant sections of the class are instructional, that is, teacher-directed, and anatomical in focus. Each class concludes with a period of improvisation, in which the experiences of changed sensation consequent upon altered postural patterns are explored in movement.

The emphasis in the second week is upon the experience of moving, with a particular focus on questions of time and motivation in improvisation. The informational aspects of the class are much reduced and images now function principally as stimuli for dancing.¹²⁰ The structure of the sessions reflects the influence of Fulkerson's approach to Release work in which images are utilised less as postural correctives and more as kinaesthetic triggers.

During the first week the class begins with a structured warm-up led by Karczag. All of the warm-up activities are drawn from Chinese and Japanese body therapies and health exercises. Over the two weeks Karczag teaches a set of meridian stretches, exercises drawn from a Zen Buddhist health exercise regime, adding one or two stretches each day.

In Karczag's approach there is a conjunction of what might broadly be characterised as an eastern body concept and a western one. The warm-up, which may take up to an hour, is followed by the introduction and discussion of the anatomical structure or set of anatomical relationships which are the focus of the day's class. The transition from

¹¹⁹ The structure of Karczag's Awareness Work class is broadly consistent with the ideokinetic lesson plan outlined by André Bernard. The lesson is divided in two parts: lecture and laboratory. In the lecture part, basic concepts of anatomy, physiology and body mechanics are discussed. The images used in the laboratory part of the class are based upon this discussion. In the laboratory part of the class, the students pair off, one partner gives assistance to the other mostly in the form of "tactile aid" (Bernard 1997:25).

¹²⁰ Some of the images utilized were: 'sense the dome of your skull expanding', 'the spine is fluid length' and 'the air is like water surrounding and supporting your moving'.

meridian stretch to anatomical study is accomplished smoothly and without comment from Karczag. We move from a body represented and subjectively realised as a field of intersecting energies, to an objective body, statically represented in anatomical drawings and diagrams. In this section of the class Karczag works with a number of teaching aids — various pictures, photographs and drawings of bones, muscles and organs, some full size vertebral bones, and a small, jointed, plastic skeleton that is passed around, handled and looked at from various angles.

The aspect of ideokinetic work which involves anatomical study is often described as 'experiential anatomy' because its purpose is not to arrive at an objective account of the body, but to deepen and clarify one's subjective experience of one's own structure. In Karczag's teaching practice we are directed towards an apprehension of anatomical structure as a living presence by incorporating images, visual representations, into our embodied sense of self. The anatomical image functions as a mechanism or tool for thinking physically.

After a period of discussion and explanation of relevant anatomical principles, partner work begins. In an article outlining her application of Alexander principles to dance, Karczag describes this transition: 'Having looked at pictures, having spoken, with appetites whetted, we then dig in'. From the beginning, Karczag's students are directed to put hands on each other, 'touching, exploring, feeling for bone, muscle, the shape of things — sensory information' (1996: 44). In the workshop sessions detailed here, students place their hands on one another's bodies, with the initial objective of directing their partner's awareness to underlying skeletal structures and to lines of support in the body. The anatomical body thus becomes a tangible body; it is not simply given in representation but is created through various forms of tactile engagement. We palpate bodies (our own and others) to locate skeletal landmarks and we handle bones to understand their volume and mass. This 'hands on' practice may take up to one hour and leads into a period of improvised dancing. On some days the class gathers for a brief concluding discussion.

The class is conducted without accompaniment. The absence of music or sound has both pedagogical and aesthetic significance. First, the ideokinetic and Alexander methods that Karczag draws upon evolved in therapeutic and educational contexts; these techniques are not explicitly orientated to dancing and are not performance techniques. In the therapeutic context, the student of ideokinesis is encouraged to focus upon internal cues for movement; musical accompaniment is regarded as a potential distraction, which may encourage conformity to externally imposed rhythms. Secondly, the concept of dancing assumed in the workshop is linked with a Cagean/Cunningham aesthetic founded in the

separation and autonomy of musical and choreographic structure. Dancing is regarded as an autonomous art not governed by externally imposed metrical structure. Furthermore, the orientation of the class is individualistic; the mover moves to her or his own rhythm.

The spatial dynamics of the workshop, that is how students are orientated, in relation to studio space, to each other and to the teacher, indicates a specific staging of ideokinetic experience. As noted above, there are no mirrors in the studio and no obvious 'front'. Warm-up activities are introduced and performed in a circle; Karczag moves around the circle to assist, clarify, demonstrate and occasionally adjust. In the section of the class devoted to study of the skeleton and anatomical drawings people cluster around Karczag, sitting and lounging on the floor. The 'hands on' or partner work produces an intimate circle, the temporarily bounded space of the couple.

Once in movement people are distributed somewhat evenly throughout the studio. How much space they occupy seems largely determined by external constraints, that is, number of people versus available floor space and a tacit agreement on sharing the available space, but movement is generally not extended or projected through space. This, I would suggest, is partly an effect of ideokinetic practices themselves, that is, the intense, inner focus of the work. Movement is within the kinesphere, a 'reach' space of about a metre and a half around the body. Whether this relative spatial containment and intimacy is a limitation of the work is a matter of judgement. My previous discussion of the impact of haptic space on the development of postmodern dance performance would suggest that this preoccupation with the kinesphere should not be construed merely as a lack or negation of the spatial dimension but may be indicative of a new spatial imaginary.

Week 1: Day 1: Monday July 25

The first day of the workshop begins with vigorous contact, the 'rubbing-down' of a partner. In pairs, standing, we are instructed to warm up our partner by rubbing her body from head to toe, vigorously on the shoulders, legs, ankles and knees, more gently on the face, head and neck; 'rather like a car-wash', was how Karczag described the activity. This activity quickly brings awareness to the skin surface, wakes up the circulation and establishes contact between people in a matter of fact and friendly, but impersonal way. The 'rub-down' is followed by a series of 'tracings'. One person traces, with a light, fingertip touch, lines of action on the body of her partner. These 'lines' drawn from alignment studies suggest directions of expansion, release and support in the body.¹²¹ We

¹²¹ The lines of flow and support are drawn from several sources including Sweigard's *Human Movement Potential* (1974) and Clark's manual *Let's Enjoy Sitting, Standing and Walking* (in Matt 1993).

are instructed to move lightly and swiftly through the tracings and Karczag sets the pace, talking through the exercise as she works on a student.

A distinction is made between the first and second activities in terms of the nature of touch involved and the role of each party. In the first activity, the person 'being rubbed' simply receives the action; the person doing the touching is the active party. In the second tracing activity the person being touched actively imagines lines of action passing along and through her body. Touch in this context is conceptualised as assisting a process of visualisation; the person doing the touching is receptive to the other's process and state. The tracings were introduced in the following sequence, with time allowed for one or two repetitions.

1. Widening across the shoulders, tracing down the outside of the arms to the little fingers, up the inside to the armpits; think *in* to the centre of the armpit.
2. Tracing across the back of the pelvis and down the outside of the legs to the foot, from the small toe to the big toe; drawing up the inside of the legs to the hip sockets. Think *in* to centre of the hip sockets.
3. Stroking down the spine, letting the vertebral heels drop; down to sacrum and coccyx. Imagine the line continuing under the body, over the perineum and then pick up the tracing again at the pubic bone. Trace up the front to the bottom lip.
4. Include the head to make a figure of eight. Tracing down the back, up the front to the lower lip. Pick up the line at the base of the skull, move up the back of the head, over the top and down to the top lip. Imagine a loop passing through to the base of the skull, to return to down the back.
5. Tracing up the front, pubic symphysis to lower lip — the 'conception vessel' meridian.
6. Up the back, over the head, down the face to the upper lip — tracing 'the governor vessel meridian'.
7. Join 5 and 6 to trace 'the minor orbit'.
8. Finish with a light brushing action, down and outwards and upwards, brushing out from centre in all directions.

Tracings 5, 6 & 7 are drawn from Chinese exercise and therapeutic systems. The line tracing 'up the back' is not in accordance with western alignment orthodoxies and Karczag notes the contradiction but stresses that there are '*many lines, many systems, many patterns, many ways of focusing upon the flow of energy in the body*'.¹²²

This activity of tracing lines of action across the surface of the body touches upon or passes over socially sensitive parts of the body — armpits, groin, breasts, and face. Instruction and direction was given in terms of skeletal structure, bones and joints, or in relation to large body masses — arms, legs, torso, back — and not in terms of soft tissue. Differences in interpretation and execution of the tracings were evident and people were presumably making their own decisions about where and how it was acceptable to touch or were negotiating that 'contract' with their partners. Karczag's choice of a more impersonal, language of bone not flesh, that is, her emphasis on an underlying and invisible skeletal structure, has the effect of de-emphasising the sensuality and sensitivity of the experience, or at least of rendering it private. The sensuous potential of this activity and the ethical issues which might arise in the exchange were not spoken of in the public forum of the workshop, not by Karczag nor any participant. Being touched in this way might be experienced as highly sensual but the activity was coded in neutral, impersonal terms, that is as being concerned with alignment, with attention or alertness, bringing awareness to the skin, as 'warming up'. That this specialised form of touch communication should be so 'naturalised' in the context of this workshop is worthy of some discussion and analysis.

It is evident in Karczag's somewhat formal presentation of 'hands on' in the Awareness work of week one, that touch is a form of practice, subject to certain protocols and rules which govern its application and shape its effects. In this workshop, these protocols and rules were not explicitly stated but they are tacitly understood. The practice of 'hands on', with all its context-specific assumptions about how to touch one another and what touching means and does, is embodied by these experienced students; 'hands on' is part of the habitus of the ideokinetic practitioner and Release dancer.

As was noted in the previous chapter, the ethics of touch have been an issue of some concern and debate in the practice of Contact Improvisation. Paxton's framing of body-to-body contact in objective and bio-mechanical, rather than interpersonal terms has been transposed to other new dance practices, and is evident in this workshop. Another

¹²² Throughout the case study, all italicised sections of text represent direct transcriptions of Karczag's speech. I have sought to retain the pattern and flow of her teaching 'talk' and have edited only where I felt it necessary for comprehension.

influence is the therapeutic and educational contexts of ideokinetic practice, where touch has sometimes been represented in non-reciprocal terms as something someone (the teacher) does to someone else (the student). These discursive framings of touch in impersonal, bio-mechanical and non-reciprocal, clinical terms have a strategic function insofar as they facilitate a degree of sensuous exchange whilst obviating the need for moment to moment negotiation between partners.

This observation might suggest that the meaning of tactile exchange is already determined, if not exhausted, by its representation in ideokinetic practice as a diagnostic or instructional tool. Against that view I would argue that Karczag's interest in the exploration of the potential of touch is not reducible to that of pedagogical instrumentality. The ease with which the students in Karczag's workshop touch one another and allow themselves to be touched suggests to me that this distinctive form of 'hands on' practice, which has evolved in the predominately female contexts of Release and alternative dance workshops, and movement therapy, constitutes a unique form of social exchange between women. Furthermore, Karczag's highly developed 'hands on' practice has evolved in response to an intense interest in moving. In the context of this workshop, touching another provokes states of dancing. The process of intersubjective exchange through touch will be discussed in greater detail below.

In a workshop journal entry I recorded the following experience of the tracing activity outlined above: 'What body is created in this activity? The tracing heightens the sense of surface and brings attention to the different sensitivities of particular zones and parts through contrasting forms and qualities of touch. I lose any sense of a bodily core or centre as the tracings elicit sensations of light, water and fire, running and flickering over my surface'.

When both partners have completed the tracings, the experience is taken into a more expanded movement of walking and running.

Improvisation score

Moving off into walking.

Dropping the heel to open the ankle, to open the knee, to open the hip sockets. This is how the body works. Opening one part, one joint, allows another to open. This is how the body works.

From walking into running.

Running alone, running with another person for a while. Running as a group and breaking rhythm to link with someone else.

After a period of running, we rest on the floor.

Feel where your breath is, where it goes, where it moves. Change position. Again, what's happening with the breath? Keep making small adjustments and noting the effect upon your breath. If you should meet up with another body rest with them awhile.

I am lying on the floor and Eva comes to rest against me. Her body is like butter, melting, hardly there. There is a sense of great delicacy and composure in the contact; a quality of listening, of attention, through her skin. Flesh merges into flesh.

I have selected some key elements of ideokinetic method as points of departure for a detailed analysis of Karczag's Release dance practice. These elements will be examined in the following order: the formation and transmission of images through the teacher's touch and voice, the horizontal plane of instruction, and the practice of 'non-doing' or inaction.

5.5.4 Touching and being touched

'What is communicated through your hands is what is happening in your own body', writes Alexander teacher Walter Carrington. He goes on to state that the quality of the Alexander teacher's touch must be receptive and not active:

You have got to feel what is happening in the student without trying to do anything about it. Because you are trying to feel, any attempt at doing — you know, wagging the head about or something like that — will make it impossible to you to feel what is going on in the student. You cannot do and feel at the same time. Refined feeling and observation are only possible when you are not doing anything (1994:103).

Karczag's classes encompass a range of styles of touching, directed towards different ends — from manipulation and demonstration, to assisting movement, to massage-like stimulation of the skin, to whole body contact. Karczag's knowledge of 'hands on' is drawn from several sources, the Alexander technique being perhaps her most concentrated and sustained context of practice. According to Karczag, her Alexander 'hands on' knowledge allows her to impart 'a subtle energetic quality of touch and the concept of non-doing' to the dance students with whom she works (in Dempster 1996:50). In the

Alexander context, touch is both diagnostic and a means of instruction. As Carrington suggests above, touching is sensing the state of the other.

The 'tactile aid' partner work developed by André Bernard is another important influence upon Karczag's teaching practice. Tactile aid is a practice developed from the table work of Mabel Todd who was explicit about the purpose of teacher touch. She writes: 'This work is not manipulation. The purpose of the finger touch is to bring consciousness to the pupil, to make him respond and become active in readjusting the structure' (in Matt 1993:17). But touch also has a dialogic dimension: 'When we touch someone they touch us equally', Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen observes (1993:6). In the 'hands on' pedagogical encounter the teacher/partner is touching but also being touched. She is experiencing and apprehending the energetic state of the student's body in and through her own body. Theatre theorist David Williams has succinctly described the reciprocity of touch as it is experienced in another field of contemporary dance practice, Contact Improvisation. He writes: 'both self and other participate and are implicated at the point of con(t)act; both toucher and touched experience the dialogics of being both toucher and touched' (1996:31).

Karczag employs this dialogic aspect of touch communication in her application of Alexander and Todd methods to dance training. In Release work, touch is a way of placing images into the body, making the ideokinetic experience 'very tangible, very real' (in Dempster 1996:45). For Karczag, the teacher is not actively *doing*, she is not adjusting or manipulating the student's body, but she is communicating precise sensory and kinetic information through body-to-body contact. In this practice, touch is a form of the teacher's body; it is a means by which her understanding goes into the body of the student. This kind of transmission of precise kinaesthetic experience through touch is fundamental to many long established dance and martial art traditions of Japan, Bali and India though unusual in Western dance pedagogy.¹²³ However the intention and therefore the effect of touch alters according to context; and in the workshop setting Karczag makes a distinction between different uses or applications of hands on practice.

In Awareness work, hands on supports a process of structural clarification or 'fine tuning' of the body, consistent with the aims of table work as articulated by Todd. Karczag has also developed a more exploratory approach to hands on practice where touch precipitates movement exploration and play. At the time of the workshop Karczag had just completed a full-length performance work developed from a complex creative exploration of 'hands

¹²³ In the Balinese dance forms of Legong and Baris, for example, the student body is danced by the master teacher; the dance is put into the body of the student through the body of the teacher.

on' practice with students at the EDDC. Elements of this research were brought to bear upon different phases of the partner work during the Dancehouse workshop.¹²⁴ Here Karczag describes the starting point for the dance work *Horizon*:

What we did was just put hands on and the idea that we started out with, the focus, was to be attentive to the moment and to try to give the person whatever you felt they needed at that moment. You would look at the person (they would be lying down) and you'd look at the body and you'd think well, what they need is a little bit more energy here, or a little bit of touch here and each person would go to a different place (in Dempster 1996: 43)

Karczag has noted that although she is an Alexander teacher (and this is where the term 'hands on' arises), the mode of touch that was the pivot point of the performance development was not an Alexander kind of touch. She writes: 'Rather than being 'directed' (i.e. the toucher knowing what the optimal direction for moving is for the one being touched - head forward and up, back lengthening and widening, knees away), this touch was more about opening space and providing energy for the one being touched to use in whatever way was immediately relevant'.¹²⁵ Hands on, in this instance being touched with precision and care by many hands, invoked sensory experiences which were taken up and transformed in dancing. In the Melbourne workshop discussed here, both aspects of Karczag's hands on practice, the directive and the exploratory, are taken up.

Karczag does not give any special instructions as to how people should place their hands on their partners, other than that the touch should be 'light'. Some information concerning the nature of the touch is communicated in the details of a particular lesson — for example, the parts of the body being worked with, bony landmarks to feel for, etcetera. This relative lack of instruction may reflect an assumption of a certain level of understanding and experience of 'hands on' work in this group of advanced students, but it also follows from Karczag's belief in the efficacy of demonstration, example and experience. You learn how to touch by being touched and skill and subtlety in touching is most effectively developed by direct, body to body contact with a teacher who has mastered it.

¹²⁴ The hands on element of the work, entitled *Horizon*, which was developed with a group of students at the European Dance Development Centre is discussed by Karczag in interview with the author. See *Writings on Dance# 14* (1996).

¹²⁵ Statement from Karczag's unpublished description of the Complex Movement Workshop, EEDC, January 1993. This workshop functioned as the preliminary, development phase of the later performance work, *Horizon*.

Despite the absence of explicit instruction, what does evolve however is respect for the other, for their separateness which is nonetheless permeable, available to change through touch, through contact with an other. As I watch and participate in these classes I am moved by the attention, care and love that is apparent in the partner work. In this exchange, intimacy is coupled with a quality that I can only describe as detachment or disinterestedness. Within the context of the Release/new dance community these interactions, which paradoxically seem both intimate *and* impersonal, have become somewhat taken for granted. Hands on, of various kinds, has become normal practice and part of a whole approach to working with the body. The terms which define partner work in alignment and Release have tended to focus upon a single aspect of what in practice is a highly complex inter-subjective process. For example, Todd emphasised the *mise en scène* — table work; Bernard focuses upon the teacher/partner's role — tactile aid; and Joan Skinner defines her touch practice as inscription — partner graphics. However, the experience common to all these body disciplines, of touching and being touched with *intent*, is much richer than these simple descriptive names imply, and much more ambiguous, multi-directional and risky.

What is going on when one person has their hands on another in this Release dance context? Many things, but one that tends to remain rather unspoken is the release and expression of emotion. Emotional feeling arises in the 'hands on' work and this response is related to the simple fact of being in physical contact with someone, and to being touched with care and attention. However minimally it might be defined, and however provisional, there is relationship and connection in that moment of tactile exchange.

Karczag has referred to this aspect of Alexander and Release work, and her exploration of it in the development of *Horizon*.¹²⁶ Another account of the impact of inter-personal touch is David Williams' article, cited above. In "Working (In) the In-between; Contact Improvisation as an ethical practice", Williams offers an insightful and moving commentary on the ethics of touch as exemplified in the practice of Contact Improvisation. Drawing upon the work of philosophers Emmanuel Levinas and Luce Irigaray, Williams describes Contact touch as an expression of love, as a caress. In the following passage Williams elucidates Levinas's notion of the caress as foundation and exemplification of the ethical relation:

Levinas ... privileges the tactile over the visual, locating the primordial proximity of the touch or 'caress' as one exemplary manifestation of ethical inter-subjectivity. For the caress

¹²⁶ See "An Interview with Eva Karczag" in *Writings on Dance* #14, Summer 1996.

actualises a contact with an-other that can neither overwhelm nor fuse with alterity, but can reveal the diffusion and vulnerability of the self-in-relation. For touch, the first sense to develop in the human foetus, is 'an expression of love that cannot tell it' (1996:32).

When touch is employed as a pedagogical instrument its effects, and affects, move in (at least) two directions, changing the bodies of both toucher and touched. 'Where does it come from? From both. It flows between. Not held back by a source. The source already rises from the two caressing,' writes Luce Irigaray (1992:15).

In an extended reflection on the relationship between touch and emotion in her teaching practice, Karczag differentiates between two different contexts of tactile communication (in Dempster 1996:43-47). In the context of Awareness work, touch facilitates the student's experience of their physicality in very specific, clearly defined anatomical terms. The feeling and emotion which arises in hands on practice in Awareness work, is thus harnessed to the task of 'fine tuning' the student body (ibid:45). But what is 'emotion'?

In *Imagination* (1963), a book that has been a key reference text for many Release practitioners, Harold Rugg synthesises a vast body of psychological and neurological research towards a theory of the creative act. In a section of the book entitled "Motor Determinants of Meaning", Rugg discusses the motor attitude theory of emotion, drawing upon a number of theorists including William James and Nina Bull. Rugg begins by defining what is meant by the bodily basis or 'motor determinants of meaning':

Our meanings are operational in character: weight means tendency to fall, volume to expand, a ceiling presses down, a floor up, a line seems to have a direction, attraction means pulling, repulsion pushing. ... The concept of love means going out to; hate, turning away from. Each of these meanings is expressed in action terms, as verb, not noun, and the basic gathering together of the total organism is always motor (1963:64).

He continues by noting that the subtle inner movements of the body constitute an important instrument by which we respond with meaning to the world. These incipient bodily movements take the form of 'anticipatory sets' or 'motor attitudes'. Rugg concludes: 'the consensus taken from diverse schools of thought states that a man's characteristic attitudes determine how he behaves, and still more basically, what he feels and thinks'

(ibid:65). This 'set' or attitude is not to be construed as a fixed physical structure, but a pattern, a habitual distribution of energies, which gives characteristic style to a person's comportment, movement and modes of expressive response. The term 'anticipatory set' describes a priming of the neuro-musculature. Rugg then defines emotion as a specific form of motor attitude. He cites Nina Bull's research:

It is not generally appreciated that all action predicates attitude, since every kind of bodily movement requires some preliminary postural preparation. Some portion of the organism must always be stabilized to form a fulcrum from which the movement can take place — as when the shoulder joint is relatively fixed in order to permit a measured movement of the forearm ... Similarly, the chest of an angry person must be fixed to form a base of operation from which the arms can strike effectively (in Rugg 1963:67).

According to Bull, emotional feeling is entirely dependent on preparatory motor attitude; indeed emotion *is* a postural set. She states that once the incipient movement (the set) gives way to overt movement, the feeling of anger, sorrow, or whatever, subsides.

This somewhat lengthy digression has been necessary to clarify one of the fundamentals of ideokinetic practice. Ideokinetic method does not entail learning and mastering an established corpus of movements and gestures; it seeks to address the generative core of movement expression. To borrow Rugg's terminology, ideokinesis addresses the motor attitude of a person, their 'anticipatory set', their *habitus*, and it is this which is engaged and affected by the touch of an other.

In the less technical language of Release practice, emotion is conceptualised as a force in the body, which is either bound or free flowing. In its bound or repressed form, emotion masks and constrains motion. Freeing muscular or postural sets liberates kinaesthetic sensation or feeling, and also emotion. In Awareness work, the emotion that rises and 'flows between' the two partners is channelled in certain pre-determined directions or lines of support. In Karczag's more open-ended exploration of hands on practice as a generative context for improvisation, the emotion that arises is not directed through pre-determined pathways but allowed to play out in dancing.

Week 1: Day 2.

The warm up is conducted in pairs: we are directed to assist the movement of our partner's shoulder circling. Shoulder circling is introduced as a Chinese (Daoist) health exercise

which mobilises the whole of the trunk, thus massaging the internal organs and activating the spine through gentle rotation. The partner assists the movement, placing their hands on the shoulders, then at the centre of their partner's body. We begin at the centre of the chest and work down, mobilising the centre of the torso. The quality of touch is firm, supporting the action, but without force.

Karczag then demonstrates the 'hands on' work, the focus of which is to make space at the waist, between the top of the pelvis, the iliac crest, and the lower ribs. In pairs: one person lies on their side on the floor; their partner locates and traces along the bones of the pelvis and rib cage. Placing our hands on the lower rib and iliac crest, we are directed to follow the movement of our partner's breath to give support for some expansion at the level of the waist. Our hands are first placed parallel to one another, then diagonally across the body so as to allow some torque/torsion on the inhalation. After a few repetitions we support our partner's roll to the other side, working to keep the space between lower rib and pelvis open. The process is repeated on the other side; we then help our partners up to sit, stand and walk. Throughout this transition our hands stay in touch with our partners' bodies to remind them of support and space at the waist. Partner roles are reversed and the process is repeated. Some time is then spent in the study of anatomy texts to locate the internal organs in this region of the body — spleen, stomach, liver and gallbladder.

As we move into the final improvisatory phase of the class, Karczag's image score recalls to mind the presence of these organs, reminding us of the expansion possible through the sense of the volume they provide.

Improvisation:

This moving is about fearlessness, about space opening and moving into it; filling any possibility with movement.

This is not about doing more. This is not about pushing, and not about doing less. This is not about holding back. Go for it. When you are ready, go for it.

This is about letting what needs to happen, happen fearlessly. When you're ready go for it.

Breathing massaging your organs; moving massaging your organs — liver and gallbladder on the right side, stomach and spleen on the left. Letting your waist support your movement.

Use the floor and the weight of your body. Use the air and your buoyancy and lightness. Use your breath.

Breath is expansion, softening. The body falling, turning back towards centre. Breath is filling, also emptying. Breath is movement. And it can also lead you into the experience of stillness.

Stretching, extending into it; curving, spiralling, twisting.

Integrating new information through movement and in stillness.

Finish in Constructive Rest Position.

The body invoked in this score is full, alive and 'peopled' with organs. Karczag's image score recalls Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen's provocative, exploratory work on the role of the internal organs of the body in movement and emotional expression. Cohen takes up the 'whole body' premise of Todd's early work and extends her exploration of movement into the realm of the organs. For Cohen, the organ system is as significant as the skeletal and muscular systems. Organs have a role in the initiation of movement, in overall postural support and co-ordination, and have a crucial expressive function.¹²⁷ Karczag does not make explicit reference to Cohen's work but in her inclusion of references to organs and organ systems she is cognisant of the currency of this body of work amongst this group of dancers. They belong, as she does, to a particular 'strata of dance society' within which there is fertile exchange between the body disciplines of ideokinesis, Release, Contact and Body-Mind Centering.

5.5.5 The teacher's voice: Karczag's language of moving

During the improvisations, Karczag sits to one side of the room watching the dancing and maintaining an almost constant flow of speech. Many different activities, points of focus, sensations and physical states are articulated within a seamless web of speech. Karczag describes the effect of this immersion in speech-sound as promoting change and movement. Her intention is to keep the dancer's awareness very mobile as his/her consciousness is shifted through and around the body. The constant flow of speech also addresses a problem specific to solo improvisation — that of self-criticism. The teacher's speech closes off the voice of judgement; there is no space for it.

Karczag's immersive style of speech practice is not characteristic of the ideokinetic genre overall. A contrasting approach is that of Lulu Sweigard who has outlined a detailed set of procedures for the verbal presentation of images within the context of the ideokinetic

¹²⁷ Cohen's "Origins of Expression: The Organ System of the Body" reprinted in *Sensing, Feeling and Action* (1993) and Patricia Bardi's "The Presence of the Organs in Dancing" (1979), *Theatre Papers Series 3*, are comprehensive introductions to this body of movement research.

'posture laboratory'. The importance of the voice as a pedagogical instrument is emphasised by Sweigard. She notes that 'imagined movement does not lend itself to demonstration by the teacher since it is not actually performed' (1974:224). As the reader will recall, the ideokinetic approach to movement re-education entails the suspension of voluntary action and the active imagining of movement. In the absence of overt physical demonstration, the teacher's ability to verbally communicate images which will stimulate the student's own imaginative response is critical. Sweigard's account of principles for the presentation of imagined movement in the posture laboratory, or ideokinetic classroom, includes detailed information regarding the content, duration and delivery of the lesson.

While teaching, talk with the voice free from strain and without urgency, and especially avoid all imperious exhortations to complete the task. Thinking does not proceed on command, nor does it follow a rhythmic count. The voice should be low, resonant, well-modulated in tone, and varied in inflection. It should never be monotonous or hypnotic.

Use as few words as possible in any description. Talking too much interferes with the student's concentration on the action to be imagined.

Be clear and precise in the description of movement to be imagined and proceed slowly enough to allow a student time to locate and visualize in his body what is being described.

In presenting an imagined movement, use the present participle of verbs to emphasize movement in progress, as in 'watch the accordion closing or being closed'. Always emphasize forces in action (1974:229).

Karczag's approach is consistent with some aspects of Sweigard's prescription, especially with respect to her use of the present participle, her slowness and repetition and her avoidance of 'imperious exhortation'. But she is guilty perhaps of using too many words and of moments of imprecision in her description of movement to be imagined. Karczag's verbal style has a precursor in that of Bill Williams, Karczag's first Alexander teacher. To participate in an Alexander lesson with Bill Williams was to be enveloped in sound, flooded with words. Williams maintained an almost constant flow of speech as he introduced the Alexander directions to your body through the hands on practice. Much about Karczag's class reflects Williams's teaching practice — her focus on resting, inhibition, dropping of social role, immersion in a form of verbal instruction which is not

instruction. 'Nothing to get right', he would say. 'If it feels wrong, let it be wrong'. His voice, and Karczag's, chants and sings new bodies into being.

Feminist film theorist Kaja Silverman has developed a provocative, psychoanalytically informed critique of the role and function of the female voice in cinema which may offer some insight into the kinds of transactions put into play through Karczag's distinctive style of pedagogic practice. Silverman notes that feminist analysis of the sonic or aural dimension of film is rather undeveloped, relative to the extensive critique of visual representation. Her project in *The Acoustic Mirror* (1988) is to redress that imbalance. The book first details the operation of the fantasy of the maternal voice in Hollywood cinema and then considers the function of the female voice in selected examples of experimental feminist cinema. Silverman's analysis of cinematic representations of the female voice is grounded in a close analysis of the role of the auditory sphere — sound, speech and language, in the constitution of subjectivity. Critically engaging Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, she notes that even before the mirror stage and the child's entry into language, the maternal voice plays an important role in the child's perceptual development.

Since the subject lacks boundaries it does not yet have anything resembling an interiority. However, the foundations for what will later function as identity are marked out by these primitive encounters with the outer world, encounters which occur along the axis of the mother's voice (1988:80).

As the infant matures, the mother's voice functions as an acoustic mirror in which the child gradually discovers its identity and its own voice. Silverman develops her theorisation through a close reading of a number of Julia Kristeva's texts, focusing specifically upon Kristeva's notion of the *chora*. Kristeva adopts the term *chora* (in Greek, meaning receptacle or enclosed space, womb) from Plato's *Timaeus*, where it is defined as 'an invisible and formless being, which receives all things and in some mysterious way partakes of the intelligible, and is most incomprehensible' (in Kristeva 1980:20). The *chora* in Kristeva's formulation is associated with the maternal body and the pre-oedipal, or what Kristeva terms the semiotic. The *chora* denotes something 'indifferent to language, enigmatic ... rhythmic, unfettered, irreducible to its intelligible verbal translation; it is musical, anterior to judgement' (Kristeva 1984:29). According to Silverman, the representation of the mother's voice as a 'sonorous envelope' is associated with the '*choric* fantasy', that is the fantasy of plenitude, of merging of infant and mother in corporeal harmony. This fantasy of immersion is motivated by a desire to retreat from

the symbolic, from the order of language, states Silverman, but, she reminds us, the *chora* is a fantasy, a retrospective construction. Silverman works to construct a theory of the maternal voice which is not conflated with the pre-symbolic. She observes that it is the maternal voice that first ruptures plenitude and introduces difference. It is the mother's voice which first maps and names the world for the infant subject, and 'which itself provides the first axis of Otherness' (1988: 96). Silverman concludes:

The mother performs a crucial role during the subject's early history. She is traditionally the first language teacher, commentator and storyteller — the one who first organises the world linguistically for the child and first presents it to the Other. The maternal voice also plays a crucial part during the mirror stage, defining and interpreting the reflected image, and 'fitting' it to the child. Finally it provides the acoustic mirror in which the child first hears 'itself' (ibid:100).

I am beginning to suggest that in the context of ideokinetic practice and Release dance the teacher's voice and speech function as kind of acoustic mirror in which the student dancer re-envisions herself. This acoustic mirror has two aspects or phases: in the first, the teacher's voice invokes a *choric* fantasy, a space of non-differentiation where the student/infant is enveloped and held in the embrace of a loving maternal voice. In the second phase, the teacher's voice begins to induct the student into a subtle, but quite highly elaborated, 'body language' or 'language of moving' in which parts of the body become differentiated from one another. Karczag's scores, for example, guide the student-dancer towards an experience of her body 'coming into parts'. Dance theorist Marianne Goldberg has described the experience of working with Karczag as a process of 'unsuturing', which allowed her to sense the parts of her body in both their difference from one another, and their relatedness to a whole dynamic structure (1996:54).

In the transcribed texts as well as in the additional teaching scores supplied by Karczag, there is a notable absence of a subject, an avoidance of direct, instrumental language. The lack of shifters and the preponderance of the gerund, the present participle of the verb (*covering* space, *allowing* movement), leads to a masking or erasure of individual agency. It is as if movement is always already happening. 'It moves through you, it moves out of you and it moves into you', writes Barbara Clark (in Matt 1993:10). Consistent with Alexander and Todd's understanding of the relationship between intention and action, attention is paid to establishing certain conditions of possibility for dancing. Karczag's focus is upon facilitating and stimulating mobility. She creates an atmosphere where

students can deconstruct or suspend their body-identities, and introduces a practice whereby they might gradually reconstitute themselves in and through (bodily) language. One of Karczag's methods is to move language around the body; as language moves, so does attention and awareness.

In the penultimate session of the workshop, Karczag's image score, excerpts of which are reproduced below, evokes a highly detailed and complex sensuous geography of a moving body. Many points of entry into a state of dancing are articulated. Her spoken text draws out a rich compendium of images encompassing bones, organs and energetic connections between body parts, and the score integrates the different forms and representations of body alluded to in earlier Awareness classes — body as energy field, body as anatomical image and the tangible body constituted through the touch of another.

Lying down, observe the effect of your moving. Energy streaming — this is movement, movement of energy in the body; there are many energies in the body...

Taking your attention to your feet. Feet are soft, squishy, spreading; feet that know their jointedness as they touch the ground.

Feel the support of the arch as you move up into your body, your moving body. Perhaps even into the articulation of your moving torso.

As you move find a connection from your mouth to your anus. This is a connection that passes through the articulation of your middle torso...

You may want to find times of moving into and out of the floor; and as you move into and out of the floor articulating your weight, articulating your way.

A continuity of thought and action; articulating your way into and out of the floor.

If you wish, return to any of the previous thoughts:

Articulation of the middle torso.

Does this create articulate moving into and out of the floor?

Soft, squishy, spreading feet that know their jointedness as they touch the floor, as they support your body weight.

Using the support of the arches, arches of the feet.

Finding a connection between your mouth and your anus.

In resting, returning to your weight, the weight of your body, to the weight of the parts; returning to your breath — the movement of breath in your body — full and empty, weighted and light. feeling how your breath can fill your back with roundedness and expansiveness.

Feeling how breath can soften the whole front of your body, including your sternum.

Feeling how your feet can open and spread, across the floor like your back, lengthening and widening.

Feeling how the palms of your hands can soften and open.

Feeling how your whole spine can drop into the back half of your body, the forward curve of your lumbar and neck spine just touching your centre line.

Feeling how your tail, the very end of your spine, can hang between two widening sit bones.

Feeling how your head can find a light and delicate balance on the other end of your spine.

The spine is strong and flexible, a series of lengthening curves.

Feeling how your breath can flow out, lengthening out through your limbs, lengthening out through fingers and toes, in resting and in moving.

Finding a soft depth under your armpits,

a soft hollow under your jaw.

If you lightly touch the roof of your mouth with your tongue you can sense the dome of your skull expanding.

Finding support from the feet, up through the middle torso, into the dome of your diaphragm; all the way up into the expanding dome of your skull.

Centre supporting your extremities. Your extremities supporting back into centre.

Karczag's voice calls the student's body into moving and she names this experience 'dancing'. This act of naming is significant because it asserts that the experience of

dissolution and reconstitution of the body undergone in ideokinetic practice, although it is challenging to the dominant representational economy of dance, does not lie completely outside its meaning. Ideokinesis constitutes another relation, aural, tactile and 'sensible', to dance language.

5.5.6 Moving together

Movement can be thought of as a response to external or internal cues and stimuli. The ideokinetic process emphasises receptivity to internal kinaesthetic cues and the settings in which it is practiced tend to support this internal focus. In the class documented below the teacher's or partner's touch provides the principal stimulus for movement.

The 'hands on' activity in this session involved working in partners and rocking. We had our hands on our partners who were lying down and we were gently rocking them. Karczag's instruction, directed to both partners, was to 'let yourself get lost in rocking'. She then added, if you sense resistance to the rocking, or if your partner is too wilful, then find a way of bringing them back to a state of receptivity. The rocking movement disaggregates the one and creates a shared body, a body between the two; the momentum of the rocking mass is subject to a very precise sensory collaboration.

Week 1: Day 5 Concluding class of week 1

The anatomical focus of this class was the three body masses of head, rib cage and pelvis — connected but separate. With a partner:

Beginning with the pelvis - rocking. Placing your hand on your partner's belly but thinking in. Touching the surface, hand on the surface, but actually thinking deep into their body.

This rocking is about rocking all of them.

You may find different rhythms for rocking. Rocking to help the back open, the contents settle, to help loosen things up.

Letting yourself get lost in rocking. Rocking is so soothing; loosening things up; letting yourself get lost in rocking.

Returning to stillness. Letting your partner feel the effect of the action and of the stillness.

Moving up to the rib cage.

tracing, defining, taking hold of this body mass that you will be rocking. Then placing your hand over your partner's heart area and gently rocking.

Let yourself get lost in rocking. Rocking to widen the back; rocking to soften the front; rocking to settle the contents; rocking to quieten and to comfort; rocking to loosen; rocking to deepen; rocking to connect; rocking to rock.

letting yourself get lost in rocking.

Guiding partner back to receptivity, to allowing the rocking

Karczag offered the following clarification on the nature of the relationship between the two people: the person lying down is in a receptive role, but both people need to be in a state of not wanting, not desiring. If the touch is too wilful, the partner resists; *guide her back to receptivity, to allowing*. The implication of Karczag's instruction is that desire, that is, wanting or purposefully *doing* something, masks sensing. It also reactivates the anticipatory sets or postural schemas that organise the subject and which ideokinetic and Release work is explicitly seeking to modify and transform. As Karczag felt the student's will gather and organise under her hands she intervened, gently rocking to bring her partner back to a state of receptivity and 'allowing'.

Defining through touch.

In stillness - letting your partner feel what there is to feel.

Move up to the head

Defining; feeling its weight; taking up the weight of the head; sitting side on, gentle rocking.

Rocking to settle the contents and the container; to separate.

Rocking the head to loosen the connection between the head and torso.

This is a decision that the two of you are taking together.

Rest.

When you are ready, place one hand on your partner's forehead, one on their belly. Through the rocking feel the connection all the way through the spine.

Helping your partner to roll.

This is so easy.

Taking their arm across their body, rolling them backwards and forwards. Three body masses connected through the spine.

It's possible to come to a place where the rolling is just doing itself and your hands are just there.

No effort.

Eventually the momentum will take your partner up to sitting, maybe all the way up to standing.

Three body masses connected through the spine.

Using the floor to explore the head, its roundness, its looseness.

exploring its relation to the ribs, connection through the neck, through the spine; movement of contents and container.

Connection through your lumbar spine

Connection through the area of your waist.

Find support from your organs — liver, gall bladder, stomach, spleen, kidneys.

Finding the movement in your ribs in relation to your organs . Connection through your lumbar spine, through your waist.

Movement of each part within itself and in relation to the other. Movement of ribs in relation to the pelvis

So much movement existing within the body; every single cell of your body is alive and moving.

Three body masses each moving in relation to the other, in relation to the whole.

Movement expanding out into limbs and extremities; into hands arms feet fingers toes.

Connection through your spine.

There is so much movement here, in resting and in movement.

In this class Karczag speaks of 'making space in the body' to allow movement to emerge. In Release pedagogy, movement exists within the body; indeed, it is a condition of all bodies — 'there is so much movement here', Karczag states. This conceptualisation of movement contrasts with traditional dance pedagogy, where the dance or movement language is independent of, and pre-exists, any particular expression or articulation. In the conventional training context the student dancer is inducted into a specialised language system and seeks to master a restricted code of movement. Dance has been defined as or through limit; it functions as a restricted code (Hanna 1987). The dancer's entry into this system of language entails a loss or lack in being. Contrastingly, in this example of Karczag's practice, dancing emerges inter-subjectively as one person rocks another to open the body into moving. Here, any movement is dance movement, and dancing is an ongoing process of movement invention, supported and witnessed by another.

The role of my partner is to assist me in experiencing the volume of my body and its depth front to back. We are making space for movement. In her manual *The Body is Round - Use All the Radii*, Barbara Clark notes that many people move 'as if they believed their bodies were flat' (in Matt 1993: 264). She attributes this lack of the dimension of depth in body concept to the distorting effect of the mirror, noting that 'a concept of the body based upon an image of its surface cannot convey the most important secret of body balance: a strong body has its strength at center' (264). The strength and power of the Release(d) body as identified by Clark, may not be evident within the static order of the mirror. It is revealed principally in movement. The strength of what may be an outwardly soft contour of a Release dancer's body lies in its effective organisation of its relationship to gravity.

Much ideokinetically-based dance teaching is directed towards reinscribing the dimension of depth and volume into the dancer's body concept and to the refocussing of the dancer's attention away from the external musculature to deep structures of body support close to the spine. When these structures of support are understood and activated, great power is released. Herein lies one of the ironies of ideokinetic method; power and dynamism in moving is predicated upon what might be regarded as the classically 'feminine' stance of receptivity and responsiveness, on not *doing*, but *allowing*.

In an interview conducted at the conclusion of the workshop I questioned Karczag about the role of agency in Release dance, asking her how receptivity, or allowing, might lead to action. The question was prompted by her articulation of the role of receptivity in the 'hands on' rocking activity described above.

It seemed to me that you were talking about a state of desirelessness both on the part of the person being rocked and the person assisting the rocking. In that action there wasn't a will to change or a desire to change and yet something happened. If we are stepping back from notions of desire or agency, from a need or hunger to move, where does the moving come from? And if you are thinking about making performance (based in this process) how does that happen? (Dempster 1996:50)

In response, Karczag first spoke about the importance of de-emphasising the moment of beginning such that the line of demarcation between dancing and not dancing becomes blurred. To be living is to be moving; movement is a condition of the body, it is always already happening. 'I can think that finding a beginning is the hardest thing in the world or I can just say, well, any moment is the beginning,' she observed. Her second response echoed performer Lisa Nelson's conceptualisation of the relationship between desire, intention and attention. Karczag shares her view of the productivity of awareness/attention; noting that 'the act of being aware will already create change' (1996:50). As discussed in my earlier investigation of the nature of perception in Chapter 4, according to Nelson, attention is a form of desire; attention makes connections and precipitates action.

5.5.7 The horizontal plane of instruction - lying down and doing nothing (with attention).

In *The Thinking Body* Todd outlines the pedagogical value of what she terms 'unsocialised positions'. She argues that when a person places herself in an unfamiliar position, lying down or supported on all fours, the moral and aesthetic considerations which might normally obtain in a social setting are suspended. The potentially transformative encounter between the teacher and the student is supported by avoidance of the familiar postures of everyday social interaction. The deeply habituated patterns of comportment and movement, constitutive of the self and practiced daily in the vertical plane of social interaction must be dislocated if new patterns are to be established.

Todd's focus is upon the negative or critical function of lying down — what is avoided through the conscious assumption of 'unsocialised' positions. For Todd, it would seem, certain postures and placements of the body are unmarked by social inscription. Of equal, if more problematic, importance is what I might term the *positive* effects of lying down, that is, what lying down invokes and produces as well as what it avoids. As I indicated in

Chapter 4, the horizontal can function both as an empty category (where nothing happens) and as one which is dense with cultural association. In lying down or supporting herself on hands and knees the student surrenders her social self and her location in perspectival space. She is disarmed as she allows herself to enter a state of vulnerability and of openness to suggestion. This state may be experienced as one of great freedom. The teacher's presence supports this posture of surrender.

Luce Irigaray's account of the 'staging' of the analytic encounter is striking for its resonances with Todd's descriptions of the function and effects of table work. In "Gesture and Psychoanalysis", Irigaray reflects upon key aspects of psychoanalytic practice beginning with a description of certain 'movements and actions that occur in every analytic session':

Let me start with two essential positions taken up on the analytic stage that analysis took over from hypnosis: *one person (originally the woman) is lying down, the other person is sitting down, and facing the back of the first person's head*. These two parameters — sitting at someone's back and lying down — disobey not only social convention but also the relations of signs to language ... This stage has been set for *remembering*

Freud placed the patient, originally a woman, in a situation of *immersion* insofar as language and relations of known exchanges are concerned.... From the onset of the session or sessions, the patient was dislocated from his habits as a speaking subject, from his system of representational, social, and familial relations ... He is not really hypnotized but immersed in language and in his own history, which changes into something both other and like himself that he does not know (1993b: 92 Emphasis in original).

Irigaray observes that lying down may provoke anxiety or irritation in the patient and this is due to 'the impossibility of producing an exact word or meaning *that relates to the here and now*' (ibid: 92). The postural axes of social discourse are disrupted and in this setting 'the identity of the speaker and the person spoken to, of the world, or even of the subject ... have not been fixed' (ibid). In Todd's table work and in later formulations, such as the Constructive Rest Position (CRP),¹²⁸ the stage is also set for remembering; and what is

¹²⁸ The Constructive Rest Position — lying on the back, knees bent up to an angle of 90 degrees, feet flat on the floor — is a resting position which requires minimal muscle effort to maintain. The effect of gravity, and a relative

remembered is something that was never consciously known. Lying down and resting in a semi-supine posture suspends the operation of everyday habitus and facilitates the student's immersion in sensation and his own bodily (kinaesthetic and kinetic) history. What is it that remembers and forgets? Sweigard has spoken of the 'innate wisdom' of the nervous system, which re-members neuro-muscular pathways and 'automatically chooses' the most effective for a desired movement goal, 'if given the chance'.¹²⁹

In order for the re-membering of integrated action to occur, everyday habitus must be disrupted, forgotten and set aside. The student's future health and integration is conditional upon the suspension of established modes of bodily competence and gestural coherence. Speaking of the important and deconstructive force of the 'postures' of the psychoanalytic session, Irigaray notes,

The position (of lying down) is necessary if the patient is to cross back into his language ... Analysis forbids the patient to simulate normalcy, assuming that exists. The patient is held still so that his speech can be reconstituted in another way. And in speech I include gestures. Obviously this is not a question of teaching the subject a new code, doctrine etc. but of helping him or her to structure a new house of language (1993b: 93).

Irigaray's emphatic articulation of the necessity of 'lying down', as a pre-condition of new co-ordinations and patterns of meaning, resonates with ideokinetic theory and practice. In ideokinesis, the renunciation of habit occurs through the practice of Constructive Rest Position. Todd's recognition of the necessity of destabilising and renouncing old habits is reflected in many of Karczag's image scores. Here is an example from a score entitled "Coming into parts — separating each part from each part":

Have to give up something before something new can enter

*— have to give up old way of support before you can experience
a new way of support*

Receiving support of floor that rises up to meet body

positioning of body parts which encourages mechanical balance throughout the skeleton, act together to assist release of excessive muscle tension.

¹²⁹ Sweigard: 'Fortunately there resides within the nervous system a good deal of innate wisdom which automatically chooses, if given the chance, the neuro-muscular pathways best suited to reach a given goal in movement. It is particularly important that this wisdom be trusted and affirmed in the teaching of movement' (1974:3).

letting go of control ... support is there if we can accept it

'Trying is only emphasising the thing we know already', observes F.M. Alexander (1990:12). This observation has been reiterated, many times over, by ideokinetic practitioners. John Rolland stresses the importance of non-interference in the re-patterning of movement which occurs at the subcortical level (1984:10). In her paper "The Use of Imagery in Dance Training", Nancy Udow also notes the critical role of a receptive attitude to processes of bodily change: 'After giving the body a directive or pattern in the form of an image, the dancer must allow the body to work in the way that it best 'knows' how' (1978:27). As I allow my body to work as it 'knows how' I am re-membering my body history as something both 'other and like' myself. My Alexander teacher Bill Williams would repeat, over and over again, 'Nothing to get right ... If it feels wrong, let it be wrong. If it feels strange, let it be strange'. Bodily semiosis, the relation of sign to language, is subject to disruption in these stagings of remembering. The student of ideokinesis is 'held still' so that her body 'speech' might be reconstituted.

Stillness, rest and a stance of inaction, have thus come to play productive and positive roles in the evolution of the Release dance aesthetic. In Release work, the practice of Constructive Rest Position has several functions. One of its functions is to facilitate the assimilation of experience at the conclusion of a lesson, but it may also mark the point of departure for creative exploration of movement. Mary Fulkerson, who has developed a highly refined and rigorous approach to the extension of ideokinetic method into areas of dance improvisation and composition, describes stillness as a *practice*. In her Release classes, students are guided through Constructive Rest to an experience of resting in stillness, of waiting without expectation. 'Let the stillness have you', she says.

In my experience very much is happening in stillness, anatomical change and redirection being just one of many states of being to explore ...

Stillness is my starting point. I remain still for a period of time and then allow thoughts to emerge from stillness. In emerging thoughts are made up of both movements and ideas. There is no separation of movement and idea within this process as both are known together in a state of being (1999: 5).

Stillness facilitates imaging and there is a correlation between the time spent in stillness and the amount of imaginative activity resulting. Evidence from psychologist B.R. Bugelski also supports the choice of a resting position for the process of imaging. He

writes, 'As motor activity drops off, for example, in day dreaming, the amount of imaginal activity increases, and with further decreases of motor involvement imagery becomes more and more prominent' (1971:55).

This points to what may appear to be an anomaly, or difficulty in procedure. If imaging ability decreases with motor activity, how do images stimulate or proceed into movement? There are two responses to this question that have some currency within contemporary Release practice. First, the moment of bridging, image to action, is like other phases of the ideokinetic process, amenable to training. From stillness, where the image is strong, a transition into movement is made through simple, 'easy actions'.¹³⁰ Simple movement such as rolling, crawling and walking has a developmental basis and requires minimal conscious direction. Taking images into movement can be practised through these patterns. Gradually, the ability to maintain an image within complex movement is developed, though it is perhaps more accurate to say that this ability emerges, often unexpectedly and accompanied by a great sense of discovery, after some period of deep engagement in the practice. 'It happens' as Todd has described the experience of an integration that is prepared for, but cannot be willed.

Secondly, the Release dancer learns to rely on kinaesthetic memory. In stillness, she experiences subtle changes of sensation. This kinaesthetic response can be remembered, re-found. The nature of the image changes; rather than *seeing* the image, the *feeling* of its action is recalled. Moving out of stillness, calls for delicate and highly discriminating kinaesthetic perception. These perceptual skills, integral to the image-based training systems, are strengthened by repeated engagement in the imaging process.

5.5.8. Images and their effects

'The facts do not matter', asserts Mary Fulkerson, 'By thinking of greater length through the centre of the body, it happens' (1982:10). Movement patterns are directed by strategies or ideas, and a single thought or image can stimulate and co-ordinate a complex action. The fundamental principle, underlying all ideokinetic and Release practice, is that thoughts directly affect muscular patterns. The effectiveness or otherwise of a particular thought is not, finally, a matter of verifiable 'fact', but of belief and practice.

The pedagogical problem addressed by images, (and it is this 'problem' that determines their selection), is how to stimulate change in deeply established patterns of bodily use. Barbara Clark devoted considerable energy to the task of developing 'suitable imagery'. It

¹³⁰

A term adopted by Fulkerson in her first manual *The Language of the Axis* (1977).

was not enough that an image be factually true, it had to be effective. Images must be attractive to act as a 'hook' or lure for the nervous system as André Bernard describes it (1997:31). According to Bernard, Clark's special gift was the capacity to generate evocative imagery.

The term 'image' has developed a specialised meaning in ideokinetic and Release work. It is not exclusively visual. The following image, recorded in Barbara Clark's notebooks affords some insight into the flexibility and poetry of Mabel Todd's application of anatomical knowledge.

For the week think about mass consciousness. Lower body is a living active mass. Holding to it two other masses — the legs. Resting on it another mass — the upper body. Think of molecular freedom all through the mass ... Think of sun shining through particles, separating them. Get more separation between particles. Mass consciousness instead of line consciousness. November 19th, 1923 (in Matt 1993:303).

Some of the images that are commonly used to suggest kinaesthetic sensation are anatomically based and they point towards particular physical realisation. One such image is that of a central vertical axis or thinking length through centre. Images that integrate sensory information from more than one perceptual system seem particularly effective. An example, which engages visual and tactile perception, is the image of a long braid, visualised dropping down the mid line of your back. Watch as the braid unravels from base of the skull to the base of the spine at the coccyx. Another example: Imagine a stream of water flowing down your spine. In partner work, the images tend to be simpler. The partner's hand provides tactile stimulus. The image is 'placed' in the body, given a location and reality, through the partner's touch. There is also a range of images which are not anatomical but which induce particular sensations or states of feeling: In rest position, imagine the floor rising to meet and support your falling body. This image constitutes the environment as animate; the floor senses and takes the form of your body as it softens to receive its falling weight. Some images promote specific kinds of spatial experience: the air has substance and density — as you move through space, imagine your body forming an impression on the air.

Images are both 'real' and 'imaginary'. They may describe and refer to physical structures, but they may equally invoke virtual entities, such as the line of gravity in the body, which has *effects*, but no location. The centre line is not a material structure but an idea around which a body may mobilise its energies. The anatomy that ideokinesis works upon and

through is an *imaginary* anatomy, that is, the libidinally invested body schema. Thinking in images is a mode of thinking through the body, and images, in the context of ideokinetic practice, are emotionally invested thoughts. It is this aspect of images that is the key to their effectiveness in stimulating and supporting habit change. As Nancy Udow has stated: 'The image is not merely thinking about a perception, but is rather a re-enactment of that experience with the accompanying movement response. Thought produces action' (1978:36).

For Udow, imagery is not only a functional support for the dancer's technique or for movement exploration. Referring to Paul Schilder's book *The image and appearance of the human body* (1950) she suggests the value of ideokinesis as a means through which a dancer might cultivate a 'workable body concept' for herself (Udow 1978: 29). The ideokinetic understanding of images and their function is related to Schilder's notion of body image or schema, with its emphasis on the constitutive role of motion, rather than the later, visually dominated concept of *imago* as developed in Lacanian psychoanalytic theory.

The ideokinetic image is, in large measure, non-specular. Mabel Todd reminds the student of ideokinesis that images are to be incorporated — think *through* the body, not along the outside, she writes. Similarly, André Bernard encourages his students to 'become the image' (in Rosen 1997:35). In ideokinetic practice there is no distance between body and image, and one is not working towards a singular or unified body image but a proliferation of images. Ideokinetic practice suggests the possibility of a reconfiguration of the spatiality of the image-self relation. Unlike the mirror-image as elaborated by Lacan, the ideokinetic image is not held outside and at a distance from the body, so that a subject may take a perspective upon herself. As my discussion of the key elements of ideokinetic method has indicated, with its emphasis upon the tactile, aural and kinaesthetic, ideokinetic/Release pedagogy constitutes a distinctively different dancer. The Release dancer is not 'seeing' herself as others 'see' her, indeed, she may not be 'seeing' an image at all, but hearing it and feeling it, as she is prompted by verbal description. With its focus upon images experienced through the body, the ideokinetic practice intensifies a haptic sensibility towards space. Space is experienced as co-extensive with the body.

5.6 Watching and being seen

A portion of each class is spent with eyes closed, either in periods of resting alone or working with a partner. The reasons for this are partly pragmatic — kinaesthetic

awareness tends to be heightened when information from other senses, especially vision, is reduced (Udow 1978, Dempster 1982), and partly a matter of convention. Working with eyes closed creates a sense of privacy and autonomy and is consistent with a process and an aesthetic which is defined as inwardly focused, as work on the 'self'. Some moments of watching are part of the formal structure of the workshop. The preliminary stage of the practice of 'hands on' entails a scanning of the partner's body, a diagnostic watching, where information is sought which will guide the placement of hands. But this type of watching might more accurately be described simply as attention or focus; it occurs always in relationship, always as a preparation for contact. As noted above there are no mirrors in the studio and outside of the quite circumscribed practice of 'hands on', looking, especially in the section of the class devoted to improvisation is subject to some inhibition, an inhibition which is not relaxed until the second week of the workshop when specific direction to observe is given by Karczag.

In this context the teacher could be described as a watchful presence or witness: she watches over, she supports her students through her attention. She scans the room; her vision is generalised, soft focus, peripheral. She watches the movement of others through her body, that is, kinaesthetically, not discriminating, not judging, not seeking to correct. Releasing teacher Joan Skinner has described this style of watching as 'X ray vision'; according to Skinner the Releasing teacher sees through the external form to attend to the movement of energy through a body.

Karczag does not welcome outside observers except in special circumstances, feeling that observation frames the work in unhelpful ways. She suggests that the presence of an outside observer has an inhibiting effect upon people and contributes to an unproductive self-consciousness. One of the effects of self-consciousness is that a separation occurs between self as a social actor and the experience of moving; the moving self is not completely absorbed in the ongoing-ness of movement but has an awareness of the act of moving and its status as representation. A contradiction or difficulty thus arises when ideokinetic technique is proposed as the basis for an alternative dance practice. Ideokinesis entails the visualisation of images, an internally directed vision; it is sometimes experienced as an intensely solipsistic process. Furthermore, if the ideokinetic process is inhibited or constrained by observation, as Karczag suggests, how is the Release dancer to negotiate this schism: between studio practice, the experience of immersion, and performing for others. I will offer a number of responses, some of which reflect the practical solutions and strategies developed by performers; others are, to date, of a more conceptual and theoretical order.

1. As outlined above (section 5.4.7), a number of ideokinetic practitioners, including Nancy Udow (1978), suggest that the transition from Release based studio practice to dance performance is negotiated through the reiteration and strengthening of specific aspects of the technique. Images stimulate subtle changes in neuromuscular functioning and concomitant kinaesthetic sensation. The Release dancer learns to rely on these subtly altered sensations and over time develops the capacity to take the image into action through heightened kinaesthetic awareness.

2. The Release dancer learns how to watch and be watched. In one of Karczaga's scores, reference is made to Deborah Hay's practice of 'inviting being seen'. Speaking of this practice, Hay has observed, 'I think that part of what I am teaching has to do very much with addressing the whole body at once as a way to be in the world'. Hay's practice is grounded in a perception of the continuum of movement experience; within that continuum she chooses to focus her attention at the cellular level. Her practice is to hold the image/intention of '53 million cells (of my body) inviting being seen' (in Refshauge 1996:67). In performance what is 'being seen' is not the dancer as visual image, nor a completed aesthetic object. Hay describes the performance of 'inviting being seen' as the unfolding of intimacy, and bringing it into visibility. 'I am discovering the dance at the same time as the dance is being seen by an audience discovering me, In other words I am being perceived — or even if I am my own witness I am seeing myself and that is an intimacy, that is such an intimate experience' (68). Hay's strategy redefines intimacy as a stance or attitude to her body that can be exercised anywhere and any time.

3. The teacher is a supportive witness, whose attentive watching bridges the distance between the watcher and the dancer, the house and the stage. 'The releasing dancer is almost in a state of transparency and when I am watching that it's almost as if I have X-ray vision. I sometimes jokingly say in class that I'm watching what is going on with X-ray vision...' (Skinner 1996:26). In my earlier discussion of the ballet, I argued that the teacher/choreographer is often represented as the ideal spectator, that is the figure around which and to whom the ballet spectacle is organised. Release practice is organised around a very different conceptualisation of the transaction between dancer and spectator. In Release dance contexts the spectator is a witness. I will discuss some of the effects of this conceptualisation in the concluding chapter.

4. My own contribution to this debate would be to suggest that the ideokinetic and Release studios are already defined through well-articulated, intersubjective practices and therefore might themselves be regarded as *public* zones, subject to various performative

energies, constraints and potentials. This perspective will also be discussed further in the concluding chapter.

5.6.1 Towards dancing

The classes in the second week are oriented to the creative exploration of states of dancing. The anatomical and instructional focus of the Awareness Work of week one and its orderly progression from warm-up through to dancing is superseded by a more elastic investigation of motivation, impulse and decision. Extended periods of time are devoted to improvisation. Attention is drawn to issues of phrasing and rhythm, alternating between moving and resting, between doing something and feeling the after effects of action in stillness. This alternation between moving and resting, while sustaining full body awareness, provides a elementary compositional structure upon which the dancing is elaborated and defined. In the two scores transcribed below, Karczag begins to draw out the question of performance, of being seen, and dancing with and for others.

Week 2: day 2

Own your sensation; own your body.

Taking pleasure in deep physicality.

This is an expanded, expansive state where movement is a given, any kind of movement, any kind that you choose to explore.

As you move, know that you are being watched, first and foremost by yourself, your internal eye. Every tiny detail, every large gesture; know that you are being watched and with your whole self invite being seen.

There is a lot of room for sensation here, in movement and at rest. space inside and around you. Space for listening, space for sensing.

Taking a decision, finding a beginning and getting moving, now. Not tomorrow, not the next second, but now.

When you want to, take a rest. Resting is a time of renewal, a time when you have space and time for sensing, time for decision making and time for action.

Allowing whatever movement needs to happen, to happen

Out of this sensing allowing your awareness to spread outwards to notice other's moving.

This is soft focus, peripheral vision. As you continue to move and notice let yourself be inspired by some of the things you see around you. Take your inspiration now less from what is happening inside and more from what is happening outside.

Week 2. Day 3

Stretching and extending; testing out where you are this morning. Thinking through the joints are folding, opening, rotating, spiralling, curving.

Resting. fully inhabiting stillness, a dynamic stillness.

Empty, open, willing, available; full of possibilities, full of movement.

This is a state where movement is a given, any kind of movement; small, large, tight, loose, hard or soft, energetic or languid, on the floor, in the air, within one spot, covering a lot of space.

Let this be the practice of 'yes', of saying yes to any movement possibility that presents itself.

Is it a sensation, a feeling, a thought, a memory? Something you can hear, something you see? Is it something you touch or someone who touched you? Something inside your body? A place of kinaesthetic delight.

.....

Working your way into a dancing state. this is a place where there is no judgement, no thinking about should or can't.

This is a place where moving is what's happening. This is a place where your body is talking, where your body is doing the speaking.

This is a place where your body finds its eloquence.

.....

If you wish to, do a dance of possibilities with someone.

5.7 Discursive representations of ideokinesis and Release.

Barbara Clark introduces the first of her teaching manuals *Let's Enjoy Sitting, Standing and Walking* in the following way:

Nature never meant movement to be a harsh discipline. As animals run and birds fly, they exhibit such joy and satisfaction in body action. Joy in movement should help us in living, as it does for animals (in Matt 1993:164).

Clark emphasises the importance of pleasure in movement. Joy in moving is both the telos and the medium of her movement pedagogy. Harnessing pleasure gradually helps you change your habits of daily living; pleasure is also an accomplishment, according to Clark. Ideokinesis seeks to address a culturally pervasive fear and mistrust of bodily experience, the somatophobia that Elizabeth Grosz has defined as foundational to Western philosophical thinking. The method's effectiveness in this regard is dependant upon the sensory acuity, imaginative ability and desire of the student.

In this chapter I have worked to develop a notion of ideokinesis as a specific kind of cultural labour. The bodily pleasure, which is its outcome, is not a simple release from tension or a return to an earlier 'pre-oedipal' state of non-differentiation, but a cultural accomplishment. Dance theorist and performer Marianne Goldberg describes this experience of pleasure in moving as the effect of a desuturing process, a 'coming into parts', as deeply embodied comportments and gendered dispositions are unravelled. Reflecting upon her work with Eva Karczag, Goldberg writes,

The various forms of movement re-education such as the Alexander technique or Kinetic Awareness address issues of repression at the cellular level. Constricted muscles hold traumatic memories of the socialisation process of becoming 'feminine' — of learning to restrain arms from moving through space with power or to keep legs tightly closed in public (1996:55).

One of the difficulties of Goldberg's representation of ideokinetic and Alexander work as a release from repression, is that such a representation re-engages the binary; a constrained, relatively static, socialised body, governed by 'cultural images' of femininity, is counter-posed to a freely moving, released female body. An essentialising discourse circulates quite broadly in Release pedagogy, as this example from Karczag's writings on her teaching practice attests:

I teach the kind of moving that is allowed to happen ... (the) emphasis is on undoing — undoing habit, undoing preconceived ideas of body and mind — to recover a natural freedom of movement and thought (1994:3).

The movement qualities of Release dancing, and their modes of production, are similarly described in opposition to mainstream dance. Release is inwardly, not outwardly focussed, and the Release dancer is pursuing an authentic impulse to move, rather than copying shapes. Karczag:

The shape and form of the movement is determined by internal sensing and motivation and the direction of energy flow, rather than copying externally perceived shapes; that is, dancing is experienced from the inside out, rather than from the imposing of external shapes upon the body (ibid: 1).

What I find problematic in these texts is the reiteration of the hierarchical relation that already obtains in dominant dance discourses. Release is defined as 'other' to ballet, for example, and yet the values of neutrality, instrumentality, efficiency and virtuosity, which have come to define ballet pedagogy, are also in evidence in Release discourse. Karczag writes of

The search towards the experiencing of 'neutrality' in the body — the greatest degree of 'being in tone' possible at each given moment — allows for the making of choices that include a wide range of physical attitudes (ibid: 3)

Karczag locates her teaching practice within the historical context of the 'experimental dance ... of the last third of the 20th century' (ibid: 2). The ideal of a body neutralised, cleared of all physical and psychic obstacles, so as to be available for any conceivable (choreographic) demand is a legacy of the modernist heritage. Although that heritage is inflected in quite diverse ways within different modernist traditions in dance, when it comes to issues of dance training the discourse of neutrality and clarity remains powerful. Ideokinesis has proved to be a highly effective method of developing 'finely calibrated control' over the moving body (Huxley 1996:89) and this fact has led to a degree of acceptance of the practice within mainstream dance training contexts. In these applications, ideokinesis does not challenge the assumption that dance training is centrally concerned with control and efficiency and that the dancer's task is to demonstrate mastery and command over her body. However, as I have argued in an earlier chapters (2.2.1 & 3.1.2), to invoke a neutral body, awaiting choreographic inscription, reinstitutes a

discordant split between the choreography and its embodiment, the dancer and the choreographer. In Karczag's representation of her own teaching practice, movement is again construed as 'raw material', and the body is in service to a choreographic text. I am identifying these instances of congruence with elements of the mainstream aesthetic, which Karczag has so systematically and determinedly challenged, not in order to discredit what is arguably a profoundly transforming and highly rigorous dance pedagogy. My intention is to highlight the importance of developing other theoretical frameworks and languages that might more precisely begin to articulate the *difference* of Release corporeality. Furthermore, my analysis of the classroom/studio language and habitus asserts that the orientation of ideokinetic and Release practice is not towards the natural body but is profoundly cultural.

In this chapter I have taken my cue from Mabel Todd, whose pedagogy of bodily change paradoxically emphasised the importance of practice, repetition and habit formation. By identifying ideokinesis and Release as disciplines, I have worked to develop an understanding of what they do and what they make. Ideokinesis and Release are not adequately or correctly represented as mere absence or negation of corporeal habit since they not only *undo*, but also *produce* corporeal habits. It is important to recognise the critical or negative aspect of Todd's pedagogy. Although Todd does not refute bodily habit *per se*, her promotion of new habits functions as a form of cultural critique at a bodily and kinetic level.

In her major books, Todd refers to the destructive corporeal habits that are imposed by uncondusive social and economic conditions, and those that result from conformity to social conventions and cultural norms. In Clark's work, connections are also made between the individual body and the social body, and it is in the articulation of this relationship in ideokinetic practice and theory that Pam Matt discerns the beginnings of a practical politics of the body. Influenced by Todd's broad project in *The Hidden You*, which links socio-cultural analysis and analysis of the postural integration of the human body, during the late 1960s Clark began to make connections between 'the process of integrating mind and body and the symptoms of national distress, which were so evident during that period' (1993:71). Clark recalled Todd's earlier advice concerning the importance of maintaining awareness of natural rhythms 'as the fast pace of industrialised life in the twenties threatened to confuse the kinaesthetic sense (1993:15), and her own response to the challenges of life in the politically and socially tumultuous 1960s was also eminently practical. Matt recalls,

In assessing the world situation Barbara suggested 'Nixon won't know what to do until he can let go of those shoulders'. Concerned over the future of the women's movement she concluded 'Women will never be liberated until they get out of high heeled shoes' (1993:72).

According to Todd and Clark, some habits are more productive, more life-enhancing and beneficial, than others. I have argued that without an acknowledgment of its incipient politics, ideokinesis, and its 'sister' practice Release, continue to be utilised and evaluated in the dualistic terms, which they have in other ways worked so assiduously to overcome.

Todd's pedagogy proceeds from recognition that posture is incessant, but not fixed. Because postural sets are not 'set' but are in a process of ongoing construction and modification, change is possible. Paul Schilder speaks of the body-image or postural set as produced through 'effort' and motion.

Motion and action are necessary for this development (of a body-image or gestalt). For this construction and organization not only the present experiences are used, but also the past, and the function of memory is to have material ready for new organization (1950:287).

Schilder notes that there are tendencies that 'try to make the body-image complete' but it cannot remain so without renewed effort; and there are countermanding forces and tendencies at play. Here he writes of the circumstances that promote the dissolution of the body-image,

When we close our eyes and remain as motionless as possible, the body-image tends towards dissolution. The body-image is the result of effort and cannot be completely maintained when the effort ceases (ibid: 287).

The intensive, reiterative body practices represented by dance training could be described as forms of 'renewed effort' that work to make a body-image complete. It is in the cessation of effort and motion that the body-image begins to dissolve. Cessation is a feature of both ideokinetic class and Release workshop and in these contexts, body-image which is 'never a complete structure and never static' (ibid) is disrupted and rendered provisional. Lying down in stillness, one's body history is re-membered, that is, disaggregated. The body's habits, its histories and its identity are not erased in ideokinetic practice, but put into suspension. The process of reintegration does therefore initially

involve a retreat from or suspension of identity. There is an element of regressive fantasy in the work of postural reconstitution or reintegration.

The question arises, upon or through what *logic* is the re-constitution of the body identity and the resumption of a full range of postural possibilities (including the vertical) to be effected, once the resting or 'dissolution' phase of the ideokinetic and Release process is complete. What happens when the dancer stands up? Todd has recourse to a logic of physics and her pedagogy is governed by a desire to bring human existence into harmony with fundamental physical principles. Clark's logic is one of corporeal pleasure, comfort and balance between parts of the body, and between the body and its immediate environment.

5.7.1 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the teacher or partner has a critical role in the subject's entry into a regressive/choric fantasy, and also in the process of reconstitution. The teacher's look, voice and touch lead into being a new bodily identity/body image. In the process of postural reintegration, the teacher or partner's hand is a touchstone, an index to the present. The other's touch works against the pull of history and the inertia of familiar patterns of use. I have also argued that the methods and techniques that constitute ideokinesis and Release as disciplines have come to function as a distinctive form of social practice. Karczag's workshop, for example, was an opportunity for women to spend some time together, to do some dancing with others, in a setting where ordinary, non-specialised moving was valued as highly as more elaborated forms. However the logic of Release dance, as represented by Karczag, is, I suggest, still (negatively) defined by mainstream dance discourse. This constraining representation is related in part to the identification of Release dance with the project of dance modernism, which has had difficulty with difference, especially the difference of women and bodies.

Gender issues in dance have not been of great interest or relevance to Karczag, who seems to subscribe to a universalist, humanist view of the practices she is involved in. The work in Karczag's terms is about energy, alignment, freedom of movement, individual expression and sometimes, emotional catharsis. Karczag has enjoyed wide recognition as a dancer, improviser and teacher but has a more problematic relationship to choreographing, to the directorial role and to authorship, as that process and role has conventionally been defined. 'I don't like telling people what to do', is how she expresses it. Her choreographic output has been mainly solo and improvisatory. Her work with groups has been largely collaborative and has always included an element of

improvisation. I discern in her engagements a very active attempt to redefine and renegotiate the meaning of the term 'choreographer' and a challenge to the assumed masculinity of the work of choreography. In my view Karczag's work in dance represents a form of feminist critique and it is gender, or more specifically, analyses of gender developed in feminist theory, which provide some useful conceptual tools which may begin to elucidate the radicalness of the corporeality developed in Release practice.

Finally, what are the aesthetic implications of the ideokinetic process of deconstruction and reconstitution of bodily hexis? If it is difficult to identify a Release aesthetic except in the broadest terms (eg., a focus upon process, flow, allowing movement), it is because in Release, identity is always under re-construction. The discourse developed around Release applications of ideokinetic method, betrays a contradictory amalgam of modernist ideals. On the one hand, ideokinesis as a body technique is identified with absolute impersonal, physical principles; it also entails an education and refinement of perception. As I have suggested in Chapter 3, Release dance has connections to postmodern dance and in some aspects of its practice — its rejection of representation and narrative, for example — it displays a determinedly critical relationship to historical modern dance. In addition, ideokinesis and Release dance place a value upon the ordinary, pedestrian body; as Matt states, ideokinesis addresses the 'complexity of moving simply' (1993:72). All these factors link ideokinesis and Release to the post-modernist dance aesthetic of the late 1960s. On the other hand, Release draws its name from Martha Graham and its effects are sometimes represented in decidedly expressionistic terms. According to Karczag, Goldberg and Fulkerson, Release practice gives form to inner realities. Ideokinesis is in some contexts represented as a means of purifying the corporeal 'instrument', so that movement happens; thus the application and extension of ideokinesis in dance improvisation, choreography and performance is linked with an expressivist dance tradition.

My perspective on this question is that although ideokinesis is determinedly aesthetic — it promotes the aestheticisation of everyday life through intensification of sensuous experience — it did not arise as an art practice per se and in its deconstructive aspect, it remains resistant to the representational, *choreo-graphic* impulse of dance. The disciplines of ideokinesis and Release deliberately and systematically deconstruct the tendency to reify or commodify bodies. So too do they destabilise and mobilise habitual modes of thinking. Herein, I would suggest, lie their value as a corporeal poetics and as a politics of the dancing body. Ideokinesis and Release address and seek to vivify the tonic dialogue, the body's fundamental relationship with gravity, which, according to Hubert

Godard, is at the heart of the dance experience. The articulation of the difference of Release dance, as a performance practice in its own terms remains an unfinished project, however. Release practice has proved extremely effective in reconstituting the corporeality of the dancer's body. However, as a performance practice, how does Release dance engage with the norms and conventions governing composition, production and presentation? What strategies does it draw upon in its address to the historical sedimentation of the space of the stage? In the brief concluding chapter I will consider some contemporary responses to these questions, but I close this chapter with an example of a spatial strategy employed by Release dance artist Mary Fulkerson.

During the 1970s, Fulkerson evolved a single image score entitled "I see myself standing". She developed a performance work by using the score as a simple compositional structure and she also worked with it in teaching Release work. The score involves projecting an image of yourself into a given space. Fulkerson's first instruction is to 'see yourself standing somewhere in the room'. This image of yourself may take the form of a picture, but it may equally be kinaesthetic, tactile or some other combination of perceptual modes. The next instruction is 'when the image is clear' (and how its clarity is established is a matter of personal judgement), 'move to meet the image'. You walk to the place where you have imagined yourself; you inhabit that place for a short while, and centre yourself there by drawing upon an image or two, such as, 'imagining your feet sinking into the floor and your head floating'. Then you repeat the process of imagining yourself somewhere in the room. Again, allow the image to resolve and then move to meet your own image. This process is repeated many times. By projecting your body imaginatively through space, you are preparing a place to stand.

I reproduce the score of "I see myself standing" here because it demonstrates, at a very simple, practical level, a means by which a practice (and through it, a woman) may begin to create a place for itself (and herself), in the world. With its close attention to the body and its interior geography, ideokinesis does initially entail an intense solipsism. This simple image score encapsulates the ideokinetic process, but adds to it a projective spatial dimension. It begins to suggest how imaging processes may work to effect the production of a place upon which to stand, and from which to dance.

Chapter 6: Conclusion — Towards the audience

In an essay recently published in English translation, French dance scholar Laurence Louppe poses the question 'What is political in dance?' She investigates this issue by asking where processes of politicisation lie in the body of the dancer and its practices. Louppe observes,

If the body of the dancer is a 'battle ground' it is above all because within its very movement, currents of thought, ideologies (and) relations of force confront each other and have done so continuously throughout the twentieth century (2001/2:72).

Louppe perceives in the modern dance tradition a sustained engagement with the question of force, and its visibility, in and through dancers' bodies. The tensile qualities of a body's movement, its manner of transferring weight and how, precisely, it releases into gravity — all these subtle elaborations of movement in space and time are, or can be, matters of political significance.

Where her colleague, Hubert Godard, identifies the dancer's relationship with gravity, the 'tonic dialogue', as the foundation of a new *poetics* of dance, for Louppe, this manifestation of a particular relation to the play of forces, locates and describes a dancing body's politics. All movement begins with falling, a letting go or release, which precipitates action; movement through space is initiated by a release of the anti-gravity muscles that work to stabilise the body around its vertical axis. The manner in which a dancer negotiates falling and recovery, or return to stability, is a key to the meanings that dance communicates. According to Godard and Louppe, the techniques that inform and govern the dancer's management of these moments of release and recovery are perhaps the most critical of all the signifying practices at work in dance. These 'gravitational adventures' are not simply of subjective concern to the dancer, but embody experiences and perceptions that are cultural, social and political. In this way, a body's negotiation with force, in and through movement, represents a politics that is taken up and lived at a bodily level — as *habitus* in other words.

A politics of dance may be discerned within the most basic of pedagogical exchanges, when, for example, a dancer learns a precise co-ordination of her breath and the movement of her arms in the *port de bras*, or how she learns to lower her weight and place her foot to spring, or re-learns how to balance around her central vertical axis, to run and fall and turn. Although my principal focus in this study has been the business of dance training, it is in performance where these political understandings and commitments become palpable for

others. Dance performance is a site where the social and political projects of dance are enacted and communicated. It is also a form of 'public pedagogy', to borrow a phrase from Carmen Luke, through which gender identities and relations are taught and learnt. At various junctures in this thesis I have indicated ways in which dance training and performance function as pedagogical regimes of subject formation. In this concluding chapter I will return to some of those observations as I consider how the 'doing' of gender is refracted through: the performer/spectator relation.

In an observation that resonates with my earlier discussion of haptic space in Chapter 4, Louppe writes, 'By a quasi tactile expansion of her/his kinesphere the dancer can touch the other's body, transform it, work with it' (2001/2:74). The dancer can touch us and move us through her mobilisation of haptic space. Identifying this intimate form of corporeal exchange as the ground of dance, Louppe is critical of the spectacular packaging of dance, and the accompanying commodification of dancers' bodies, which became so intensified in the late twentieth century. The dominance of an exchange economy has rendered the dancer's body 'inoffensive', Louppe asserts, and reduced it to the status of a mere cipher in a representational system dominated by the consumption of signs. In such a setting, the dancer's body no longer has the power to unsettle us.

Like Louppe, I have focused my investigation of the social and political implications of dance at the level of the dancer's body. I have explored contrasting formations of the dancer in two very different contexts of practice — one economically and socially powerful, the other marginal in economic terms, but important for its influence upon an emerging new dance aesthetic. The imaginary dimension of dance, that is, the realm of images, fantasies, myths and beliefs, has been significant in my inquiry. An analysis of the ballet and Release dance imaginaries has been undertaken in order to uncover and elucidate some of the stories embodied in training practices, and to begin to speculate upon what performative expression those stories facilitate or obstruct. I have also argued that dance training methods and techniques are signifying practices, which not only produce and reproduce, but also destabilise habitus. However, the question of rewriting the dancing body and performing differently turns not only upon the difficult project of changing the dancer's bodily hexis, but also of changing the audience and its habits of viewing. In this chapter I will introduce some preliminary points of discussion towards a retheorisation of the inter-subjective relations activated through performance. I will also have occasion to suggest that dancers' bodies may still have the capacity to unsettle, move and even embolden the spectator.

In the concluding section of Chapter 5, I suggested that the failure to conceptualise a new dance practice such as Release dance, other than in terms of its opposition and resistance to

mainstream discourse, has limited its cultural effectiveness. While the discourse and practice of Release dance has contributed much to the understanding of the means by which habitus or body-identity may be suspended, the Release dancer cannot remain, for too long, in free fall, or resting in the horizontal plane. When she regains her verticality what does she have to say, and with what language?

The work of Jennifer Monson, whose principal dance training experience has been in Release techniques, will provide a framework for discussion of this question. Monson is one of the dancers of whom Releasing dance founder Joan Skinner (1996:22) speaks when she describes dancers who use the technique to release great power in moving. Monson likes to move with focused big energy and sometimes drops body-slamming crashes into the floor; her technique has a protective as well as a facilitating function.

Ann Cooper Albright, in an extended discussion of Monson's duet work *Finn's Shed*, insightfully describes Monson's precise skill in releasing her weight into the floor. Albright notes that Monson's ability to release through the centre of her body supports an 'erratic, sometimes chaotic flinging of different body parts' (1997:51). Monson's practice of releasing engenders a dancing body that can gather its energies to move with great swiftness and force. However this body is not committed to a demonstration of its own muscularity; the emphasis is on the doing and not the display, Albright implies. For Albright, Monson is 'a refreshing example of an alternative physicality'. She does not conform to the commodified image of female dancer, 'neither the lithe feminine dancer nor its more recent reconstruction as a sleekly muscled one' (ibid: 53). Her physicality does not immediately signify 'dancer', but appears casual, recalling the pedestrian dance aesthetic of the early post-modernists. Monson's way of moving has not consolidated into a style, and, according to Albright, by de-emphasising the constructedness of her dancing, Monson evades commodification. I would suggest that this outcome is an effect of Monson's long-standing engagement with Release technique.

Monson's work in improvisation and collaborative composition represents a politically engaged new dance practice. She has, in the past, perceived a strong relationship between her engagement in Release and improvisational dance and her feminist-lesbian political activism. Her current dance practice may be less overtly 'political' — Monson herself says her interests in performance have become more narrowly 'aesthetic'.¹³¹ However, as I will argue below, the ongoing political dimension of Monson's performance practice lies in her commitment to addressing the spectator as female.

Two questions remain:

¹³¹ Unpublished interview conducted by the author, April 1999.

Why is dance of such interest to women? This intriguing but complex question initially arose in the context of my critique of John Martin's theory of metakinesis in Chapter 3. A related question, also briefly touched upon earlier, in Chapter 4, and which bears upon the issue of kinaesthetic empathy or identification, is this: When a woman watches another woman dancing what happens?

In the following discussion of women's involvement in and responses to dance performance, I will attempt to steer a path which avoids the dangers of, on the one hand, a false universalism, which represses the specificity of a woman's corporeality and sees there 'a body just like our own' (Martin 1966:53); and on the other hand, an essentialism, which assumes that the specificity of one woman's corporeality is both outside of history, and common to all women.

6.1 The formation of an audience

6.1.1 Introit: "Am I pleasing?"¹³²

Jennifer Monson's *ode to summer* (2000)¹³³ crashes and stumbles into being. Monson breaks and smashes plates somewhere off stage and with a roar careers onto the stage. Her body contour amplified almost out of recognition by many layers of clothing, she stumbles, falls and rolls across the performance space, eventually colliding with and coming to rest at the feet of the audience. Catching someone's gaze, she begins beseeching the audience, wordlessly pleading, begging for assistance. She needs something— but what is it? Finally someone intervenes with a question: 'What is it? If you would only tell me what you want, perhaps I can help'. What is it she wants? Monson's mute appeal to the audience is dense with questions, suggesting an interrogation of the act of performance beyond the immediate circumstances of this event. In another, more rhetorical register, her action invokes Freud's infamous question concerning 'the enigma of femininity'. What is it that women want?

Monson has described this prologue to *ode to summer* as an explicit acting out of a fundamental dynamic in performance. She is making manifest in a determinedly overblown manner an uneasy aspect of the performer-audience compact. She enacts a breach in performance etiquette, an etiquette which assumes that a performer's desire and need for attention (her narcissism) must necessarily be subsumed into a larger narrative. Monson makes a spectacle of the feminine and feminised place of the performer. She

¹³² My ballet informant Russell Dumas, tells me that in childhood ballet class he was taught to mark the closure of each *enchainment* in a particular way. Holding the pose, *indemi bras*, the dancer frames the display of self and skill, and offers both, with deference, to the patron/audience. According to Dumas, this closing gesture was understood to mean 'Am I pleasing?'

¹³³ Presented at Dancehouse, Melbourne, November 2000.

represents that place as one that is dependant upon the desire of the other. This strategic production of herself as in need, or lacking, sets up the terms of Monson's address to a specifically 'feminine' condition and her later refutation of it.

Monson makes explicit the interdependence of herself as performer and the audience, albeit in a humorous way. And beyond this instance of performance her performed, that is, self-conscious entreaty (help me!), speaks to relations between people, between self and not self, the reciprocity of social situations. Her action invokes an ethical relation, a care for the other, as members of the audience move to 'help' the performer.

Monson's strategic call to the audience has a precedent in Trisha Brown's improvisatory dance *Yellowbelly* (1969). This work begins with a differently nuanced invitation, however. Brown invites her audience to taunt her, to goad her into action by yelling out 'yellow-belly'. The audience's desire solicits action -- Brown's dancing is generated as a response to their provocation. In *Yellowbelly*, Brown produces the audience as hostile and demanding and makes explicit their aggressive projection while contesting her submission to it. In actuality, Brown found her audience too kind, too gentle and found it necessary to stop and reiterate her own demand that the audience should 'be really nasty'.¹³⁴ The effect of Brown and Monson's strategies is to produce an audience conscious of itself and unambiguously implicated in the production of meaning. Brown and Monson also make explicit a dynamic which is conventionally elided, the feminised position of the performer.

Another example of intervention into the performer/spectator relationship is Rainer's *Trio A* (1966). Widely regarded as a seminal work of post modern dance, *Trio A* stages an interrogation and critique of the conditions of performance. What is the 'problem' of performance that *Trio A* sought to address? In terms of art historical discourse, and especially under modernism, one of the 'problems' of dance performance has been its theatricality and referentiality, which impede its accession to the status of art. Performance, with its dependence upon the conditions of viewing and the presence of the spectator, challenges modernist belief in the putative self-presence and autonomy of the art object.

The 'problem' of performance is also a problem for the performer. Rainer is explicit about her own narcissistic investment in the relationship with the spectator and *Trio A* addresses this issue choreographically. Rainer dealt with the problem of narcissism by never permitting the performer to confront the audience face to face. Her disciplined turning away from the audience in *Trio A* entails a double movement, as it both invokes and refuses a theatrical convention — that of the performer's acknowledgment of and deferral

¹³⁴ Trisha Brown relates this story in "Trisha Brown" in *Contemporary Dance*, ed. Anne Livet. New York; Abbeville Press, 1978. pp 42-57.

to the patron/audience ('Am I pleasing?'). *Trio A* thus attempts to address two problems of performance, first, the issue of dance's uneasy relationship to modernism, and second, that of the mobilisation and circulation of desire. *Trio A* systematically critiques the theatre's exploitation of the circulation of desire between performers and spectators, which is the 'motor' of performance although censored and subject to stringent protocols.

These instances of intervention, separated by some thirty years, and all involving a theatrical staging of the place of the performer, are not cited here for their uniqueness — indeed these kinds of tactics are part of a theatrical stock-in-trade exploited regularly by performers of many kinds and for diverse reasons. I cite them to underline the necessity of the repetition and renewal of performative strategies that deliberately interrupt the smooth consumption of the performer and the performance.

Early or first stage post modern dance, from which these examples of intervention are drawn, has often been characterised by dance historians and critics as a dance of opposition, a non-dance, if you will. In the 1980s an eclectic post modernist style emerged and once again spectacle and physical virtuosity were embraced as primary values in dance. It is this development, and the foreclosure of other bodily modalities in dance, that Laurence Louppe has so thoroughly criticised. In the light of this reassertion of spectacle, the work of the early post modern dancers, most notably the artists associated with the Judson Dance Theatre, is now represented as being somewhat stern and austere, pedantic and polemical, certainly purist and formal. The dance of artists such as Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, Steve Paxton and Simone Forti, was indeed a dance that refused virtuosic display, the display of mastery upon which dance performance had been based, and in so doing, their dancing refused, withheld or denied, audience pleasure. However, this representation of early post modern dance as a kind of intellectualised un-pleasure, a dance constituted in its refusal of mastery and refusal of visual pleasure, misses or perhaps refuses to recognise the point that these artists were engaged in a radical reassessment and reworking of the codes of bodily pleasure, bodily mastery, skill and risk. They were proposing other desires, other pleasures, other masteries and other politics.

In her essay "The Aesthetics of Silence" Susan Sontag, writing of the reductive impulse of much modern art, observes that,

There is no abolishing a minimal transaction, a minimal exchange of gifts — just as there is no talented and rigorous asceticism that, whatever its intention, doesn't produce a gain (rather than a loss) in the capacity for pleasure (1969:8).

In the ideokinetic and Release practices discussed in this thesis there is an initial renunciation, constraint and denial of the body's desire for movement and activity. This 'asceticism', to borrow Sontag's term, produces not paucity, but an *excess* of sensation and an enormously expanded capacity for kinaesthetic pleasure. In the states of stillness and silence fostered in this work, the focus of attention is not on a neutral(ised) but a libidinised body, with all the complexity and fluidity of relations between perception, action and desire that such a notion implies.

Throughout the thesis I have been concerned to give attention to dance training practices which place value upon bodily pleasure. I have argued that this pedagogical emphasis on 'pleasure in moving' represents a foundation upon which an embodied politics of dance might develop. Taken into performance, these new dance training practices may constitute tactical responses to an institutionally generated complacency, that is, the inevitable relapses into conventional perceptions of the theatre as a viewing place, a place of reflection and distanced contemplation. The theatre, which does its work of reproducing social relations, has to be continually renewed.

I wish to complicate this story however. Rainer speaks of a debut performance of two pieces in a program organised by Jimmy Waring in July 1961

(performing) means less and less to me; I don't need performances to survive, and at one point I did. My first intense feeling of being alive was in performance... As the date drew close, I really had the distinct sensation of butterflies in my stomach. I stood waiting for the curtain to go up.. No, it didn't go up, it parted, and I had the sense of uh ... it was like an epiphany of beauty and power that I have rarely experienced since. I mean I knew I had them — the audience. Partly it was adrenalin, I'm sure, but also a cathartic kind of love, an intense feeling of being in the moment. It was the first time I had experienced myself as a whole person. There was no part of my consciousness that was anywhere else ... in 1961 [performing] was the most urgent thing I could do (1974:6)

Rainer's reflections upon her intense attachment to performing, at a particular point in her professional life, raises the question of how women might make use of the intersubjective space of performance to further their own interests and ends. In the discussion that follows I will explore the proposition that what theatrical, that is, self-conscious, performance might offer to women, is a means of making good a narcissistic wound or deficit in

attention. This is not to champion unreflective self-regard, but to recognise that performance may occasionally offer a woman an opportunity 'to experience (herself) as a whole person'. This may be especially so in a setting in which she author (ise)s her own dance.

6.1.2 Formation of the feminist subject of performance.

In the instances of negotiation between performer and audience detailed above, a particular understanding of the relationship between dance performance and the world is enacted and in that enactment there is a recognition that new aesthetic practices must, in a very tangible, tactical way, make a space for themselves.

I have opened this reflection upon the significance of feminist politics in contemporary dance practice with a story of repetition in order to underline the fact that the relation between feminism and dance is unfinished business. The development of modern dance is often represented as a proto-feminist story, as if there were a simple or straightforward equation between the sex of the dancer/choreographer and the political status of their production. Speaking of the tendency to conflate the sex of an author with the sexual politics of his or her texts, Elizabeth Grosz notes that although the author's sex has no direct bearing on the political position of the text, there are, nevertheless,

ways in which the sexuality and corporeality of the subject leave their traces or marks on the texts produced, just as we in turn must recognise that the processes of textual production also leave their traces or residue on the body of the writer [and readers] (1995:22).

This thesis has been concerned principally with the latter, that is, with an examination of the corporeal effects of the 'textual production' that is dance training. I am now considering the ways in which the sexuality and corporeality of a dance artist leaves its trace in the body of her dance works, and in the bodies of her audience.

Grosz suggests some guidelines for thinking through the question of what a feminist dance practice and/or choreographic 'text' might be and what it might accomplish.

First, the relations between a text and the prevailing norms and ideals which govern its milieu (the way it affirms, extends or problematises existing paradigms of textuality) must be explored. For the text to be considered feminist it must render the patriarchal or phallogocentric presumptions governing its contexts, and commitments visible.

Second, a feminist text does not, strictly speaking require a feminist author, but it must in some way or other, problematise the standard masculinist ways in which an author occupies the position of enunciation, challenging the authoritative position of the one who knows. And thirdly, a feminist text must not only be critical of or a challenge to the patriarchal norms governing it; it must also help to facilitate the production of new and perhaps unknown, unthought discursive spaces (1995:22-23).

In the opening moments of Monson's performance of *ode to summer* all three conditions are realised. Monson knowingly presents herself as a subject-not-in-command, one who is both out of control and needing assistance. She then elicits the help of the audience and so disrupts the separation between the subject and object of performance upon which the patriarchal representational economy depends. The audience cannot hold her at a distance, or (mis)recognise her as a unified subject; she is rolling at their feet. Furthermore, the 'help' she has solicited from the audience is to assist her in a process of divesting herself of a series of identifying signs. These take the form of approximately thirty T-shirts, many with slogans or logos, and four pairs of trousers. Monson is 'coming into parts' as she removes layer after layer of clothing. While she does so, Monson chats about where she got each item of clothing, who she was with at the time, what she was doing in her life, and her current view of the politics expressed on the T-shirt slogans. These T-shirts create a narrative of self-formation and in Monson's performance of this story there is much humour and irony. She can be very funny and she likes to make her audience laugh.

Finally Monson is naked, but not bare of stories and inscriptions. She dances for about fifteen minutes and one of her tasks in this improvisation is to recall other dancers and other moments of dancing. In *ode to summer* traces of other bodies, other dances and other moves — citations of previous performances and other performers — arise and subside. There are many familiar 'Monson' moves as well, but there are some awkward times, pauses in the flow of movement, cracks not papered over when she appears to lose her connection with the thread of her remembered dance history. These are some of the most moving moments and I will speculate upon why that might be so a little later.

As outlined in Chapter 3, the dance aesthetic within which Monson works initially developed in a very localised context. This aesthetic placed value upon a distinctive kind of perceptual investigation and labour. But the artists active in the development of this new aesthetic recognised that an audience for such a practice did not come ready-made; part of the work of early postmodern dance entailed the formation and priming of an audience.

Monson is similarly involved in the production and priming of an audience and she brings a feminist sensibility to this task. Her solicitation of the audience creates an impediment to specularisation. She attempts to get some purchase upon the space of performance and thus displays and turns the gaze of the audience upon itself, so that they may reflect upon their own implication in the production of meanings in this particular time and place. Implicating the audience in this way, Monson establishes another ethics and the possibility of another, non-specular, mode of exchange.

Watching Monson perform *ode to summer* in Melbourne in November 2000, I was struck by her complication and deferral of the voyeuristic pleasure which so often structures and regulates the audience's experience of dance performance. I was intrigued by how she managed this, given the densely coded traditions of visual practice that surround every moment of theatrical performance. I can recall other dance performances where the performer's nakedness seemed to carry already established and familiar meanings — the naked performer framed as an object of beauty for the gaze, for example. This was not the exchange Monson was negotiating with her audience, it seemed to me. I found it thrilling that some other possibility could exist, and I also felt freed from shame, judgement and comparison, and all that residual negativity that can (still) circulate for me in relation to my own body. I wrote to Monson and asked, 'what is or was the nakedness or its function for you in *ode to summer*?'

Jennifer Monson's response:

I don't know why I danced naked. I think in some way to free myself from the dislike of my nearly-forty body and wanting to just acknowledge and accept it with all its incredible dance history. Our bodies get so shaped by how we dance and I wanted that to be really visible, not worry anymore about how I look or if I am perceived as a dancer 'cause I am too big or too fat or not technical enough — all those old, ancient ridiculous feelings that I really want to get over.

I think the begging opened up the space for that. It made so obvious and extreme one aspect of the nature of performing. I am so desperate to express myself when dancing and one never knows if one is succeeding, so the begging made a very direct complete relationship, that then came back to me, my very personal history through the clothes I wear on my body and then stripping that away to the layers of meaning in my actual flesh.

Monson strips off her clothes and seemingly, with this act, the names and signs of social inscription. But what remains is not an innocent body, a body outside of history; on the contrary, her intention is to render even more palpable a body deeply marked by and formed in dancing, and through living. She removes the T shirts, but the traces of the living they represent stay in her limbs and in her feeling for moving. In her act of performing herself 'differently', Monson propels into movement a shadow image, a point of fixity which would hold her in place. This image of Woman, which Monson is not and cannot be, must be set moving, destabilised and agitated until it lets her loose.

6.2 Towards an alternative paradigm of performance.

In dance performance, communication and exchange is effected through the activation of a moving force, or, to express the transaction in another way, the dancer's movement is an energy that destabilises and changes relationships, within a single body, and between bodies. In Release practice, the habits of dance style and genre are rejected for the fixed identity they confer. Release dancers, like many dancers before them, have represented the force that destabilises identity and promotes movement and change as 'nature'. As I have detailed in Chapter 5, the Release process has however both a deconstructive and a reconstructive phase. In the deconstructive phase, identity is put into suspension as kinaesthetic perception, whole body sensation and feeling, are intensified. This experience of enhanced kinaesthetic awareness grounds the second phase, the reconstitution of the self, in a corporeal logic. Within the Release process itself, there lies a key to a reconfiguration of the space of performance in terms that are sensitive to a corporeal logic, a logic of sensation and perception. I have suggested, however, that essentialising tendencies in the discourse of Release have impeded fuller engagement in this task of reconfiguring dance representation, performance and reception. The Release aesthetic remains constrained by its identification with natural forces; and its impact, through kinaesthesia, upon social and cultural domains has not been effectively theorised.

Feminist scholar Teresa Brennan offers a way of reconciling the essentialist and the social constructionist views of processes of subject formation, which will be useful in the task of rethinking Release dance performance. Reflecting upon the hiatus within feminism around the question of essentialism and identity politics, Brennan has developed a provocative thesis concerning the relationship between the terms *essence* and *identity*. She works with Freud's theorisation of identification, which she summarises as follows:

Identifications are the stuff of which the ego is composed. In turn, one meaning of the word 'ego' is the identity the subject presents and experiences as belonging to it. Identity ... is

composed out of different, usually unconscious identifications (with groups, parents, lovers, significant living and dead others, nations, institutions and of course, ideas). These identifications can be deep or transitory (1991:2).

Brennan then discusses two further aspects of identification which are relevant to my exploration of the kinaesthetic 'identifications' activated in performance. Brennan notes that identification depends upon a received view or a given image, that is, an image, idea or person must already exist, for it to become part of one's own self-image. The diverse identifications that together produce one's identity have to be made to cohere, but this coherence has its price. Incompatibilities between different identifications have to be 'papered over' if the necessary illusion of a coherent identity is to be maintained. According to Brennan, the cost of the illusion of a coherent identity is fixity, lack of movement.

Fixity is the price extracted by identity that depends on an identification with another (person, institution, ideas). This means it is the price extracted by any identity at all. This is not to say we can dispose with identity; it is just that one can be aware, at least in theory, of the costs of maintaining the illusion of coherence (ibid: 3).

But then, how do we move at all? Brennan asks. If identity is dependent upon the maintenance of fixed reference points around which we cohere, how is any new thought, or for my purposes, any new *movement* possible.

Brennan notes that Freud associates the death drive with the tendency towards fixity and repetition and she proposes another force or drive, which she dubs the 'life-drive'. The life-drive has no specific content, 'it is an energetic force that seeks opportunities to keep living' (ibid: 5). Brennan continues,

Because it competes with consciousness, with fixed ideas, it has none of the defining properties that mark out distinct identities, which are necessarily composed of fixed points (ibid: 5).

This life-drive, or moving force, which is Brennan's preferred term, is *essential*, meaning that it is common to all people, part of being or 'essence'. It is an energetic force that 'connects being to being' (ibid); it is what enables us to move and change and be moved by others. Brennan also suggests that this moving force or life-drive, which is something held in common, disrupts identity. Conversely, what restricts or obstructs movement is the fixity of identity and its maintenance. In a later work, *The Interpretation of Flesh: Freud*

and Femininity (1992), Brennan develops the notion that people are not energetically self-contained, that is, the life drive moves between subjects. One of the forms it takes is that of living attention. According to Brennan, attention can be either facilitating or fixing, that is, it can support mobility and agency, or hold the subject in place. Brennan thus suggests that the life drive, although principally a force of destabilisation, can in certain circumstances, be directed towards the maintenance of identity.

Brennan's analysis of attention as an energetic force offers a way of theorising differences in the communication and reception of performance. Her work implies that watching performance may involve identification, and that performance may therefore stabilise and fix identity. This is how the image of Woman functions in ballet, I would suggest; Woman is a fixed point around which both the narrative structure of ballet and the identity of the spectator subject coheres. In a performance context such as that offered by Monson's *ode to summer*, the exchange is rather different. One is in the presence of a moving force that explicitly works to destabilise and mobilise identity. As I indicated earlier, there are moments of extreme instability in Monson's performance, when she appears to not know who, or where, she is, when she has no place, no identity, from which to move. These moments of great vulnerability and also great fluidity, when identity is in flux, are deeply moving.

Ann Cooper Albright has also investigated psychoanalytic theory as a resource for rethinking performance. In an essay entitled "Mining the Dancefield: spectacle, moving subjects and feminist theory", she draws upon psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin's feminist reconceptualisation of female desire, to suggest an alternative theorisation of the audience/performer relationship. Albright, like the performers she cites — Pooh Kaye, Marie Chouinard and Monson — is 'dissatisfied with an equation that always identifies the audience with an active, desiring subject and the performer with a passive, desired object' (1990:40). Albright suggests that Benjamin's intersubjective model of desire 'where the act of desiring erases neither your own nor another person's position as subjects' might be productively applied to performance (ibid: 39).

Contrary to orthodox psychoanalytic accounts of subject formation, which emphasise the necessity of separation as the basis of identity, Benjamin's feminist model assumes the paradox 'that in being with the other, I may experience the most profound sense of self' (ibid: 39). Albright draws upon Benjamin's theorisation of the intersubjective ground of subjectivity, to develop an account of dance performance as an intersubjective space of desire where dancers may experience 'the most profound sense of themselves'. She suggests that audiences 'could be trained to see this' (ibid: 40). Albright's focus is on the dancer as instigator and agent of changing representations of women in performance. A

question that Albright's essay raises, but does not address, is how is it that a dancer experiences an intensified sense of self in performance. Do audiences also experience this intensified and expanded sense of self, and what role does the audience play in creating an intersubjective space in which desire circulates between two subjectivities? What do spectators *do*? My response to this question is to proffer the notion of the witness dyad as an alternative paradigm of performance. Brennan's theorisation of living attention and the life drive will be brought to bear upon the discussion.

The witness dyad has been taken up as a training practice and as an improvisational tool by many Release dancers, including Monson. It is a practice which explores a primary dynamic of performance, watching and being seen, and it has been explored by dancers as a way of countering the feeling of objectification that can plague them in performance, the feeling of becoming an object of another's gaze. The dyad suggests another model of performance exchange and makes explicit a sense of mutual implication sometimes experienced in performance. It also presents a way of *practicing* an alternative theorisation of the spectator - performer relation.

The witness dyad was developed in a therapeutic context, part of a movement practice now known as Authentic Movement. Janet Adler, one of its most experienced practitioners describes the process as follows:

The form of this work is simple — one person witnesses another person moving in a studio space. The witness, especially in the beginning, carries a larger responsibility for consciousness, as she sits to the side of the movement space. She is not 'looking at' the person moving, she is witnessing, listening — bringing a specific quality of attention or presence to — the experience of the mover. The mover works with eyes closed in order to expand her experience of listening to the deeper levels of her kinaesthetic reality (1987:20).

Adler goes on to describe the role of the witness as both empathic and active; the witness's attention is a creative, moving force. In Authentic Movement contexts it is understood that the witness and the mover, together, produce the experience. The dancer's movements, and the meanings it constructs and expresses, are the effect of an intersubjective exchange. Attention is not passive or merely receptive, but active, a form of energy. Monson names this attention 'power', and in her improvisation and performance workshops she uses the

dyad form to make tangible the spectator/witness's attention as a form of energy that moves into the body of the dancer and supplements her own.¹³⁵

The dyad is a mode of performance practice through which a moving force, in the form of 'attention', mobilises and supports another. Brennan has suggested that such attention may have particular value and interest for women. Although she is careful to state that the life drive/living attention is not specifically 'feminine'— it is a force that motivates any movement for change, according to Brennan — she does argue that this drive may hold particular significance for women. She writes,

Because it is counterposed to fixity, it is more likely to make itself felt in those who need to disrupt fixity in order to survive. These, pre-eminently, are peoples of colour and women without power. They have more to gain by disrupting fixity, in identity and ideas, to the extent that disruptions means redistributing energy in ways that help them move (1991:6).

To Albright's perception of the power of performance to elicit an expanded sense of self I would add that this effect is consequent upon the postulation of the spectator as female. The performer is imagining the spectator as female; she is dancing for another woman. She is exercising her agency and autonomy and being seen by another, whom she senses is like herself. In this setting 'self' is the trace or residue of female experience, and not a fixed identity.

The witness dyad as practiced in Authentic Movement is conceptually linked with the object-relations school of psychoanalysis and in particular with the work of theorists Nancy Chodorow and Jessica Benjamin. Object-relations theory takes as its primary field of study the relation between the mother and infant in the first year of life. Feminist theorists working with object-relations theory have posited the pre-oedipal as an idealised female space, operating outside of patriarchal law and discourse. Characterised by plenitude, it is a world of shared female knowledge, in which 'subject-object dualism ... might be re-envisioned' (Hirsch 1992:281). Object-relations theory has been criticised on the grounds of its essentialism and its idealisation of the mother-daughter bond. However, as Margaret Whitford observes of these attempts to conceptualise the mother-daughter relationship outside patriarchal norms,

¹³⁵ In 1999 Monson offered workshops at Dancehouse, Melbourne under the title *POWER: Investigations of energetic states in dance*. The dyad practice was a major vehicle for the exploration of energy states with other dancers.

It is not clear yet whether this is a regressive fantasy of return to the pre-oedipal (as orthodox Lacanians would argue), or a genuine glimpse of a post-patriarchal future (1992: 265).

Although the witness dyad, like the teacher-student dyad of ideokinesis, may entail a regressive fantasy, we still need to reckon with its effects. Feminist cultural critiques from various fields of inquiry have detailed the effects upon women of attention to their bodies, whether that attention be their own or another's. The implication of many of these critiques is that attention paid to the woman's body is necessarily disabling; it holds her in place, mires her in immanence or fixes her as an object of the gaze. In an aesthetic, performance context, the constructedness and illusionary nature of the fantasy of being seen as 'oneself' is a given. The issue is how *useful* is this fantasy. If the witness dyad is associated with a regressive fantasy, it may be nonetheless a productive and enabling one, through which women can experience their own desire.

The practice at the core of this thesis, ideokinesis, is dependent upon a capacity for sustained attention to the body. Aspects of feminine embodiment, negatively connoted in some feminist critiques, are recast as aptitudes, capacities for habitus change and sensory acuity, within ideokinetic and Release pedagogy. In this chapter I have drawn upon the work of Teresa Brennan and Jennifer Monson to reconsider the dynamics of spectatorship in Release based dance performance, and to ask again, when a woman watches this dancing, what happens? My response to this question has been to elaborate a particular understanding of the notion of 'attention'. Attention, when pursued as a practice, may facilitate mobility, expansion and change. This understanding of attention as a practice of habit change has much to offer feminist theory and projects of social change. Yvonne Rainer makes an observation about the power of attention, which is as relevant to women in dance as it is to their performance of everyday life:

It is not taught in acting schools that your very presence in front of people transforms you. The very fact of being in front of people transforms you. I don't work for any mgreater transformation than that. It's a much more minimal way of thinking about transformation. I am transformed simply by virtue of being focused upon (1977:2).

As Rainer has observed, being watched changes you. Attention is energy. Performance practices including dance training involve the self-conscious production of performative identities. Such practices can obscure the subtlety of the experience of transformation that occurs simply as an effect of attention. Attention, such as that offered in performance, may

intensify a woman's experience of being produced as an object, and as a representation, but it may also mobilise change in gendered identity and relations.

In the concluding chapter of her seminal work *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*, Teresa de Lauretis asserts the continuing relevance of the rallying cry of nineteen seventies feminism: 'The personal is the political'. She also revives another expression that has become somewhat dated, that of 'consciousness raising', and argues that this practice 'has produced and continues to elaborate, a radically new mode of understanding the subject's relation to social-historical reality' (1984:185). She states further that

The feminist mode of analyzing self and reality has been a mode of acting politically, in the public as well as the private sphere (ibid).

De Lauretis goes on to describe the impact of the feminist practice of 'self-consciousness'; or attention to the self, as 'effect(ing) a habit-change in readers, spectators, speakers etc.' (ibid:186). The relationship that de Lauretis draws between self consciousness and political consciousness, and her assertion that critical reflection upon experience has public as well as private significance, suggests a response to the question posed early in this chapter: Why is dance of such interest to women? One of the reasons why Release dance is of interest to women is that this dancing entails a practice of self-analysis and critique, at the level of the body and in the company of others. In performance, as I have begun to indicate in this chapter, these embodied experiences are communicated publicly, made real, with and for spectators. In this setting, attention is the dynamic medium of exchange through which habit-change is effected.

In this thesis I have examined the role of dance training in the formation and consolidation of particular forms of bodily disposition or habit. I have also identified and analysed some approaches to dance and movement education that offer methods of transforming bodily habit and have suggested that these bodily practices have particular significance for women. De Lauretis has eloquently argued for recognition of the social, political and epistemological importance of women's subjective bodily experience. Following de Lauretis, I have argued that there is an intimate relationship between dance practices and: subjectivity: one is not born a dancer; any more than one is born a woman. Since one becomes a woman and a dancer through gendered experiences of corporeality, the way a woman moves, and how she attends to the movement of others, are not issues of a merely aesthetic or merely personal significance. These are issues of habitus and for women they are of political and epistemological significance.

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