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Every Breath is a Wave

**In what ways can contemporary dance making express an
ecofeminist perspective**

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree

of

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at

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by

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Abstract

Arising from the growing interest in ecological concerns that intersected with second wave feminism in the 1970s, ecological feminism is a theoretical perspective which argues that the oppression of women is parallel to and mutually reinforcing to that of the natural environment. Interested in the holistic nature of ecofeminist analysis I seek to understand how the processes of contemporary dance making can intersect with the theory and praxis of ecofeminism. Within ecofeminism the body is often used as a reference point for expression and understanding. Contemporary dance making therefore is of relevance for the exploration of ecofeminism as it offers a way of knowing that is of and from the body. The overall research question of this thesis and creative research project is ‘In what ways can contemporary dance making express an ecofeminist perspective?’

In order to investigate how contemporary dance making may express an ecofeminist perspective, creative practice as research formed an appropriate methodology for this project. Creative practice as research is a methodology which proposes that creating artworks not only expresses research, but the artwork becomes the research in itself. The specific creative practice research methods used in this thesis were improvisation, choreography and journaling.

The methods used in the creation of this solo allowed investigation into how contemporary dance making fosters my relationship with the environment. Moved by the severe consequences of a nuclear disaster, the experiences of the women of Greenham common and the anti-nuclear movement in Aotearoa, my solo dance is an ecofeminist representation of visceral responses to the environment and the threat of nuclear technology. The solo dance is titled ‘*Daughter, there will be no home*’ and is a representation of my relationship to the environment of this earth and an expression of my ecofeminist sense of care for the earth.

It is my love I hold back
hide
not wanting to be seen
scrawl of hand writing
don't guess
don't guess at my
passion
a wholly wild and raging
love for this world.
(Griffin, 1983, p.217)



Figure 1. Video still from *'Daughter, there will be no home'* (12 May, 2017)

Acknowledgements

*Heartfelt gratitude and respect
To my supervisor Karen Barbour*

*For my family,
Words cannot express
And that is why I dance*

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Author's own.

Chapter One: This is the world I was born in to:

Introduction

This is the world I was born into
I saw the wave and its white curl.
I saw the branches coming from trees
Like streams from rivers.
(Griffin, 1983, p.219)



Figure 2. Video still from '*Daughter, there will be no home*' (12 May, 2017)

This is the world I was born into

I was brought up by people who care and so I value caring. As a child I listened to my parents discuss, with sadness, lakes no longer safe to swim in and forests that once echoed with the call of native birds. I realized that there was a lot to care about too; climate change, war in Afghanistan and Iraq - an endless list.

One thing that I valued very early was creativity and knew it was important to nurture it. The need to create was encouraged from an early age by my parents. My siblings and I were exposed to a wide variety of art, from dancing with my mother to Strauss waltzes, to making artwork for my father's alternative music fanzine *Insample*. As a young girl some of my creative urges manifested themselves

in dressing up and twirling around in front of surfaces where I could see my reflection. In my hometown of Rotorua, as in most regional towns, the most popular option available for young children to learn dance was ballet and so at the age of six I went to my first class.

This began over a decade of experience in studio dance styles. Not all of the memories of this period are happy. I never entirely fitted in. My introverted nature, my home education background and pubescent acne at times garnered comments from classmates that were less than complimentary. As a disheartened teenager I doubted that I belonged in the world of dance.

However, my perspective and understanding of what dance could be and what it could mean to be a dancer, changed when I was fifteen. After coming back from a class close to tears my mother suggested I read about Isadora Duncan. As I write this I still remember the energy and excitement that ran through my body as I read the Wikipedia page about this influential woman. I was inspired by Duncan's free spirit, her belief in the importance of dance as an art form and her core belief that dance should not go against or defy nature, but rather embrace the human body and acknowledge it in relation to movement (Duncan, 1909a; 1909b). Maybe I was a dancer after all?

Inspired by these revelations I soon discovered other women dancers such as Ruth St. Denis and Mary Jane O'Reilly. I read about all kinds of dance forms, becoming interested not only in contemporary dance, but women's dance in the Middle East and flamenco. I began to understand how the studio environment in which I had been dancing was shaped by patriarchy (Barbour, 2011; Brown, 1999). In a world of male gaze, women dancers were to be objects smiling at the right times, showing enough skin and never revealing the pain induced by pointe shoes (Dempster, 1993; Fensham, 1993). Since puberty I had been interested in feminism but this realization led me to take greater interest in the movement and I now feel that my feminist convictions and identity as a dancer are inseparable. At this time I also realized that through dance I could articulate the social awareness fostered by my upbringing. One of the first dances I choreographed examined the importance of our national parks.

At nineteen I decided to study dance and women's and gender studies at the University of Waikato. In this context I was exposed to different feminist frameworks, site specific and community dance and a variety of approaches to

choreography, improvisation and contemporary dance. Contemporary dance as Barbour (2007) describes, is an approach to movement, or a collection of systems and methods. It is not a specific style but a multitude of approaches to movement (as cited in Jahn-Werner, 2008). For me, an understanding of contemporary dance freed me from the constraints of ballet and offered a more open holistic environment to dance in, giving me the space to create my own expressive movement inspired by nature. I became conscious of how my approach to movement was inspired by nature. For example, I used the imagery of a waterfall to help my head be free in swing exercises, and I imagined sinking into soft cool sand to help my body relax in floor rolls.

During a directed study in my third year on environmental dance I was introduced to ecological feminism. I immediately felt an affinity with the perspective. To briefly define the movement, ecological feminism “attempts to unite the demands of the women’s movement with those of the ecological movement in order to bring about a world and worldview that are not based on socioeconomic and conceptual structures of domination” (Warren & Cheney, 1991, p.179). The linkage of the social and the ecological helped me to understand the world in which I lived in a way that both broadened and supported my conceptions and I began to wonder what ecofeminism could offer to me as a contemporary dancer. In my directed study I undertook a first attempt to investigate the ethos of ecofeminism and as I understood more about the topic my interest grew. After I completed my bachelor degree in creative practice I decided to research ecofeminism and dance through master’s study.

The aim of this master’s thesis is thus to understand how the processes of contemporary dance making can intersect with the theory and praxis of ecofeminism. The overall research question in this thesis and creative research project is, ‘In what ways can contemporary dance making express an ecofeminist perspective?’

Structure of thesis

Following this introductory chapter, I will introduce feminist history in chapter two. The purpose of this is to give a context for the theoretical perspective of my research. I will begin by giving background to and briefly describing, the main themes of first wave feminism. To introduce second wave feminism, I will address

the multiple perspectives which arose as a result of women's liberation. I will discuss the 'backlash' against feminism which occurred in the 1980s and 1990s and outline the third wave or postfeminist perspectives which developed during this period.

In the next section of this feminist perspectives chapter I will examine ecological feminist perspectives. To give context to the ecofeminist perspective I will describe the environmental movement in relation to ecofeminism and discuss the conceptual roots of ecofeminist perspectives, its main themes and the key texts which influenced the movement. I will also examine the importance of indigenous perspectives in ecofeminism. Lastly in this chapter, I will touch on the significance of ecofeminist activism and art.

In the third chapter I will review literature and discuss contemporary dance making and feminism, as solo contemporary dance is the means through which I will illustrate my understanding of the theory. I will describe the practice and ethos of three women dance and performance artists; Isadora Duncan, Ali East and Andrea Olsen. These women's approach to art making can be seen as examples of ecofeminism.

In the fourth chapter I will discuss the methodological framework of my research, describing how my thesis is grounded in a constructionist epistemology and feminist theoretical perspective. I will give background to creative practice as research, which is the specific methodology of my research and describe my specific methods. Whilst dance making forms my overarching method, the two aspects of dance making which I will use in my research are improvisation and choreography. I will also describe how, in order to record the development of my dance making, journaling will also be a method I will utilise.

The creative practice research project I undertook was titled '*Daughter, there will be no home*'. It was performed on the 12th of May, 2017 and is documented on video, there is record of this performance in the form of a USB and video link, in the appendix of this thesis there is a link to the video. Also included is the poster and programme notes from the performance.

In the fifth chapter I will discuss and analyse the findings of my research, giving background to the solo dance work created '*Daughter, there will be no home*' and describing the ecofeminist themes that influenced the work. In the sixth and final chapter of this thesis I will offer conclusions.

Chapter Two: Feminist Perspectives

There is a record
I wish to make here.
A life.
And not this life alone
(Griffin, 1983, p.215)

Feminism is a diverse spectrum of theory and practice (Stanley & Wise, 1983). However, to put it simply “Feminism is a movement committed to the elimination of male gender power and privilege or sexism” (Warren, 1997, p.4). Despite a history spanning centuries feminism still sparks debate (Gamble, 1999; Whelehan, 1995). Whilst women of my generation have previous decades of feminists to thank for the ability to vote, study at universities, divorce and own property many women in my age group consider themselves too liberated for the ‘f word’ which largely is seen as the domain of radical feminists (Dann, 1985; Gillis & Munford, 2004).

As Desmond (1999) describes “Feminist scholarship investigates the historical constitution of gender as a category of social differentiation and analyses the effects of this epistemological divide in all realms of human endeavour” (p.309). In this chapter I will introduce feminist history, in order to give context of the theoretical perspective of my research. Firstly, I will give background to and briefly describe the main themes of first wave feminism. To introduce second wave feminism, I will describe the multiple perspectives which arose as a result of women’s liberation. In relation to second wave feminism I will discuss radical, socialist or Marxist, black and indigenous feminist frameworks. Also, I will discuss the ‘backlash’ against feminism which occurred in the 1980s and 1990s and outline the third wave or postfeminist perspectives which developed during this period.

In the following section, I will examine ecological feminist perspectives. Introducing the environmental movement to give context to ecofeminism, I will then discuss the conceptual roots of ecofeminist perspectives, its main themes and the key texts by Mary Daly, Susan Griffin and Carolyn Merchant which illustrate these themes. Further, I will examine the importance of indigenous perspectives in ecofeminism. Lastly in this section I will give examples of ecofeminist activism and ecofeminist art.

First Wave Feminism

One hundred years before my birth, women in Aotearoa/New Zealand became the first in the world with the ability to take part in democratically electing their own government (Brooks, 2016; Dann, 1985). Under the auspices of Kate Shephard, suffragettes like my foremothers Bridget Kelly (nee Lee) and Rachel Gordon (nee Barclay) were galvanised by the belief that women should have the right to vote. This cornerstone event in both the history of Aotearoa and the world signalled new ways of being for women, the seeds of which were planted in the late 18th century (Dann, 1985).

In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication on the Rights of Women* was published. Containing an "analysis of the psychological and economic damage done to women from a forced dependence on men and exclusion from the public sphere" (Humm, 1992, p.4). Concerned with equality between men and women, figures such as Wollstonecraft formed the backbone of what would later be described as first wave feminism (Gamble, 1999). First wave feminism was dominated by a liberal feminist framework which placed emphasis on the individual freedom of women and aimed to work to further women's ability to equally participate with men as citizens (Ryan, 1992).

The relevance of liberal feminism continued throughout the 20th century Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* (1963) brought attention to the 'problem with no name': the feeling amongst many upper and middle class women, who although they had raised families, were unsatisfied with their lives and wished for something more than the prosperity of suburban domesticity. In *Feminine Mystique* Friedan argued that women were suffering from 'domestic tyranny' (1963). In post Second World War America, Friedan (1963) believed that women had been conditioned to accept male domination and sexual passivity on the proviso that this was the natural feminine role and would therefore serve as self-fulfilment. The solution to women's dissatisfaction, as Friedan (1963) saw it, was to prioritise education and professional training for women.

A number of liberal feminist concerns are still relevant in the 21st century. In Aotearoa, issues such as the push to extend paid parental leave, reveal the existence of attitudes within society that do not enable or support women (Torrie &

Jones, 1992). Thus the work of liberal feminists continues today, alongside more recent second and third wave feminist approaches.

Second Wave Feminism

Many academics agree that first wave feminism ended with the publication of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) and a new wave of radical feminism evolved from this time onwards (Humm, 1992; Whelehan, 1995). Beauvoir (1949) argued that what was accepted to be 'woman' was not something innate but rather something one became. As Beauvoir (1949) elaborated;

One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychical or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female takes on in society; it is civilisation as a whole that elaborates this intermediary product between the male and the eunuch that is called feminine (p.293).

This view intimated that much of a woman's appearance, apparel and behaviour was not due to a biological predisposition, but rather a certain image of woman had been constructed. However, in societies fashioned and dominated by men, it was suggested that if an image of 'woman' could be constructed, it could also be brought down (Beauvoir, 1949).

Liberation, reproduction, experience and difference (Humm, 1992) are words often used in conjunction with second wave feminism. Whereas the first wave campaigned for women's rights, the new feminists sought women's liberation. The 1960s were a time of social upheaval and transformation in many western countries. In this context women's liberation groups were formed (Ryan, 1992). 'Consciousness raising' was a widespread practice at this time, involving women only meetings where members would sift "through theoretical beliefs and experiential realities" (Ryan, 1992, p.46) of their lives in order to explore women's common gendered experiences. By the 1970s fractures in the women's movement as a whole had appeared and multiple women's groups and organisations began to establish themselves within newly identifiable forms of feminism. These forms of feminism included radical, socialist and Marxist, black and indigenous feminisms amongst others.

Radical Feminism

One of the most vocal feminisms to spring from the second wave was radical feminism. A key word in radical feminist discourse is 'patriarchy' (French, 1990). Patriarchy always takes the form of hierarchy. It assumes that males are superior to females and that males have individual destinies of domination and transcendence over women and the natural world (French, 1990). Unlike liberal feminists who wished to use societal structures to help advance women, Radical feminism can be marked by emphasis on the ways women differ from men. Radical feminists wished to transform or reject patriarchal structures, as any organisation from a patriarchal culture will contain within it the shades of women's oppression (MacKinnon, 1992; Rich, 1980). They were instead occupied with the development of women's spaces and culture (Firestone, 1970; Greer, 1971).

At first the women's movement focused almost exclusively on heterosexuality, within radical feminism the voices of lesbian women, many of whom felt estranged from the movement, began to be heard. Whilst all women were subjugated under patriarchy, as Stanley & Wise (1983) describe lesbians were oppressed because they were "particularly threatening women- women who aren't dependant on men and, in this sense, free women" (p.81). It was not long before lesbian feminism became a praxis in its own right (Penelope, 1992). Women taking control over their bodies and identities lay at the heart of radical feminism as Dworkin (1981) describes

Male domination of the female is the basic material reality of women's lives; and all struggle for dignity and self-determination is rooted in the struggle of actual control of one's own body, especially control over physical access to one's own body (p.203).

This manifested itself, for example in lobbying for abortion, against sexual violence and eschewing traditional markers of femininity such as make up (Ryan, 1992). The radical women of the 1960s and 1970s are integral to our understandings of 'woman' in today's society. The body of work and activism they produced has drawn attention to the extent of male domination over women's bodies (Whelehan, 1995).

Socialist and Marxist feminism

Socialist and Marxist feminists, also called 'Politicos', extended Marx and Engels critique of class to feminist theory, focussing on the history of women's material and economic subordination (Humm, 1992). As Hartmann (1992) states, these women aimed to "organize a practice that addresses both the struggle against patriarchy and the struggle against capitalism" (p.355). Integral to this type of feminism is the idea that the parallel oppression of women by capitalism and patriarchy manifests itself in a sexual division of labour which places women in jobs that have low pay and little status (Hartmann, 1992; Mitchell, 1966).

A central concern of socialist and Marxist feminism therefore, has been to determine whether the ways in which the institution of the family reproduce the sexual division of labour. In her essay *Women: the longest revolution*, Juliet Mitchell (1966) stated that "Until there is a revolution in production, the labour situation will prescribe women's situation within the world of men" (p.11). It can be seen that capitalism and the family were two structures that mutually misuse women's reproductive capacity.

The Marxist feminist approach has come under attack from some feminists who argue that it is impossible to remove the patriarchal attitudes present in the writings of Marx and Engels from any theory associated with their work, and therefore, a Marxist or socialist feminism is contradictory (Humm, 1992).

Black feminisms

The influence of Black women on American history and culture is immense but often overlooked (Collins, 2000). In 1833, the black school teacher Sarah Mapp Douglass founded the female anti-slavery movement. This organisation was integral in inspiring white women to take up the cause against slavery and spread social awareness to create the foundations of the women's movement in America (Collins, 2000). Another figure of importance was the activist and preacher Sojourner Truth. Born into slavery she escaped with her youngest child and encountered the abolitionist movement in Massachusetts, where she was also exposed to the growing women's rights movement (Collins, 2000).

Many women of colour were critical of second wave feminism. As hooks (1992a) describes, many perceived that the "Women's liberation movement as

outlined by bourgeois white women would serve their interest at the expense of poor and working class women, many of whom were black” (p.395). Primarily, black feminists recognise that “Black women have particular and legitimate issues which effect their lives as Black women” (Lorde, 1984, p.60). Within the black feminist movement the fight to eliminate racism remains an imperative and is seen as “fundamentally a feminist issue because it is so interconnected with sexist oppression” (hooks, 1992b, p.396).

The multi-layered approaches of black feminists have changed feminism and shaping of understandings of the confluences around race and gender (Collins, 2000). Within the United States of America, current movements such as #Black Lives Matter are heavily influenced and supported by black feminists (Cohen & Jackson, 2016). Black feminism has also played a role in influencing other marginalized women such as indigenous women (Smith, 1999).

Indigenous feminisms

Feminism has been adopted by many indigenous women. However, it is fitting for me to acknowledge the significance of Māori women, not only because I write in the context of Aotearoa, but also due to the role the Māori women’s movement has played in shaping other indigenous feminist approaches (Smith, 1999). Māori feminism addresses the need “to actively honour, to celebrate the contributions, and affirm the mana of Māori women” (Irwin, 1992, p.1). Therefore integral issues for Māori feminists are sovereignty, preservation of appropriate tikanga (cultural practices) and the Māori language (Smith, 1999; Te Awekotuku, 1991).

An important theme within the movement of Māori feminism is the recognition that like any other group of women, Māori women are not a homogenous group and factors that impact their identities include; tribal affiliation, knowledge of tikanga and language, class, locality and sexual preference. By recognising differences amongst Māori women, Māori feminists challenge attitudes that essentialise Māori (Irwin, 1992).

Linda Tuhiwai Smith is a key figure in the movement of Māori feminism. Her work has influenced the scholarship of many other indigenous cultures. On the subject of indigenous women’s participation in feminism, Smith (1999) writes that;

These groups of women challenged the assumptions of the Western/White women's movement that all women shared some universal characteristics and suffered from universal oppressions which could be understood and described by a group of predominantly white, western trained women academics (p.168).

The need to interrogate Western feminist assumptions within academic structures provides a key component of Smith's work.

Through the acknowledgement of the multiplicity of Māori identities, the preservation of language and the redress and challenging of accepted histories, the contribution of Māori feminism remains important to the future of Aotearoa, and has influenced other indigenous feminisms (Irwin, 1992; Te Awekotuku, 1991).

Third wave Feminism

By the 1980s, women's and gender studies programs were becoming established within universities with the University of Waikato being the first tertiary institution to teach the subject in Aotearoa (Brookes, 2016). Despite these advances in Aotearoa, the decade of the 1980s has often been described as a period of backlash against feminism. Many critics claimed that second wave feminists had gone too far and could even be culpable for some of women's current dissatisfaction and oppression (Faludi, 1999; Gillis & Munford, 2004). The prevalence of this view point led the 1980s to be described as a postfeminist era in which the aims of feminism were considered unnecessary to women's lives (Gillis & Munford, 2004). However, as some feminists argued, it was not the women's movement that became postfeminist but society that had become hostile towards further gains for women (Faludi, 1992).

Out of this environment a new generation of third wave feminists such as Naomi Wolf arose who argued for a 'power feminism'. This concept was elaborated in Wolf's *Fire with fire* (1993), which laid out an argument for removing women from the position "of seeking power through an identity of powerlessness" (p.147), which second wave feminism had supposedly placed them in, and sought to encourage the view that women were catalysts for change within themselves and society (1993). Not all feminists were convinced by this. As Germaine Greer (1999) explains "the personal is still the political. The millennial feminist has to be aware

that oppression exerts itself in and through her most intimate relationships, beginning with the most intimate, her relationship with her body” (p.424).

Arising from the feminist backlash of the 1980s, with its emphasis on women as change makers and empowerment via the girl power of pop culture, further analysis of third wave feminism is still necessary to fully understand the trajectory of these feminist perspectives (Gillis & Munford, 2004).

Ecological Feminism

Despite the backlash feminism faced in the 1980s and 1990s, a form of feminism was gaining momentum which sought to remedy the marginalization of women through greater understanding of human interaction with the environment (Combellick-Bidney, 2008). This type of feminism is described as ecological feminism (d’Eaubonne, 1974). The word ecology originates from the Greek word *Oikos* which translates as ‘house’ (Curtis, 2009). In this way, ecology can be understood as the study of the house and dwelling place of all life as we know it (White, 1967). With its roots in second wave feminism, ecofeminism operates at the intersection of the environmental movement, indigenous knowledges and feminism (Warren, 1997).

Second wave feminism coincided with an increased awareness of environmental issues (Combellick-Bidney, 2008), arguably leading to greater interest in ecological feminism. Some argue that the term ecological feminism first appeared as “l’eco-féminisme,” in Françoise d’Eaubonne’s 1974 *Le féminisme ou la mort* or in English ‘feminism or death’ (Glazebrook, 2002). This work explored women’s potential to ignite an environmental revolution, warning that humans could not survive the ecological consequences of patriarchy (Glazebrook, 2002). However, d’Eaubonne’s writings were not translated in to English until some years later and by this time, the term ecofeminism had been in use for some years. The first English language use of the word was in 1976 by radical feminist and ecologist Ynestra King (Spretnak, 1987).

Environmentalism can be defined as a “movement to protect the quality and continuity of life through conservation of natural resources, prevention of pollution, and control of land use” (Columbia University & Lagasse, 2016, paragraph 1). The philosophical foundations of environmentalism are found in the writings of Ralph

Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. However, the literature created by these thinkers displayed the anthropocentric world views of the societies in which they were written (Merchant, 1980). Widely recognised to have launched the modern environmental movement, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) drew attention to the use of pesticides and insecticides on the environment. As Carson (1962) described "for the first time in the history of the world, every human being is now subjected to contact with dangerous chemicals from the moment of conception until death" (p.31).

Environmental movements grew during the 1960s and gained international recognition through the protests of Earth day in 1970 (Merchant, 1996). The largest and most well-known environmental organisation is Greenpeace, which was founded in 1971 in British Columbia, Canada to oppose United States nuclear testing on the Alaskan Island of Amchitka (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2016). As the organisation has grown, Greenpeace's activities have extended to the protection of endangered species, particularly protecting whales from hunting, the cessation of the dumping of toxic chemical and radioactive wastes at sea and the use of fossil fuels (Greenpeace, 2016).

In the context of Aotearoa, Greenpeace plays an important part of 20th century history. On the tenth of July 1985 the Greenpeace ship *Rainbow Warrior* was bombed and sunk by French secret agents in Auckland harbour. The ship had been engaged in protest against French nuclear testing in the South Pacific. This act of terrorism resulted in the death of Greenpeace photographer Fernando Pereira and evoked shock, disbelief and anger in throughout the country (Carlyon & Morrow, 2013). As a result of this event, Greenpeace gained a large number of supporters in Aotearoa and helped to further anti- nuclear sentiment in this country (Leadbeater, 2013).

Conceptual roots

The conceptual roots of ecofeminism can be seen in the traditions of French feminist theory (Gaard & Gruen, 1993). In the key text *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir (1949) described how both women and nature appear as 'other' in western philosophical traditions. Beauvoir's assertion foreshadowed the conviction of many ecofeminists that western culture has treated the relationship of humanity and nature

as a dualism. This attitude led to problematic treatment of nature through constructing a privileged human identity that exists outside of nature (Plumwood, 1993). The strength of ecofeminism is its ability to connect the cultural with the environmental. For ecofeminists, environmental concerns can only be remedied by addressing the imbalance of power between women and men (Gaard & Gruen, 1993; King, 1983; Plumwood, 1993). Therefore, an environmental issue is able to be seen as feminist concern whilst a feminist issue can only be fully understood through an acknowledgment of environmental factors (Griffin, 1978; Merchant, 1980; Warren, 1997).

The development of ecofeminism as a distinct form of feminism occurred in the 1980s with writers and activists such as Karen Warren, Charlene Spretnak, Val Plumwood, Vandana Shiva, and Gloria Feman Orenstein among many that emerged. In common with other feminisms, ecofeminism suffered a backlash in the 1980s and 1990s (Gaard, 2011). However, the case against women who identified with this form was particularly virulent, as they were critiqued as essentialist and described as “theoretically weak and doubtfully liberated” (Plumwood, 1993, p.1). Many scholars discarded serious consideration of ecofeminism.

The main critique of ecofeminism was that it essentialises women as having an intrinsic connection to nature that men do not possess (Gaard, 2011; Merchant, 1996). However, this assertion goes against a foundation idea of ecofeminism that “since all life is interconnected, one group of persons cannot be closer to nature” (Birkeland, 1993, p.22). Instead, Plumwood (1993) describes, the position of ecofeminists is to “give positive value to a connection of women with nature which was previously, in the west, given negative cultural value and which is the main ground of women’s devaluation and oppression” (p.8).

Ecofeminism provides a framework to consider what environmental ethics mean for humans and how relational attitudes of humans to ‘others’ form what it means to be human and the nature of human responsibility to the nonhuman environment (Warren, 1990). Warren (1997) stresses the importance of empirical data as a means through which the connection between women and nature can be made. For example, statistics that show women are more effected by contaminated water and exposure to toxins than men. This reveals that many environmental issues that concern women are a feminist issues (Shiva, 1989; Warren, 1997).

Main themes

At the heart of ecofeminism is the assertion that a “Culture against nature is culture against women” (King, 1983, p.11). An ecofeminist sees that oppression of the environment is parallel to the oppression of women and understands that “Environmental degradation and exploitation are feminist issues because an understanding of them contributes to an understanding of the oppression of women” (Warren, 1990, p.127).

When addressing matters of over-population, climate change, nuclear power, conflict and inequality, an ecofeminist sees that;

the quintessential malady of the modern era is free floating anxiety, from a grounding in the natural world, from a sense of belonging in the unfolding story of the universe, from a healthy relationship between the male and female of the species” (Spretnak, 1987, p.6).

A key element in the ecofeminist framework is the notion of a logic of domination also described as the logic of dualism or colonisation (Plumwood, 1993). This concept has been explored in depths in the writings of Karen Warren. As Warren (1990) describes a logic of domination;

Involves a substantive value system, since an ethical premise is needed to permit or sanction the ‘just’ subordination of that which is subordinate. This justification typically is given on grounds of some alleged characteristic (e.g. rationality) which the dominant (e.g., men) have and the subordinate (e.g., women) lack (p.128).

Therefore, the oppression of women seems justified through the ‘natural’ superiority of the male intellect and body. A core belief within ecofeminism is that “the logic that separates and subjugates must be exposed and rejected” (Gruen, 1997, p.365). Implications of this concept are that ecofeminists should not only be concerned with the oppression of women but the oppression of any persons due to their ethnicity, age, class or political and spiritual belief system (Warren, 1997).

Another foundation of ecofeminism is the recognition that humans do not exist outside of the environment but within and as a part of wider ecosystems (Merchant, 1980; Plumwood, 1993). Because there is a relationship between us, and our environment, care must be shown to sustain this relationship (King, 1983). This is contrary to attitudes historically present in western society where nature is

seen as a tool to be used and a realm of conquest (Spretnak, 1983). In contrast, ecofeminists present a variety of different approaches to understanding that Nature has intrinsic value and that;

there are values that exist independently of our conceptual schemes and linguistic frameworks and that these values can be determined not only independently of the usefulness of a particular entity but also independently of our feelings or attitudes about it (Gruen, 1997, p.357).

As Merchant (1996) similarly describes;

A partnership ethic of care is an ethic of the connection between a human and a non-human community. The relationship is situational and contextual within the local community, but the community is also embedded in and to the wider earth (p.217).

Amongst a diverse spectrum of beliefs and experiences, two discernible types of ecological feminism are 'social' and 'cultural'. Often aspects of both inform an ecofeminist's perspective, however, one form is usually dominant (Wildy, 2011).

Social ecological feminism incorporates environmental activism and highlights human interaction with the natural world, emphasising the ways societal structures can induce change. Cultural ecofeminism uses symbolism based on Goddess worship provides a way to connect with the environment (Wildy, 2011). For these cultural ecofeminists, the patriarchal nature of the world's monotheistic religions are seen as being the root of women's and nature's oppression (Freer, 1983). Expression through natural medicine and craft are seen as ways to care for the environment and eschew the ideologies of patriarchal religion (Spretnak, 1997).

Key texts

The first of three key texts in the formation of the ecological feminist movement is Mary Daly's (1970) *Gyn/ecology: The metaethics of radical feminism* which explored how the patriarchal ideologies inherent in science, medicine, cultures and religions, legitimized women's persecution through rituals and customs such as female genital mutilation and European witch burnings. Whilst this argument resonated with many feminists, the publication garnered the criticism of Black feminists who felt that Daly portrayed women of colour as victims and did not

acknowledge the fullness of black feminine identity (Lorde, 1980). *Gyn/ecology* and Black feminist's subsequent critique drew attention to the need for ecofeminists to use the words of those they were writing about if meaningful literature was to be created

Another key ecofeminist text was by poet and author Susan Griffin's (1978). Her book *Women and nature: The roaring inside her*, described how women were seen as separate and inferior to men and therefore associated with the 'otherness' of animals and nature. Griffin (1978) believed this ideological split legitimated the domination of both women and the environment leading to the development of a militarised and destructive social order which prized rationality and individualism.

One more important publication was Carolyn Merchant's (1980) *The Death of nature: Women, ecology, and the scientific revolution* which drew on socialist feminism and ecology to argue that women's oppression in western societies was linked to science and capitalism. She focussed her critique on the philosophy of the 'father of modern science' Francis Bacon. Merchant (1980) argued that Bacon developed a certain discourse in which female imagery was used as a tool to justify male power over nature.

The writings of Daly, Griffin and Merchant were influential in the way they examined attitudes towards the environment within science, religion and capitalism and connected them with the oppression of women. However, these key publications can be critiqued for their Eurocentric focus (Li, 1983; Smith, 1997).

Indigenous & Third World perspectives

The perspectives of indigenous and third world women form a key component of ecofeminism. Their diverse experiences provide knowledges of the environment, the body and gender which offer critique of the forces that have shaped western discourses and ideologies and provide alternative ways of knowing (Li, 1993; Shiva; 1989; Te Awekotuku, 1983).

In Aotearoa, the Māori word for land and placenta are the same; 'whenua', acknowledging the interconnected nature of women and land. As Ngahuia Te Awekotuku (1983) described, "underlying her relationship with the land was the traditional Māori woman's perception of the environment as a source of emotional, spiritual, physical sustenance, identification and strength" (p.138). When

Europeans arrived, they brought with them new ways of thinking about land, the effects of which are culturally, socially and environmentally with us today;

Travelling up the island, enjoying the voluptuously feminine shapes, the alluring contours and creases of the landscape, I suddenly encountered a scene of abysmal ugliness and grief. The leaking, stark clay scars of a formerly green and forested hillside, red soil exposed like bleeding viscera across a gaping, jagged gash of earth; singed and blackened tree stumps protruding helplessly from crusty slag piles; moisture rising dimly from the churned uneven ground. And everywhere machines and noise and men (Te Awekotuku, 1983, p.139).

For indigenous feminists such as Te Awekotuku degradation of the environment is seen as a threat to identity. The status of indigeneity acknowledges a long standing relationship between a people and land, therefore the interconnection of the two is seen as paramount (Li, 1993).

Oppression as a result of colonization is also experienced by women from third world nations. Indian scientist, activist, and author Vandana Shiva is an important figure in ecofeminism who has drawn attention to this concern. Shiva (1989) helped to found Diverse Women for Diversity (DWD) an organisation which brings together third world and indigenous women as a voice against war, monoculture, totalitarianism and fundamentalism (DWD, 1998).

In this way, the perspectives of indigenous and third world women are integral for understandings of how oppression is experienced and exploring the diverse relationships women have with the environment (Smith, 1997).

Ecofeminist activism

Whilst ecofeminism can be seen as a framework of political analysis, it is most fundamentally a process. “To ecofeminists values and actions are inseparable: one cannot care without acting” (Birkeland, 1993, p.19).

One of the first examples of ecofeminist activism took place in 1974 in the Gharwal region of Northern India. The women of the village of Reni hugged native trees which were to be felled and replaced with monoculture pine (Anand, 1983; Warren, 1997). For these women the native trees provided proponents of medicine, fuel, and food which were essential to carrying out their work within the community

and therefore integral to their long term welfare (Anand, 1983). The women of Reni came to be known as the Chipko movement as the word Chipko is Hindi for hug or to embrace. The actions of the Chipko women drew international attention and eventually “forced the state government to set up a committee to investigate the concerns of women” (Anand, 1983, p.182).

The women of Greenham common are a later example of ecofeminist activism. Greenham Common in Berkshire, United Kingdom was an air base where the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) had planned to site United States cruise missiles in December 1983 (Harford & Hopkins, 1984). Alarmed at the thought of a nuclear weapon being housed in their country a group of women activists set up a peace camp outside the base in 1981 to non-violently resist and protest NATO’s actions (Harford & Hopkins, 1984).

An integral aspect of Greenham was the way that creative endeavours such as drawing and dancing were used as a means of activism (Feigenbaum, 2015). The activism which characterised Greenham common has been described as “Women’s creative symbolic practices” (Feigenbaum, 2015, p.269). In Feigenbaum’s (2015) discussion of this subject two specific practices which are used are ‘myth making’ and ‘symbolism’. Myth making implies the creation or reworking of existing stories to illustrate and express concerns, whilst symbolism refers to the adoption of objects such as the serpent or spider webs to which an agreed specific meaning is attached (Feigenbaum, 2015).

On the 24th of May of 1983 the women at Greenham common called for a women’s international day of action for Nuclear disarmament. In Aotearoa women responded to this call by forming a peace camp at Windsor reserve in the Auckland suburb of Devonport. Events culminated when “20,000 women decked out with white flowers, armbands and peace signs marched quietly up Queen street to a rally in Aotea square” (Leadbeater, 2013, p.86). As a result, the anti-nuclear movement in Aotearoa gained momentum, leading to our long standing anti-nuclear stance (Leadbeater, 2013).

Ecofeminist art

It is worth noting that in the arts there has always been a tension with regards to women defining themselves as feminist (Pedersen & Haynes, 2015). Whilst many

women artists show strong feminist themes in their work for example, choreographer Martha Graham, only some align themselves publically with the women's movement (Thoms, 2012). In part this is due to the stigma attached to identifying oneself as feminist, as there can be scepticism of the role 'identity politics' plays in the arts (Faludi, 1992). Despite this, for many ecofeminist artists the line between their art and activism is blurred or is non-existent (Orenstein, 2003; Wildy, 2011). As Gloria Feman Orenstein (2003) describes, for ecofeminist artists "Instead of viewing the arts as adjuncts to political activity or as a distraction from political activism, ecofeminism considers the arts to be essential catalysts of change" (p.103). Orenstein (2003) outlined a philosophy of ecofeminist artmaking in which artistic creation exists along with other forms of creativity such as pro-creation.

In the 1960s and 1970s, inspired by second wave feminism and the growing environmental movement, certain women artists were compelled to explore the environment as themes in their work (Wildy, 2011). In retrospect these women can be seen as the first ecofeminist artists. These artists drew heavily on imagery from the goddess worship of ancient cultures in order to create an aesthetic removed from the contemporary patriarchal culture (Wildy, 2011). In more recent decades, scientific knowledge has been used by ecofeminist artists in order to create works which focus on the knowledge that "humans are capable of living on the earth without destroying it" (Wildy, 2011, p.56). Many of these artists explore how environmental damage can be healed in collaboration with nature (Orenstein, 2003; Wildy, 2011).

Throughout the development of ecofeminist art, the body has been investigated as a powerful medium of expression, given that all we know of our environment is experienced through the body. The body is integral to how knowledge can be gathered and then conveyed with artistic intention (Olsen, 2002). There are two means by which the embodiment is utilised in ecofeminist: art performance art and visual art works that use the body as the basis of expression.

Performance art in which the artist's or audiences' bodies intentionally interacts with the environment can be seen in the works of artists such as Mierle Laderman Ukeles. Ukeles first work in the 1960s was called '*Touch Sanitation*'. This work involved the artist circling the city of New York in a spiral, in the process shaking hand with all of the 8500 sanitation workers. When she met with each

worker, as she shook their hand she would say “thank you for keeping New York City alive” (Orenstein, 2003, p.107). Through physical contact Ukeles used her body as a means of connecting with those who worked to maintain the health of her city’s population.

A second way the body is used in ecofeminist art is in artworks that involve using the form of the human body as a basis for sculptures and other installed objects. Often these objects serve to remedy environmental damage such as air pollution. An example of this type of work is Jackie Brookner’s ‘*Prima Linga*’ (1996) which involved “a large sculpture of a tongue, built of moss, water volcanic rock and water that effectively licks polluted water clean” (Wildy, 2011, p.62). Thus the shape of the human tongue is used in a way that parallels its function in the human or animal body with an ecosystems ability to self-regulate and reduce pollution. In this way the sculptural work is connecting human and non-human life.

The linkage between activism and art and use of the human form characterise ecofeminist art, presenting a diverse genre which aims to creatively draw attention to the interconnection of life on earth, through the experiences and perspectives of women (Orenstein, 2003; Tepfer, 2002; Wildy, 2011).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have followed the historical trajectory of feminism in order to give a context for my specific theoretical framework of ecofeminism. I examined an ecofeminist perspective, introducing the environmental movement to give context to ecofeminism. I discussed the conceptual roots of the ecofeminist movement, its main themes and the key texts by Mary Daly, Susan Griffin and Carolyn Merchant which illustrate these themes. Further to this, I examined indigenous perspectives in ecofeminism, and gave examples of ecofeminist activism and ecofeminist art.

At this time, in a geopolitical landscape dominated by capitalism and neoliberal politics, the feminist gains made for my generation should not be taken for granted (Greer, 1999). Whether it is related to the pollution of a river from which women traditionally gathered food, or ease of access to internet pornography (Smith, 1997), there is still much ground that needs to be covered. It can be observed that the same patriarchal attitudes that urged women such as Mary Wollstonecraft

to act in the 1790s continue to exist. This signals to me that in the 21st century feminism is more relevant than ever (Cohen & Jackson, 2016; Greer, 1999).

Chapter Three: Contemporary dance making and feminism

Where is the point I can enter?

Where is the place I can touch?

(Griffin, 1983, p.215)

Women in art making are in a unique position to challenge patriarchal assumptions and explore new ways of being (Patterson, 2008; Shapiro, 2015). An area of art in which the presence of women has been strong is dance, in particular modern and contemporary dance.

In this thesis I suggest that the themes I have discussed regarding ecofeminist perspective are relevant to contemporary dance making. Specifically in choreographing a solo dance. My decision to do so is informed by the range of literature within dance studies, particularly in relation to feminist dance praxis, in which it is argued that solos are a means through which the female performer takes centre stage both literally and metaphorically (Barbour, 2012).

In this chapter I will review literature and discuss women's solo contemporary dance as this is the means by which I will illustrate my understanding of the theory I have described in the previous chapter. I will describe the practice and ethos of three women dance and performance artists whose approach to art-making can be seen as examples of the ecofeminist theories outlined in the previous chapter.

Women's solo contemporary dance

Women have played key roles in the development of modern and contemporary western dance. As Daly (1993) describes it was "Almost exclusively women who invented modern dance" (p.7). Dancers such as Isadora Duncan, Lois Fuller and Ruth St. Denis, all choreographed solos to perform themselves, exploring subjects and character studies in radical new ways (Dempster, 1993). The image of the solo woman performing onstage is perhaps a defining image of this period in dance (Dempster, 1993). As contemporary dance evolved alongside the growth of

feminism in the 20th century, women used solo dances to sift through cultural assumptions and break new ground creatively, notable examples being Martha Graham's modern dance solo *Lamentation* (1930) and Yvonne Rainer's post-modern dance solo called *Trio A* or *The Mind is a Muscle* (1966).

Feminism acknowledges that the structures of both society and art are patriarchal (Daly, 1993; Dempster, 1993; Desmond, 1999). As a result of this, much feminist criticism is concentrated on "The schism between cultural or aesthetic representations of Woman and the lives of real women" (Daly, 1993, p.6). Often, dancing women have been situated as passive subjects whose appearance and movements typify an idealised femininity (Brown, 1999). This can be typified in the work of choreographer George Balanchine. As Dempster (1993) describes, Balanchine

Once described the Ballet as women, a garden of beautiful flowers. Tending this ballet/garden/women is the gardener-choreographer. Balanchine represents the choreographer as the horticulturalist, a cultivator of disorganized, disorderly nature. The choreographer a man of knowledge, shapes, directs and forms into meaningful patterns the unconscious flower-bodies of women. (p.17).

In the case of Balanchine as with many male choreographers, his construction of women in dance served to reinforce masculine dominance (Dempster, 1993).

In her discussion of a feminist aesthetic Marilyn French (1990) describes that for something to be marked as feminist "it must approach reality from a feminist perspective and endorse female experience" (p.34). With this definition in mind it becomes clear how women's solo dance can be identified as a specific and unique method of feminist performance (Barbour, 2006; 2011; 2012). Instead of appealing to and reinforcing stereotypes, a solo dance may enable investigation of the relationship between the idealised and the reality of women's embodiment. In this way, a solo dance may allow one to "disread femininity in and/or through women's everyday body experiences" (Markula, 2006, p.23).

A means through which women dancers are able to challenge expectations made of them in solo dance is via movement invention (Brown, 1999). This allows dancers the opportunity to unpack the weightless, soft style of movement associated with femininity and create movement, and as Barbour (2011) describes, different choreographic strategies become available, such as

Gestural, pedestrian or everyday movement designed to enhance kinaesthetic empathy with the dancer; to subvert or resist audience expectations of the dancer, to challenge and change stereotypical feminine movements or movement qualities; and to make embodied expressions of my lived experiences (Barbour, 2011, p.76).

An issue of importance in relation to women's solo dance is that the position as feminist dancer does not guarantee an audience will perceive the dancers intention to challenge the traditional femininity so connected to women dancers' dancing bodies (Markula, 2006). In this way the influence of cultural stereotypes with regards to an audience's perception of female dancers cannot be underestimated (Dempster, 1993; Barbour, 2011). As Carol Brown (1999) states that "in practical terms, dancers need to be aware of how their bodies, often unwittingly, reinforce certain bodily ideals" (p.16).

It is also important not to infer that every choreography featuring a solo woman is a work with a feminist perspective (Barbour, 2011). However, in a cultural context that has policed women's agency for so long, a woman exercising autonomy of image and movement choice provides a strong theoretical and artistic statement "providing them with the opportunity to be themselves as an/other woman" (Fensham, 1993, p.37). In this way it can be seen that a body of work has been produced by women dancers, which sifts through cultural stereotypes and constructions and critiques the forces which created them (Barbour, 2011; Daly, 1993).

In the following section I will weave together my discussion of feminist theory, the ecofeminist movement and the relevance of women's solo contemporary dance. I will do so by discussing the works and philosophy of three women artists. Whilst they may not identify as ecofeminist or feminist practitioners, their contribution and approach to art-making are all examples of the themes and aims that I have discussed my feminist perspectives chapter and there writing and artistry have helped to form my interest in environmental dance. The women I will discuss are; the founder of modern dance Isadora Duncan, dance educator and choreographer Ali East, and finally professor, experiential anatomist, choreographer and dancer Andrea Olsen.

Isadora Duncan

In the early 20th century during first wave feminism and the struggle of women to gain suffrage, a key figure not only in dance, but in the wider context of western art emerged (Foster, 1986). The American born dancer Isadora Duncan revolutionised performance dance in the West. Drawing on the aesthetic of ancient Greece, donning chitons and dancing barefoot, she developed a style of movement characterised by the flowing quality and ease of action she saw as inherent to all life. Integral to her approach were the forms and movement of nature, as she described “nature has always has been and must be the great source of all art” (Duncan, 1909b, p.70). Particularly inspiring for Duncan was the motion of the sea.

A fundamental in her approach to movement was the notion that all motion was governed by the principles of wave movement. As she described “all free natural movements conform to the law of wave movement: the flight of birds, for instance, or the bounding of animals. It is the alternate attraction and resistance of the law of gravity that causes this wave movement” (Duncan, 1909b, p.69). This philosophy of movement was in stark contrast to the dominant form of dance of the period – ballet.

Duncan (1909a) critiqued ballet, believing it to be a deformed and unnatural style. She also criticized ballet for portraying its female characters as nymphs and coquettes. Through her conviction of a dance inspired by the natural world Duncan provided an alternative feminine identity which was radical in her era and would foreshadow many of the convictions held by ecofeminists of 1980s and 1990s. She believed that

Woman is not a thing apart and separate from all other life organic and inorganic. She is but a link in the chain, her movement must be one with the great movement which runs through the universe; and therefore the fountainhead for the art of the dance will be the study of the movements of nature (Duncan, 1909b, p.68).

When discussing the art of the dance Duncan often referred to ‘the dancer of the future’ a figure whom she used to describe as the culmination of her philosophy and would herald a new dawn of feminine expression (Dempster, 1993).

During Isadora Duncan’s lifetime dance was seen merely as a form of entertainment. Duncan (1909a) was one of the first figures in western art to argue

that dance was as integral an art form as music, theater and literature. At the centre of Duncan's vision for a new 'art of the dance' were women in tune with the natural world.

Ali East

An influential dance figure in Aotearoa whose work has contributed to the study of dance and the environment is choreographer and dance lecturer at the University of Otago, Ali East. Although East does not focus on feminist issues in the same way as Ana Mendieta, like Mendieta, the notion of "the body as part of the Earths continuum" (East, 2011, p.65) is a foundation of East's pedagogical approach and has informed her work as a dancer and choreographer.

East (2011; 2014) describes that her interest in ecology as springing from her rural childhood, inspired by her observations of birds and fish. Stylistically, she describes herself as a four legged dancer "alternating freely between using my hands and feet on the floor. Rather than resist gravity I am inclined to use it to give me momentum, speed and lift." (East, 2011, p.66). A conceptual influence for East (2011) is deep ecology which she describes as "an intuitive experiencing of ourselves as part of a greater organic whole" (p.65). In 1980 she founded Origins Dance Theater, a company of dancers, musicians and artists whose work was dedicated to raising awareness of environmental issues. For example, '*Waiting trees*' (1981) which was choreographed to protest the felling of native trees (East, 2014).

East's (2014) work as an academic has drawn attention to how the landscape has shaped contemporary dance in Aotearoa as she explains;

For many of our population, the surrounding pounding oceans have shaped our sense of island identity and potentially influenced the quality of our dance. Behind the beaches rise dense bush-clad ridges interspersed with steep valleys, rocky creek beds and cascading waterfalls. The horizon, with its rhythmic undulations and jagged peaks, offers to some a reading as an avant-garde musical score (p.102).

A work of particular interest with regards to my research is her solo performance from 1996 '*How being still is still moving*'. The piece experiments with film in order to convey the imagery and sounds of the ocean in to a theater context. The

performance used semi-improvised movement inspired from such diverse sources as the hula, the scuttle of crabs and arm gestures reminiscent of washing (East, 2011).

Whilst her work is not framed as ecofeminist, through focussing on the body's relationship to the environment the work of Ali East has drawn attention to the importance of place in contemporary dance and has inspired many choreographers and dancers in Aotearoa, encouraging them into the development of a uniquely South Pacific style.

Andrea Olsen

A contemporary of Ali East is experiential anatomist, educator and dancer Andrea Olsen. Olsen is Professor of Dance at Middlebury College in Vermont in the United States of America. Similarly to Ana Mendieta and Ali East, Olsen (2002; 2004; 2013) acknowledges an interconnection between the body and the environment. Like East, Olsen's approach is not described as ecofeminist however, her movement philosophy based on the integration of mind, body and the environment aligns much of her work with an ecofeminist perspective. Olsen places emphasis on how our bodies and their relationship to the environment can be a force that brings humans together. As she explains, her role as an educator revolves around "what connects us as humans rather than what separates us, starting with our own bodies" (Olsen, 2013, p.145).

A feature of Olsen's philosophy which she uses to investigate similarities shared between bodies and the environment is experiential anatomy. Olsen explains how "It [experiential anatomy] encourages the individual to integrate information with experience. Thus, experiential anatomy enhances bodywork by providing an underlying awareness of body structure and function" (2004, p.16). In this way by understanding the processes that support embodiment such as the rotation of joints, the practitioners are able to see the patterns humans have in common.

In her acclaimed book *Body and earth: An experiential guide* (2002) Olsen refers to the body as "an aspect of earth" (p.3). Of importance in Olsen's work is the concept of wholeness and unification that exists in both bodies and earth. Seeing themselves in relation to an ecology, Olsen (2014) argues, enables dancers to see their embodiment as part of a greater whole.

Andrea Olsen's (2014) focus on the anatomical and ecological as experienced and holistic, echoes the assertion of ecofeminists that to construct human identity outside of nature is problematic. Therefore a way of being must be explored in which human embodiment exists within and as a part of a global ecology (Plumwood, 1993; Spretnak, 1987). In this way Olsen's work provides valuable insight for ecofeminists considering embodied ways of knowing.

Conclusion

An area of art in which the presence of women has been strong is dance, in particular modern and contemporary dance. Women have used dance as a means through which they can explore the duality between representations of woman and the everyday experiences of women (Daly, 1993). Thus as Shapiro (2016) describes, these women have been developing "a choreographic process that centres on the body as a site for self and social awareness and a critical understanding of the context of women's lives" (p.14).

In this chapter I have reviewed literature on the subject of women's solo contemporary dance and outlined the contribution and ethos of three women dance artists whose approach to art-making can be seen as examples of the ideas previously discussed. I believe that women in dance making are in a unique position to challenge patriarchal assumptions and explore new ways of being (Pederson & Haynes, 2015; Shapiro, 2015). The medium of dance is the human body. There is no intermediary object between a dancer and their intention in the way that there is in other art forms, (such as a camera or musical instrument). In this way feminist dance makers are able to investigate what it is to be women through the most personal and contested terrain of the human body, and with direct reference to gender and sexuality.

Chapter Four: Creative Practice Methodology

Nor do they argue
Nor do they understand
Nor do they know
But still it is so.
And there are structures of
Unknowing
We call disbelief
(Griffin, 1983, p.218)

I have posed the following question as the broad area of my research, ‘In what ways can contemporary dance making express ecofeminist perspectives?’ In order to gain an understanding of this topic, a strategy for the collection and demonstration of knowledge will be necessary. Methodology can be defined as “the strategy, plan of action, process, or design, lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes” (Crotty, 1998, p.3).

In this chapter I will discuss the methodological framework of my research. First I will describe how my thesis is grounded in a constructionist epistemology and feminist theoretical perspective. I will then give background to the specific methodology of my research which is creative practice as research and describe my specific methods. Dance making is my overarching method and two integral aspects of dance making are improvisation and choreography as I will detail. Finally, I will also discuss how it is necessary to record my methods through creative journaling.

Epistemology & theoretical perspective

The theory and construction of knowledge is described as epistemology (Gamble, 1998; Stanley & Wise, 1983). Within research, epistemology is understood to be “The theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology” (Crotty, 1998, p.3). Within my research a constructionist epistemology informs the theoretical perspective and methodology.

Constructionism acknowledges that one objective truth is not waiting to be discovered (Green & Stinson, 1999). Truth, or meaning, exists because of our engagement with the world. As Crotty (1998) describes, from a constructionist perspective “There is no meaning without a mind. Meaning is not discovered but constructed” (p.8). Green & Stinson (1999) explain further that “we construct reality according to how we are positioned in the world, and that how we construct reality and truth is related to the perspective from which we are looking” (p.93). In this way, a constructionist perspective infers that “Meaning shifts depending on where cultural forms are being created/consumed ...context is everything ” (Patterson, 2008, p.397). Therefore, within a constructionist epistemology it can be understood that a multiplicity of viewpoints will exist on any given topic (Crotty, 1998; Green & Stinson, 1999).

The notion that knowledge is created through experience of the world often runs counter to traditional western concepts of knowledge. In western contexts it has been assumed that knowing is gained from an objective reality in which the researcher exists separately from that which is studied (Stanley & Wise, 1983). Feminist scholars have critiqued this traditional paradigm and drawn attention to how prevailing knowledges have either failed to recognize the insights of women’s experience or have considered that women’s everyday realities are peripheral and unimportant (Stanley & Wise, 1983). By acknowledging the importance of and need to explore the experiences of women, feminist researchers are challenging established epistemologies and providing a platform for other ways of knowing to be realised (Desmond, 1999).

An epistemological strategy which demonstrates feminist approaches to knowledge can be illustrated in Karen Barbour’s (2006; 2011; 2012) ‘embodied ways of knowing’. This strategy allows one to engage with “Experiencing knowledge as constructed, contextual and embodied” (Barbour, 2006, p.87). Embodied ways of knowing emphasises valuing one’s own experiential ways of knowing and realising that “we can work towards reconciling knowledge gained from these experiences with knowledge gained through other strategies in a personally meaningful way” (Barbour, 2011, p.95). In this way, personal experience and theoretical concepts can be understood as connected and mutually reinforcing.

Evident within epistemology is the need to and ability to generate new knowledge (Hanstein, 1999b). Theory has varying applications and definitions, but

fundamentally theory “serves to account for or characterize phenomena in a particular area of inquiry” (Hanstein, 1999b, p.62). Primarily, the role of academic research is to either test existing theories or generate new ones (Hanstein, 1999b). Therefore, in research a theoretical perspective provides a context within which the research takes place and grounds its rationale (Crotty, 1998). Given my ecofeminist interests, the theoretical perspective evident in this thesis is feminism.

Instead of reaching towards the abstraction traditionally valued by the academy, within artistic and academic research processes, feminist researchers strive to provide a platform through which theories of knowledge can be seen as relational, embodied and connected (Gaard & Gruen, 1993). My ecofeminist perspective and constructionist epistemology provides an understanding of how different forces intertwine to shape our being in the world. For feminist researchers “the creative research process has much to offer women as a pathway to emancipatory knowledge” (Pedersen & Haynes, 2015, p.1269). In this way, I will use creative practice as research as the methodology for my thesis in order to investigate how ecofeminist perspectives can be expressed in contemporary dance making.

Methodology

Research is a process in which knowledge is gathered and interpreted and takes the existence of knowledge as a given (Hanstein, 1999; Stanley & Wise, 1983). In order for knowledge to be gathered, analysed and reflected upon a process or design must be decided upon, in order to link the use of particular methods with the desired outcome (Hanstein, 1999a). Within academic research this is the purpose of the methodology.

Qualitative research is the term used for inquiry that gathers findings from the social world (Haseman, 2010). In recent decades qualitative research methodologies have expanded and it is recognised that neither quantitative nor qualitative findings are able to adequately represent all aspects of human experience, as research findings can be more than numbers and words. A developing area of qualitative research is creative practice as research (Edmonds, 2007).

In its broadest definition creative practice as research “seeks to describe ways in which creative outputs can be recognised as research” (Combrink & Marley, 2009, p.179). According to Candy (2011) creative practice “involves conceiving ideas and realising them in some form as artefacts, installations, compositions, designs or performances” (p.33). A unique aspect of creative practice as research that distinguishes it from quantitative and qualitative methods is that the output “not only expresses the research but becomes the research itself” (Haseman, 2010, p.150). In this way creative practise as research enables a dancer to present a dance not just as part of the research process, but as a means of embodying research and not simply referring to it in written work (Vincs, 2010). As Fensham (1993) describes, “In performance the dancer’s research on the body is made visible” (p.35).

In this thesis I will refer to this methodology as creative practice as research. However, as an emergent methodology within the academy there is still conjecture surrounding terminology. Therefore this approach has been given a variety of names such as practice based/led research and performative research (Candy, 2011). The specific meanings of such terms are a contested area within creative practice research and further scholarship is needed in order to develop a shared vocabulary amongst creative practitioners and academics (Haseman, 2010). I refer to this method as creative practise as research. Whilst practice based research is a common term for the methodology, the inclusion of the word creative is important, as it distinguishes the methodology from other forms of research as, in some sense, all disciplines could be understood as practices. Therefore the use of creative infers the unique engagement required for artistic projects (Barbour, 2006).

Another area of contention within the field of creative practice as research is the role of qualitative research methods. Some academics and creative practitioners believe that it is useful to acknowledge the importance of qualitative methods in the development of the creative practices (Smith & Dean, 2009). However, others argue that creative practice as research is a ‘third paradigm’ distinct from the methods of qualitative research. As Haseman (2010) describes “By claiming a third space, performative researchers can stand aside from the assumptions of qualitative research and gain the clear air they need to clarify the conceptual architecture and protocols of performative research in its own terms ” (p.156). In this way, the features of creative practice as research that are distinct

from other forms of inquiry are acknowledged and it is understood that they cannot be articulated through the frameworks of other methodologies.

Research Methods

Research methods are the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse findings related to some research question or hypothesis (Hanstein, 1999a). In creative practice as research methodology, a range of methods such as post-performance reception study, documentation and reflective practice are often used (Haseman, 2010). With specific reference to dance making and creative practice as research, there are many ways in which methods can be implemented, depending on the research questions which are to be investigated. I am working within creative practice as research and in dance making. As well as my main research question, I have identified two more specific questions which enable me to examine the research question these are; ‘In what ways does my contemporary dance making foster a sense of relationship with the environment?’ and ‘How is my contemporary dance making an expression of ecofeminist care?’ In order to investigate these research questions my planned research methods are as follows.

Method 1. Dance making

The main method of my research is dance making. As I have outlined in my discussion of creative practice as research, a dance work can be seen not only as a product of research but the research itself (Barbour, 2011; Fensham, 1993). With reference to dance making, Vincs (2010) articulates that “Rather than dances being the outcomes of thinking done previously, dances are the actual process of thinking” (p.100). In the process of thinking through dance it is important to recognize that, as Vincs (2010) states further, to be a dance artist “is not to engage solely with single activity, such as dancing, performing technique, or exercising creativity, but involves constructing a simultaneous engagement with a multiplicity of elements” (p.100). Therefore, I refer to dance making as a process which includes all the elements necessary or inevitable in the creation of dance; choreography, improvisation, somatic practices, workshopping, rehearsals, the selection and design of site/setting, costumes, music and lighting, performance, feedback and reflection (Barbour, 2011; East, 2011).

The outcome of my research will be a solo dance which I will choreograph and perform myself. My position as researcher, choreographer and performer allows me a unique position in the creative process. When choreographing for themselves dancers will often draw upon their own narratives and embodiment (Markula, 2006). The recognition of personal experience is a key element of feminist research, which acknowledges that a person's individuality cannot be ignored and realises "It is inevitable that the researcher's own experiences and consciousness will be involved in the research process as much as they are in life" (Stanley & Wise, 1983, p.48). Thus the use of solo dance aligns with my theoretical perspective of feminism.

As I have discussed in my chapter on contemporary dance making and feminism, women's solo contemporary dance can be seen as a unique method of feminist performance which investigates the relationship between the idealised and the reality of women's embodiment (Barbour, 2012; Brown, 1999; Daly, 1993; Dempster, 1993 & Markula, 2006). As Barbour (2011) explains on this subject, "Being a feminist dancer in a predominantly western culture here in Aotearoa, I am aware that women's bodies are regularly displayed as objects of consumption, within advertising, fashion, pornography and entertainment" (p.35). As I have described traditionally, in western performance contexts dancing women have been situated as passive subjects, styled by a male choreographer to perform in front of what is presumed to be a largely male audience (Desmond, 1999). Women's solos in contemporary dance have the ability to subvert and challenge this positioning.

Solo dance making gives me the opportunity to place myself as a female performer centre stage, both literally and metaphorically. In doing so I manifest an expression of femininity informed by my lived experiences (Barbour, 2011; 2012). This will enable me to explore how agency can be exerted through movement, whilst critiquing the ways dancing women are portrayed in other contexts. As Barbour (2011) describes, "Movement in women's solo contemporary dance making might be understood as receptive to multiple influences, integrated and understood through embodiment and responsive in multiple ways, including both choreographed and improvisational expressions" (p.80). Within the many elements of solo contemporary dance making I discuss in detail the two key methods which are improvisation and choreography.

Method 1a. Improvisation

An integral component in music, theater and of course dance practice, is improvisation. Defined broadly as the act of generating spontaneous creative activity (Bresnahan, 2015) improvisation is “a way of tapping the stream of the subconscious without intellectual censorship, allowing spontaneous and simultaneous exploring, creating and performing” (Blom & Chaplin, 1989, p.6). Improvisation can be utilised in a variety of ways in dance making.

One of the ways improvisation can be used in dance making is to generate movement material, which can later be shaped choreographically to form phrases of movement. There are a variety of starting points of stimuli for improvisation, such as music, poetry, memories or kinaesthetic experience (Hodes, 1998).

Contemporary choreographers, notably in the area of postmodern dance such as Yvonne Rainer and Deborah Hay, have not only used improvisation in order to develop and manipulate movement material, but also as a feature of performances (Smith- Autard, 2010). As part of a dance performance, improvisation can function to “necessitate moment to moment embodied responses” (Barbour, 2011, p.80). Bresnahan (2015) describes a variety of ways improvisation can be used in this manner, such as game structures and prompts given by audience members.

Whether used in a performance setting or as a way of generating and developing phrase material, improvisation in dance is significant as it challenges perceptions that creative processes are situated in the creator’s mind (Łuczniak, 2015). As Carter (2000) discusses on this subject

The primary instrument through which improvisation in dance takes place is the human body and its interactions with other bodies. The full range of human attributes, including the physical, conceptual, and emotional resources embodied in the body are thus available for improvisation in dance (p.182).

Therefore, the creative process evident in improvisation is highly embodied. The separation of mental processes from action and bodily expression is impossible and ideas appear not in solitary minds, but from interactions. As Łuczniak (2015) describes creativity emerges from “a body’s disposition and ideas in the mind, from interaction with surroundings, objects and gravity” (p.302). Given that my choreography will be a solo work, the role of improvisation in my research will be

to help me interact with stimuli relevant to the theme of that work, so as to generate movement material.

One of the first steps in my creative process will be improvisation. With key words, phrases and images relevant to my topic in mind I will video sessions of improvisation, using footage as a memory aid as well as reviewing it to note nuances I may not detect 'in the moment'. By doing this I will be able to observe the movements and qualities that occur and then select those that interest me and explore them further in a more structured way through choreographic techniques (Green, 2002).

Improvisation will also enable me to explore sensory interaction between the human and environmental body, such as the sensation of cold water on my hands or dirt between my toes. Improvisation will provide me with a basis for movement which stems from engagement with the materiality of the environment. In this way, improvising connects me to a relationship which exists between people and their environment (Cohen, 2008; Olsen, 2002).

Through improvisation I hope to generate movement material and ideas. In order to convey conceptual clarity to an audience, I will need to refine my movement material. When shaping 'raw' improvised movement, choreographic devices and frameworks such as Laban's (1988) movement analysis may be used in order to determine what aspects of the movement a choreographer may want to develop and what is relevant to the overall structure of a finished work (Smith-Autard, 2010).

Methods 1b. Choreographic methods

Within dance making, another method that is integral in my research is choreography. Originally, the word referred to the actual writing down of a dance's steps. Today this is known as dance notation. It was in the late 18th century that choreography started to be used to describe the actual process of composing dances (Craine & Mackrell, 2010).

A figure who has contributed greatly to understandings of contemporary choreography is dancer Rudolf Von Laban. Laban developed what has come to be known as '*Laban Movement Analysis*' (LMA). LMA "provides a vocabulary for describing...the qualitative features of movement; that is 'how' movement is

executed” (Brennan, 1999, p.288). LMA forms the basis of the five elements of dance used in the New Zealand education curriculum. These elements are *body awareness, space, time, energy* and *relationships* (Te Kete Ipurangi, 2016). Often sharing terminology with musical definitions, there are also a variety of choreographic devices that have been formalised in contemporary dance practice such as canon, fragmentation, splicing, retrograde and augmentation, to name a few examples (Smith-Autard, 2010). These devices provide a structure for manipulating movement material in order to generate variety whilst also keeping a sense of cohesion.

Whilst the sensory experiences of the environment maybe explored through improvisation, more structured means of creating movement will also be necessary. Once I have gathered movement from improvisation I will be able to begin considering choreographic conventions and drawing on my knowledge of the elements of dance. I will generate action from specific choreographic tasks. Choreographic principles which I will draw upon to create phrase material in specific tasks include devices such as repetition which is a key device in dance making as it helps an audience remember key movements or motifs in the dance work (Smith-Autard, 2010).

A choreographic method I will utilise in my research is the exploration of movement drawn from patterns evident in the environment. Movement patterns which regulate the body’s systems, for example the expansion and contraction of the lungs as they breathe, are echoed in the actions of other natural phenomena such as the shapes of waves as the moon’s gravity pulls them out and draws them back towards the land. As Isadora Duncan (1909b) noted, “I see waves rising in all things” (p.69). Hughes & Lury (2013) suggest that “a pattern provokes more than the visual senses..... Patterns of movement can also create oscillations or alternations in mood such that they can provoke our bodies into a visceral response rather than a purely visual grasping of form alone” (Hughes & Lury, 2013, p.793).

Patterns I plan to focus on choreographically are patterns from natural phenomena. Some of these patterns are also found within contemporary dance practice, thus allowing me to investigate how my contemporary dance making expresses a sense of relationship with the environment through shared patterns such as the spiral. Spiral patterns are a common motif in natural phenomena (Olsen,

2002). Some examples of naturally formed spirals are the arrangement of respiratory pores on the shells of *Paua* and the arrangement of florets in sunflowers.

With regards to contemporary dance practice, in the style of dance training outlined by Erick Hawkins, the “curved pathway of a spiral is frequently used to describe and enhance movement efficiency” (Celichowska, 2000, p.57). Spiral patterns form the basis of many pathways from floor movement to standing movement. Curling whilst lying on the ground in warm up exercises engages the actions of a spiral. As Celichowska (2000) further describes, the spiral pattern in Hawkins technique “in the curved path of the spiral, the direct downward force of gravity is diverted through a gradually descending curve that wraps around a vertical axis” (p.57).

Another choreographic method which I will utilise is the exploration of movement patterns from specific bodily processes. The body is supported by various systems which, similar to an ecosystem, creates shapes and patterns (Cohen, 2008; Olsen, 2002). For example, the pathway of blood as it is pumped through the body is “a closed loop circuit, with the heart at one end of the circuit and the capillary isorings at the other” (Cohen, 2008, p.72). This can be likened to the way a water course starts at a spring and then runs as a river out to sea where it may eventually be absorbed into clouds. Thus I am aligning with Andrea Olsen’s (2002) view which sees that the body is an aspect of the earth and therefore can be seen to operate in a manner similar to that of an ecosystem. The acknowledgment of the body as an ecosystem within and connected to the wider environmental systems of earth infers interrelationship between people and land. There are many ways this relationship has been sensed and expressed.

These methods are relevant to my research because a basic principle of ecofeminism is the recognition that humans do not exist outside of the environment but within and as a part of wider ecosystems (Plumwood, 1993; Warren; 1990). Choreographic methods will enable me to kinaesthetically explore patterns such as spirals, allowing me to gain insight into how, through dance making my body’s relationship to the environment can be expressed.

Throughout my choreographic process it will be necessary for me to document my activities, especially given the nature of solo work. I will annotate phrases in written word and diagrams to aid memory. I will also film movement material. A particular strength of videoing movement is its ability “to capture every

nuance of the choreographed piece” (Janesick, 2001, p.537). Videoing enables a dancer to view their own bodies moving, therefore helping them gain awareness of a movement’s shape and quality in a way they would otherwise not be able to annotate. I will video and annotate phrases in order to help me remember the material I develop but also as an aid for me to understand how my ideas evolve and help me to reflect on the process as a whole once the dance has been completed.

By investigating movement and creating phrases of dance material in this manner, I hope to gain understanding of how my contemporary dance making expresses a sense of relationship with the environment and how contemporary dance making can express a sense of ecofeminist care.

Method 2. Journaling

In my research I must provide myself a space in which to ruminate and reflect upon my experiences of improvising and choreographing. Therefore, another key method in my research will be journaling. Journaling will not only create an outlet for contemplation, but also enable me to trace the path of my progress and methods, in order to make sense of how my embodiment as a woman shapes my relationship and sense of care of the environment.

Creative journaling has often been utilised as a method of exploration for artists. As creative practice as research has grown in academia, the practice of journaling has become an integral method for researchers (Baker, 2013; Haseman, 2010). Creative journaling can take a variety of styles depending on the artistic medium being researched as well as the habits of the individual artist. However, it usually takes the form of reflective and creative writing, (Bright, 2014). It is important to note that, whilst keeping a journal is often understood to mean a record in the form of writing as Bright (2014) describes “Understanding of creativity and creative processes cannot be achieved through words alone” (p.64).

Within dance studies creative journaling can include writing that varies from diary-like entries describing a session workshoping in the studio, to creatively describing a memory relevant to the theme of a dance (Hay, 2011; Olsen, 2014). By keeping a record of the creative process a choreographer is able to trace the trajectory of their creative process from the inception of a theme or research question, to brainstorming in order to refine the topic of a choreography, the

rehearsals leading up to the performance and the period of reflection post-performance (Barbour, 2006).

Writing to support the creative process can also challenge what is conventionally perceived as writing. Dancer and specialist in performance writing, Alys Longley (2016, 2013) has developed a method of written documentation described as movement initiated writing, which;

Conceptualises a kind of writing that is drawn from the felt sense of moving, sometimes using the entire page space—the space, texture, colour, formatting and text—to translate the felt affect of movement to a performance on the page (Longley, 2013, p.76).

This form of writing considers the potential of documentation as another practice of performance and also disturbs notions that in the creative process writing as documentation must be confined to tidy conventional forms (Longley, 2013). This way of thinking about writing creates the ability to express concepts and impulses that may be hard to express otherwise through the written word (Bright, 2014).

The use of a creative journal as a method used in partnership with dance making has the potential to extend and question the possibilities inherent in dance making (Longley & Tate, 2011). Through journaling I hope to document the evolution of my creative process. Utilising ideas from Longley's (2016, 2013, 2011) movement-initiated writing, will enable me to respond to the methods of improvisation and choreography in a way that feels right for the movement.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the details of my methodology, my constructionist epistemology and feminist theoretical perspective. I gave background to the specific methodology of creative practice as research and described my specific methods which are improvisation, choreography and journaling.

To gain deeper understanding of my main research question I have identified two more specific sub questions. Through the combined methods of dance making (improvisation and choreography), as well as journaling, I aim to understand the ways my contemporary dance making may foster my sense of relationship with the environment and how my contemporary dance making can be an expression of ecofeminist care.

In my feminist perspective chapter I argued that feminism is more relevant in the 21st century than ever. I have also noted that since embodiment is at the forefront of dance, women dance makers are in a unique position to explore feminist themes. With regards to methodology, I build on my argument and conclude that creative practice as research has the ability to aid researchers interested in the fields of dance and feminism, as it enables knowledges to be expressed which historically have been marginalized by patriarchy, an example being the lived experiences of women.

Considering this, in order to create a dance work that embodies how contemporary dance making can express ecofeminist perspective I have chosen to focus on a topic of personal relevance to me, and to human survival. I have chosen to consider the ramifications of nuclear technology as the subject of a choreography. This is a relevant topic for my thesis as concerns over nuclear technology were a factor that led many women to take an interest in feminist and ecological concerns and thus was a galvanising issue for ecofeminists. As Combellick-Bidney, (2006) describes “Ecofeminism grew in popularity with the anti-nuclear movement” (p.61). The women’s peace camp at Greenham common in 1983 is a well-known example of women mobilising against nuclear technology (Cooke & Kirk, 1983; Feigenbaum, 2015) and the anti-nuclear stance in Aotearoa was heavily lead and supported by women (Leadbeater, 2013). Thus I begin the creation of my solo dance.

Chapter Five: Discussion

How is it I can say this
So that you will
See too what I have seen.
(Griffin, 1983, p.223)

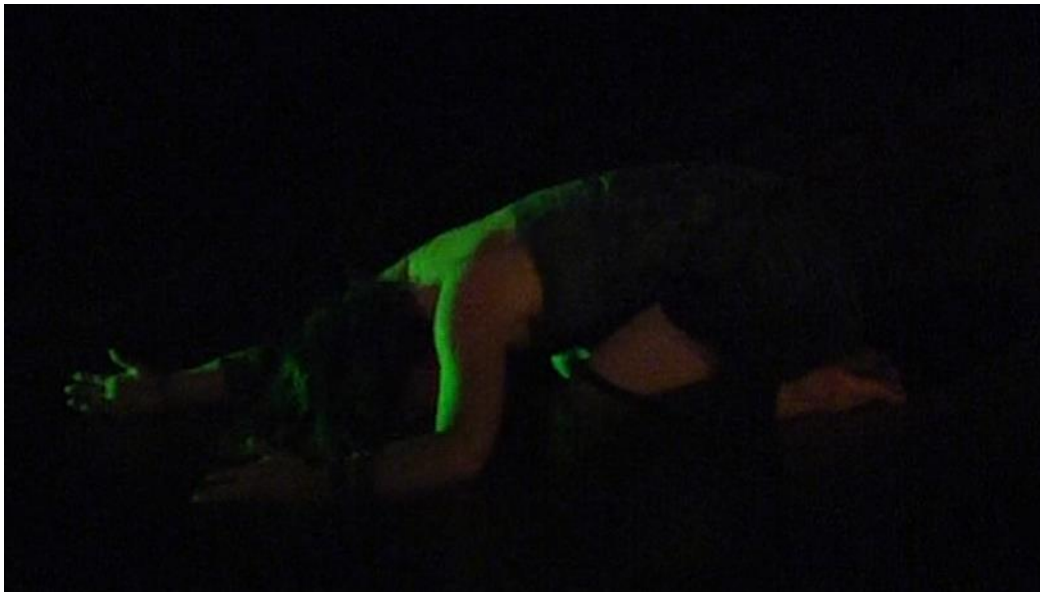


Figure 3. Video still from *'Daughter, there will be no home'* (12 May, 2017)

Within ecofeminism the body is a reference point for expression and understanding, and contemporary dance making offers a way of knowing that is of and from the body. Therefore, as I have argued in this thesis, contemporary dance making is of relevance for the exploration of ecofeminism, (Barbour, 2012; Olsen, 2013; Wildy, 2011). The overall research question for this thesis is 'In what ways can contemporary dance making express an ecofeminist perspective?' In order to investigate this topic, creative practice as research formed an appropriate methodology and the research methods of improvisation, choreography and journaling allowed investigation into how contemporary dance making might foster my relationship with the earth's environment.

To create a dance work that exemplifies how contemporary dance making can express an ecofeminist perspective, I chose to focus on the ramifications of nuclear technology as the subject of my choreography. This is a relevant topic for

my thesis as concerns over nuclear technology led many women in the past to take an interest in feminist and ecological concerns and thus was a galvanising issue for ecofeminists. The issues surrounding nuclear technology are also of particular significance in the context of Aotearoa. Ernest Rutherford, a physicist from Nelson, split the atom in 1932 and this led to the development of nuclear power (Leadbeater, 2013). However, it is women who have been at the forefront of raising awareness of the dangers surrounding the use of nuclear technology (Leadbeater, 2013). Due to widespread public support, in 1984 Aotearoa adopted ‘nuclear free’ legislation, despite much external pressure (Leadbeater, 2013). The solo dance I created was titled ‘*Daughter, there will be no home*’ and is a representation of my relationship to the environment of this earth and an expression of my ecofeminist sense of care for the earth. The solo dance was performed on May the 12th, 2017 in the Playhouse theater at the the Gallagher academy of Perfroming arts on the Hamilto campus of the University of Waikato (see poster and programme in appendix). The performance can be viewed online at [<https://youtu.be/Ok5Gjr96hqk>] or through the USB video documentation (see appendix two).

In this chapter I will examine and analyse the findings of my creative practice research solo dance. In the first section of this chapter I provide some background and ‘framing’ (Foster, 1986) for my solo dance, I will also briefly describe the ecofeminist themes that influenced the work. I will then discuss how the theory outlined in this thesis in conjunction with my chosen methods led to the creation of my solo dance ‘*Daughter, there will be no home*’.

Solo dance: 'Daughter, there will be no home'



Figure 4. Video still from 'Daughter, there will be no home' (12 May, 2017)

As a part of my research I looked at the responses other women artists had to the threat of nuclear weaponry. Two poems that resonated with me were Lauris Edmond's 'Nuclear bomb test Mururoa Atoll, 6 September 1995' and Susan Griffin's 'Prayer for continuation' (I cite excerpts from these poems throughout this chapter). Inspired by these poems, I felt compelled to write one of my own. The aim of writing a poem was to connect theory with lived experience and creative work that existed on the subject and to inform my dance making. The inspiration for my poem is drawn from a range of sources including my own journal writing during the creative process. I wove my journal writing together in my poem with scientific information and factual evidence, the descriptions of women's dreams and the imagery from the poems by Griffin (1983) and Edmond (1996) (see footnotes for references to Griffin and Edmond's poems).

This dream

I had this dream that I want to tell you about.

In this dream I am alone,

Looking

For someone that I know,

Before the world dies.

I am walking,

Walking through ... a field.
 Beneath my feet the earth feels hard and dry.
 I don't want to look up because I know that the sky is going to be grey and
 that I am not going to be able to see the moon or stars... again.
 My ears ring ... with sounds... that don't exist anymore...
 The only thing that is on my mind is
 When I find that someone,
 How am I supposed to hold them?
 In these nuclear arms of mine?
 Yes
 'I am the woman broken by a flash in the lifeless sky'¹
 The woman who feels the wind against her skin
 'Upon this wind the dust of dead bodies is blown,
 I breathe in this dust'²

When I awake
 I am still on the journey.
 My heart aches wondering
 How are we still here?
 How did it come to be that the few should hold life on earth in the palm of
 their hands?
 I can name them for you; General dynamics, B.A.E, Lockheed Martin,
 General electric³
 But it's all ok isn't?
 They tell me it's normal
 Isn't it now?
 Normal
 To dig the soil for elements used to destroy the earth,
 Normal
 To burn a child in the name of peace,

¹ From 'Nuclear bomb test Mururoa Atoll 6 September'. (Edmond, 1991). In *Seeing Voices*.

² From 'Prayer for continuation'. Griffin, S. (1983). In L. Caldecott, & S. Leland (Eds.), *Reclaim the earth: Women speak out for life on earth*.

³ From *Nuclear Madness*. (Caldicott, 1980).

*There are some dreams one cannot come back from
Where “the simplest acts of living are undone”⁴
“Thanks to the grotesque adventures of brilliant men”⁵*

*No
Somewhere in my stomach is a clenched fist.
This fist I name memory
Tell me
How do we heal this Military industrial complex?*

*In this moment
All the world’s nuclear weapons are currently on high alert.
15,200 warheads 90% of which are owned by the USA and Russia⁶
...feel it
The unfolding tug of the umbilical cord
A woman once told me “we’re not the same but we’re one” (p.146)⁷.
Every breath is a wave,
Every pore of my skin a lake,
I will trace the rivers of my veins for you
And together we will know
That Body is earth
And this earth
Lingering
Is home.*

(Baker, creative journal, 2017)

In addition, the title of my solo dance came from the line in Griffin’s (1983) poem

“After the fires
(After the unspeakable)
There will be no home”

⁴ From ‘Nuclear bomb test Mururoa Atoll 6 September’. (Edmond, 1991). In *Seeing Voices*.

⁵ From ‘Nuclear bomb test Mururoa Atoll 6 September’. (Edmond, 1991). In *Seeing Voices*.

⁶ From *Nuclear Madness*. (Caldicott, 1980).

⁷ From Sustainability and art-making. (Olsen, 2013). In *Sustainability*, 6(3),

(p.223)

I felt that the sense of loss of a home is the core issue of nuclearisation, the daughter I included refers to the line:

Will there be a daughter of a
Daughter of a daughter
A son
(Griffin, 1983, p.224)

I decided upon this as the title because I wanted to make clear the point that we need to keep the home of our bodies and of the earth, not only for ourselves, but future generations for our 'daughters'.

The poems became an integral aspect of my dance making and featured in the accompanying soundscape. The soundscape included samples of music from the introduction of Meredith Monk's *'Dolmen music'* and Broken Consorts' *'The River'*. Natural sounds utilised were; bird song and cicadas by the Uuhina stream, the call of a kokako and an oceanic wave sound generated from sine radio waves. A prescient aspect of the soundscape was the recordings of my voice reciting lines from Edmond's (1996) and Griffin's (1983) poems as well as the poem I wrote myself. The recording of spoken word as part of the soundscape added to the performance as it helped to reinforce the intention of movement with regards to the theme.

The costume aesthetic that I decided upon for the dance was unkempt and organic. Given the subtlety of certain movements I needed a costume that would not conceal my body too much. I modified an asymmetrical black and grey tie-dyed skirt into a dress. I also added cut up stockings that were black and grey to my arms and legs to encourage the look of organic chaos. Under the different lighting states used, the colours of my costume altered, emphasising different features and shades of the costume as the dance progressed. I also used make up as a way to add to the aesthetic. Heavy eyeshadow in dark shades helped to emphasise the focus and movement of my eyes.

All of these framing aspects created the context for viewing the solo dance. In addition, my poem is an expression of the themes which arose from my reading

of ecofeminist literature. The themes in particular that influenced my dance making practice were mind/body dualism, the logic of dualism and lived experience. I will discuss these themes below.

Themes

One central theme of ecofeminist literature is the acknowledgement of a mind/ body dualism (Merchant, 1996). In relation to the body, western philosophy has privileged the mind over lived experiences. Reason and science therefore have been 'elevated' with the mind and the masculine, whilst emotion and nature have been associated with the body and the feminine (King, 1983; Merchant, 1980). A dualism between mind and body has also been legitimised through a 'logic of domination'. This logic infers that the oppression of women is justified as the male intellect and body is constructed as being 'naturally' superior to that of the female (Warren, 1997). In solo dance making I can prioritise my female body, emotional and lived experiences and, in this case, my relationship with nature.

The effects of mind/body dualism and the logic of domination can be observed in many of the attitudes and practices in dance making. However, problematizing the meanings that western dance forms inscribe upon bodies, and veering from discourses that construct the body as a biological container for technique, are ways in which an ecofeminist perspective in dance making can challenge this dualism. In my solo, I made the choice to develop my own expressive movement material rather than to demonstrate technique.

Personal narrative is one way in which ecofeminists resist the logic of domination and begin to unpick the mind/body dualism. Prevailing knowledges have either failed to recognize the existence of women's experience or considered that women's everyday realities are peripheral and unimportant. An integral part of feminist scholarship is an awareness of the importance of and need to explore the experiences of women (Desmond, 1999; Stanley & Wise, 1983). By focussing on the experiences of women, the constructs of and expectations placed upon women can be contested and the everyday realities of women's lives explored (Daly, 1993; Barbour, 2012). Spretnak (1987) places the need "to unlock our memories" and follow our "body parables" (p.9) as some of ecofeminism's most important strategies to create change and challenge patriarchal attitudes. Therefore another

main theme in my research was the relevance of lived experience. In my solo I explored lived experience by focussing on the reactions of the Greenham Common women to nuclear devastation, as I discuss in detail in the following sections, I also explored my own responses to this issue.

I am water, I am sand



Figure 5. Video still from *'Daughter, there will be no home'* (12 May, 2017)

Curled up
A cell,
A foetus in fluid.
Initiating movement,
Starting to move in space
Gradually unfurling
Opening my eyes
Coming ashore
(Baker, 2017, creative journal)

In my solo, lived experience was integral to my dance making process. *'Daughter, there will be no home'* was a means through which I explored ecofeminist representations of the threat of nuclear devastation. As part of the research for the

dance, I examined the visceral responses of women to the nuclear threat. A phenomena which inspired my dance making were the pattern amongst some women in the late 1970s and early 1980s who reported having dreams of a post nuclear dystopian future. This phenomenon became known through letters written to feminist magazine *Spare Rib* over the summer of 1980 (Cook & Kirk, 1983). These dreams enabled women to express their concern for the consequences of nuclear technology; concern stemming from the knowledge that both body and earth would cease to be habitable after a nuclear disaster. These dreams became part of non-violent resistance, by the women of Greenham Common, who when arrested or taken to court would recount their dreams and share the disquiet they were left with (Cook & Kirk, 1983).

I read the accounts of dreams and noted phrases which resonated with me in my journal: for example, ‘tears my stomach,’ ‘pierced with emotion,’ ‘feeling numb and frozen’ (Cook & Kirk, 1983). From this collection of phrases I started to improvise and develop movement material. As I moved with these phrases I reflected upon how the women who expressed these sentiments were marginalized through how the media portrayed them. The women of Greenham Common were often stereotyped as emotionally over-wrought. As Cook & Kirk (1983) describe, in this media portrayal the women were “presented as something to gawp at, typically female, weak and irrational” (p.96). In my journal I considered how

‘Whilst, these women were ostracized for their outward displays of emotion their concerns were legitimate and justifiable. Society however chose to side- line their concerns and focus on ostracizing the nature of their activism’.

(Baker, 2017, creative journal)

In this way, the media portrayed that it was not the patriarchal establishment who were ‘crazy’ or out of control, but these women activists whose actions and message were undermined due to their subversive behaviours.

Thinking about the personal experiences of these women helped me to channel energy for the performance. The women who lived in the peace camp at Greenham Common lived in protest, and as I danced I attempted to perform in a way that would embody the protest and outrage felt by these women. When considering the energy my performance required on stage in my journal, I described how I felt that I was

*'A specific woman- myself but at the same time I was in presence
with the memories, voices and bodies of other women in an embodied
dream or liminal place'*

(Baker, 2017, creative journal).

Using women's dreams of nuclear destruction as creative stimuli as well as considering the representation of the women at Greenham Common, enabled me to generate movement. The movement was inspired by feminist methods of resistance against patriarchal attitudes to the environment helping to bring this resistance to my performance intention. Thus it allowed me to investigate my responses to the threat of nuclear technology.

Another means through which I examined my responses to this issue was through investigation of shapes and patterns evident in the body. The body is supported by various systems which create shapes and patterns (Cohen, 2008; Olsen, 2002). A specific pattern I chose to investigate was the spiral. Spiral patterns are present in our bodies from the large scale rotation of the spine to the miniscule structure of DNA (Olsen, 2004). I wanted to investigate this pattern in particular, as it is also used within contemporary dance practice and therefore directly connects the form of my dance making with patterns in the natural environment. In the studio I traced spiral patterns with different parts of my body; my shoulder, my hips, in the air and against the floor with my fingers and with my nose.

As Caputi (1991) states, in order to change patriarchal attitudes towards the environment "We now desperately need new and transformative words, symbols and metaphors" (p.434). With this statement in mind as well as the myth-making and symbolism discussed by Feigenbaum (2015) in relation to Greenham Common, I began to wonder what symbolism the spiral might have in my dance. In many cultures the spiral is seen as a symbol of rebirth (Freer, 1983). In Māori art the koru (spiral) is one of the most popular shapes. It is a stylisation of the curled up young fern frond and as Flintoff (2004) describes, it "conveys any of the positive concepts that parallel the vigour with which the fronds bursts into life" (p.123). Struck by the word 'continuation' from the title of Griffin's poem, I thought about how radiation, the effect of nuclear contamination, disrupts the cycle or continuation of life, the fluid environments of the ocean and women's wombs. These are all so integral to our survival and life is unable to be sustained without them (Bertell, 1983; Statement of Sicilian women, 1983). The motif of the spiral became, for me,

a symbol of continuation. In the first section of the dance when I traced the spiral in front of me with my finger, I reflected upon how ecofeminists are urging for attention to be paid to earth's survival. At the end of the dance when I traced a spiral on the floor with the back of my hand I considered the continuation of myself. An experience by which this symbolism was reinforced and heightened was when I performed phrase material outdoors.

Once I had developed a reasonable amount of movement material I decided to take my movement into an outdoor environment so as to reinvestigate the movement in context. The site I chose for this activity was a grove of native trees on the university grounds. As I moved in this site, I felt a shift in my focus. I started to notice the small details of the movements, such as how my toes felt as they moved against the damp humus and the cool morning air around my neck. As I noticed I reflected upon the intimacy of the experience and the contrast in sensations.

This experience reinforced the feelings and images I had in mind when I was choreographing in the studio, as well as bringing new associations to the movement material. As I worked with the spiral, the symbolism I attributed to it was further developed when I moved with it outdoors. As I spiralled my nose and fingers against the earth, I now was not only tracing a spiral but burrowing myself into the earth. After the experience of taking my movement into the natural environment, I reflected through journal writing upon how I needed to remember the sensations of dancing outside to execute movements with full intention. As Williams (2015) describes, "I found that I had to recall feelings of a certain moment, of how the environment affected my body kinaesthetically" (p.13).

Taking movement into an outdoors environment also helped me to generate new phrase material. One motif which arose from this involved the action of rubbing my thumbs against my fore and middle fingers. This gesture came from feeling the texture of the soil move beneath them. The gesture resonated for me as it conjured the line from Griffin's (1983) poem:

Only I breathed in the dust
Of their deaths
(p.216)

In my poem I used this imagery and adapted it to

*Upon this wind
The dust of dead bodies is blown
I breathe in this dust.
(Baker, 2017, verse 1)*

Hence I imagined I was feeling this sinister dust in my hands. This gesture became slightly menacing and I used it in the dance to signal the beginning of the climax section.

Through lived experience, the use of patterns and symbolism and taking movement outdoors into the environment, it became clearer to me how “Choreography might be a structuring of such “images”, enabling a dancer to move through different corporeal experiences” (Marler, 2015, p.35). I found that these realisations enriched my dance practice, helping me to detach from the norms of my previous dance training. Instead of creating movement on a basis of desiring a certain aesthetic, I started to generate and pursue movement on the basis of how it felt.

You must not let terror overtake you



Figure 6. Video still from 'Daughter, there will be no home' (12 May, 2017)

Fingers always moving
Breath asking questions to
A Shadowy presence
My eyes
I must not look away
(Baker, 2017, creative journal)

An emphasis on the feeling of the movement was heightened in the next step I took in the dance making process. This step was to explore movement experiences from specific bodily processes and consider how they would be affected by radiation. The phrase material I developed through this progression came to form the climax of the dance.

One of the starting points in this phase was to research the radioactive elements which are integral to nuclear technology. I focused on the elements of plutonium and uranium as they are the key components in making nuclear bombs. Plutonium is a 'man made' element created from neptunium 238 which has been synesthised and beta-decayed (Kamiya et al, 2015), whilst uranium is a naturally occurring radioactive metal. When in contact with the body, these elements are stored in the bones, reproductive organs and lungs. Held in the body they harm not

only the person initially in contact with the substances, but the children and grandchildren that person may have (Caldicott, 1980).

An image I used during improvisation was of these radioactive substances in my body. I placed my hands over my lungs and ovaries and I felt the need to try and draw out this radioactive substance from my body using my hands. My movement became uncomfortable. Both of these elements are characterised by the way they emit heat (Kamiya et al, 2015) and when I focussed on the image of these elements emitting heat rather than the pleasant relaxed feeling which occurs when my body is warm, I felt weighed down. My movements became slow and careful as if I was frightened of disturbing the elements inside me. This initial investigation helped me to start sensitizing myself to environmental factors which affected my body. As I took this step in my journal I wrote

*'Feeling my organs as having presence and weight inside me, they
are entities'*

(Baker, 2017, creative journal)

Through this somatic investigation of the affects of radiation, I started to gain greater insight into how the body is part of earth and therefore can be seen as an ecological system in its own right (Orenstein, 2002).

I started to sense my breath as tidal waters flowing through my lungs as Olsen (2014) describes

Life-supporting oxygen enters the body as breath, and is pumped by the heart to every cell in the body through blood. The flow of breath as blood is an expression of the life force that begins, sustains and ends life (p.13).

In an extension of this, my body and the 'outside' world were in a constant exchange of information. The oxygen inhaled by my body, after being exhaled, is used by other forms of life such as trees that in turn release oxygen. Thus a cycle of renewal between different life forms continued (Shiva, 1989). Reflecting on breath and the process of respiration helped illustrate to me how my body was connected to other forms of life therefore it seemed fitting to highlight breathing in my dance performance.

Focussing on breath helped me to execute movements with a greater clarity and aided my performance intention. As the dance reached its climax I panted, sighed and at one point with a hand over my mouth and nose, I attempted to stop myself from breathing. Using breath in this way, I found I could alter my awareness

and induce different emotional states. As I held my breath in I felt panic. As I loudly exhaled I felt the strength of the air rushing from my body leaving me with a sense of power. I had not emphasised breath in this way in dance before and was interested in how it helped me to re investigate familiar movement.

As Shapiro explains, “The body knows and re-members even in the silences of our lives. In dance the familiar can become strange” (2015, p.67). As I processed the affects of radiation through dance making, I started to feel the familiarity of my body becoming strange. This feeling of strangeness I attributed to the knowledge that nuclear contamination changes the fundamentals of everyday life, the water we drink and the ground under our feet (Griffin, 1983), bringing to mind the line from Edmond’s (1996) poem:

“Tell me what I must do
when the simplest acts of living
are undone and turned to chaos”.

As Spretnak (1983) describes, “The military theater of a nuclear exchange today would extend instantly or eventually to all living things.” (p.112). Affected by radiation, environments become unhealthy, causing disease and becoming unable to sustain life (Harford & Hopkins, 1984). It is the knowledge that radiation would change all that is familiar to humanity that I believe induces such fear with regards to nuclear technology. Given this it felt suitable to investigate the embodied reactions of fear associated with nuclear technology.

I started this aspect of the dance by looking in the mirror and trying to break my embodied responses to fear and panic into small movements, thus defamiliarising them and making them strange (Shapiro, 2015). I became interested in the eyes, how they fluttered or shut when shocked or upset. I decided upon the blinking movements of eyes as a focus for conveying the all-encompassing horror that nuclear disaster entails. This exploration manifested in the middle section of the dance. Bent over in a pose similar to the yoga ‘child’s pose’, I looked up to my left and blinked my eyes at an increasing rate whilst my hand twisted together nervously.

This awkward reflexive movement, as well as the continued emphasis on my breath, intensified over the second section of the dance and culminated in a

phrase of contorting rolls and floor movement, which was the climax of the second section of dance. This phrase was uncomfortable and demanding to perform. This was intentional as I wanted to kinaesthetically evoke discomfort in the audience and myself. Imagery I worked with to help focus my performance intention in this section was a sense of being trapped and feeling discomfort due to the awareness of an external danger. I found that this imagery helped give my movement a writhing quality in this section. I began to feel transformed, not entirely human anymore, but some other sort of creature. My body felt wilder. The usual orientation of my body, of my head aloft, feet on the ground, disappeared and instead as I danced my arms became legs, my head an extra foot. Following this phrase came a period of collapse.

After all the tension had accumulated in my body, I felt that I needed to process the movement I had just embodied. I finished the second section on the ground in stillness. In order to work down to stillness I played with the image of collapse. In my mind I had the image of a mushroom cloud, caving in on itself after it expands (Caldicott, 1980). In the dance, I sat balancing on my tail bone with my legs bent and feet off the ground. Slowly I experimented with parts of my body giving out until I came to lie on my stomach.

By somatically investigating the adverse effects of radioactive elements, such as plutonium and uranium and exploring embodied responses to fear of nuclear technology, I gained insight into how the body is an aspect of earth and therefore an ecological system in its own right (Olsen, 2002; Orenstein, 2003). I was drawn to investigate movement that was subtle and awkward such as the blink of an eye. I felt my awareness shift, helping me to experience my body in a different way, making the strange familiar. However, as I finished reflecting on the visceral nature of nuclear disaster I began to wonder how my dance making should resolve.

In this moment



Figure 7. Video still from *'Daughter, there will be no home'* (12 May, 2017)

Coming back

I stand

With the warmth of my face

Feeling the spirals

(Baker, creative journal, 2017)

Much of the literature I had been reviewing with regards to nuclear technology had been written in the 1980s. At times during the creative process I questioned my choice of topic: was the threat of nuclear devastation a relevant issue in the 21st? In a twist of fate during the choreographic process, tensions between China and North Korea escalated. These recent actions meant that suddenly nuclear weapons became a prominent topic in the news again (Griffin, 2017; Thomas, 2017). Suddenly the issue of nuclear devastation was no longer part of the past, but in the 21st century once again a present threat. So, with these global events taking place, I worked towards performing the dance.

One of the most challenging choreographic aspects of the piece was finding an end to the dance. As I approached the end of the choreographic process I wrote in my journal that I realised I had been

*'Opening myself up to this solemn/heavy issue – literally
stumbling under its weight'.*

(Baker, 2017, creative journal)

With this in mind, I felt a responsibility not to end the dance with a state of nuclear devastation, but to go beyond the crisis which my piece explored. I needed to find closure. I did not want to leave the audience with a feeling of complete hopelessness or negativity. Also, for myself as dancer and choreographer, during the creative process of the dance, feelings of trauma, outrage and fear had accumulated in my body and I needed a way of ending the piece which would allow these experiences to ease. As I considered how the piece should end, I found myself working through the questions that had built up for me over the months of investigating nuclear technology.

As Griffin's (1983) poem states.

Be here now
Is the lesson.
But I do not want to be.
I am one hundred years away
Into the future.
My heart aches wondering.
Will this old tree grow even bigger?
Will its roots threaten the foundation of this house?
(Griffin, 1983, p.224)

I considered how perhaps any sense that the world was safer from a nuclear disaster, due to improved technology in power plants and advances made in global political relations, was an illusion. Maybe nuclear technology was irrevocably imprinted on all of us, even in nuclear free Aotearoa? As Caputi (1991) describes in our daily lives the use of language and imagery that refers to nuclear technology creates what has been termed "nuclearisation," a process through which the presence of nuclear technology in societies has become normalised. I started to wonder how something as potentially destructive as nuclear technology, which may have become normalised, can be constructed as strange again.

Much of the ecofeminist literature I had read on nuclear technology called for continuing discussion and awareness on this topic (Leadbeater, 2013; Spretnak, 1983). I realised that I had found no answer yet to the questions I was

asking. What had been reinforced to me through the process of dance making was a simple and undeniable fact- that we are connected to the earth and each other. Because of this, to ensure our survival, I wondered if there is any other option for us but to keep reaching out to one other? Hence, the acknowledgement of our interconnectedness drove my movement intentions for the last section of the dance. As Olsen (2013) asks on this topic;

Do we consider the earth as a unified globe, world, Gaia- with ancient interconnected system supporting human needs within the integrity of Earth itself? Or do we continue to look only from the human perspective, emphasizing short-term gains that deplete resources? And from a personal view, do we consider the body as a whole – person, self, I, including our physical, intuitive emotional, thinking, spiritual selves – however we define the parts (Olsen, 2013, p.143).

I wanted to emphasise the presence of my body as a site of interconnection. I did this by generating phrase material that involved touching parts of my body such as my face and tracing lines on my skin. In this way I was thinking about connecting one part of my body to another, imagining the rivers of my veins beneath my skin which I described in my poem. An example of this type of movement was a phrase where I stood facing the audience but my left hand with index finger pointed, was touching the ground and my right hand also with the index finger pointed, was reaching up. I was bent over to the left so that my finger could reach the floor and I was looking up to my right hand. Through this action I was imagining that I was connecting the earth with the sky. From this position I slowly came to move upright, my right index finger tracing a line from my forehead down and my left finger drew a line up the middle of my body. My fingers met in the middle of my lower lip.

Two integral aspects of my sub-questions were care and relationship. A healthy relationship involves care. Earlier, in the middle section of the dance my movements had been uncomfortable and confronting. To end, I wanted the traces of this type of movement to lessen and to introduce more comforting movement. I finished the dance by walking slowly towards the audience. I moved my hands against my face gently as if trying to reassure myself. When I reached the front of the stage I began to reach my left arm out to the audience, with my right hand supporting my left elbow, the palm of my left hand up. With this gesture I reached out to members of the audience attempting to physically connect to them.

The last piece of spoken word used in the soundscape was the concluding section of my poem. It included the quote from Olsen's (2013) "we're not the same but we're one" (p.146). I felt that this line illustrated the relationships that exist in ecosystems threatened by nuclear technology, as well as stating the major reason we need to care about the environment. This statement also summarised a key aspect of ecofeminist philosophy; the acknowledgement of diversity and interconnection (Spretnak, 1987).

As I considered how the threat of nuclear devastation is still present in society, finding a resolution to my solo dance which went beyond crisis and emphasised the interconnection of life felt appropriate. In this way I found a sense of ending my solo dance '*Daughter, there will be no home,*' through gestures that connected me with all there is.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the findings of my research. I have given background on the solo dance that formed the creative practice component of this thesis and have briefly touched on the ecofeminist themes that influenced my dance making. Through a number of methods and experiences, such as the use of patterns and symbolism and through exploring embodied responses to fear of nuclear technology, I was able to create a dance work that emphasised the felt experience of movement. I also gained insight into my body's connection to the earth. Throughout the process I felt comfort and empowerment in my ability to reflect on and move with, these ideas through my body. To me this highlights the importance of the dance making process in its ability to help foster connection and express care.

Chapter Six: Conclusion and continuations

The mind is vast
what we know small.
Do you think we are not all
Sewn together?
(Griffins, 1983, p.218)



Figure 8. Video still from '*Daughter, there will be no home*' (12 May, 2017)

In this creative research thesis I have sought to understand the ways in which contemporary dance making can express an ecofeminist perspective. As well as this main research question, two sub questions which have enabled me to examine the research question more fully are, 'In what ways does my contemporary dance making foster a sense of relationship with the environment?' and 'How is my contemporary dance making an expression of ecofeminist care?'

In this research project I have been working within creative practice as research and more specifically in dance making. The methods that have underpinned my research are improvisation, choreography and creative journaling. Interested by the activism of the Greenham Common women and the threat of nuclear devastation these methods aided me in the formation of the creative practice component of my thesis, a solo dance work '*Daughter, there will be no home.*' This

work portrayed my relationship with the environment and expressed my ecofeminist care for the earth.

Despite many advancements, it can be seen that feminism is a necessary force across many societies (Cohen & Jackson, 2016). I believe that feminism is as integral a perspective in the 21st century as it was in the late 1700s, when foremother of the modern movement, Mary Wollstonecraft, petitioned for gender equality (Ryan, 1992). It is important that specific perspectives such as ecofeminism continue to be developed and the potential for them to be studied in conjunction with other disciplines is examined.

The importance of dance making as an artistic medium, relevant for the inquiry of feminist issues, is also an important field of study and should continue to be recognised and expanded upon. It must be reinforced that, unlike as Balanchine described, women are not the docile 'flower bodies' in need of a male choreographer, to shape their corporeality and representation (Fensham, 1993). It is vital that women are able to define themselves as women dancers and exert agency. In particular, solo dance provides a means through which women can explore their identity (Barbour, 2011)

I also have argued that creative practice as research is an important methodology, as it enables ways of knowing, previously marginalized by existing qualitative and quantitative methods. As a feminist dance researcher I am particularly enabled through creative practice as research. Presenting dance as a finding of my research and as a means of presenting my findings, illustrates my embodied knowledges and lived experiences as a woman. This challenges the western historical privileging of the masculine and the mind (Pedersen & Haynes, 2015).

Dance making potentially offers a relevant practice for expressing a range ecofeminist perspectives. Through this research project I have gained insight into how dance making fosters my relationship with the environment. When I make dance, I connect to the environment through movement. My awareness shifts and I am more able to observe and feel my body's immersion in the natural environment. I take notice of the intimate exchanges between my body, an aspect of earth and the body of earth itself (Olsen, 2002). Thus I begin to understand that, contrary to western scientific and patriarchal attitudes, we humans are not separate from nature, but are a part of and interconnected with it (Merchant, 1980).

What affects me also affects other life, whether it is the symptoms of radioactive fallout or a contaminated river. I have also examined how my contemporary dance making can be an expression of ecofeminist care. By reflecting through movement on the shapes and processes my body has in common with other life forms, the interconnection between myself and the environment becomes even more apparent. This realisation heightens my empathy with the environment and leads to a sense of care. Through dance making I can also show my ecofeminist care by investigating topics relevant to the environment such as the visceral threat of nuclearisation. Through my embodiment I am able to process these issues, raise awareness and express my concern.

A practice that could have deepened my research on this topic involves more work in outdoor settings. I found much value in taking my movement material into a more natural environment on the occasion I did this. Further, an outdoor performance in a relevant setting alongside the theater performance could have created the opportunity for me to reflect upon how my experience of performing the dance altered in different settings. Choosing a site to perform in would have enabled me to foster a relationship with a specific environment over the process of choreographing, rehearsing and performing the dance. Further, my sense of care for the environment could have been heightened whilst dancing in a natural environment.

Another way my research could be expanded upon would be to attempt a similar dance making process with a group of women dancers instead of as a solo. This would mean that the dance would be created in a more collaborative environment but also, it is possible that in this context the process could be enriched through group discussion relevant to the chosen subject of the dance, weaving this into the creative process in a way similar to the consciousness raising developed by radical feminists (Ryan, 1992). A form of consciousness raising integrated into the dance making process could help to broaden participants' awareness on the chosen subject, as well as create a deeper sense of understanding between dancers, leading to a more empathetic dance environment.

Opportunities for further research on this topic include site specific dance works. This could be in reference to sites that could be seen representing patriarchal attitudes through using and controlling the environment. These could include power stations, factories, and mines to name a few examples. Site specific dance works

which respond to landscapes that have been detrimentally impacted through processes such as deforestation and intensive farming, would also offer value. An ecofeminist perspective on dance making could also be of relevance for communities who want to gain a deeper understanding of their environment, or are facing issues surrounding the environment and want to engage in a practice that would help them support one another and could offer the potential for activism.

There are many issues that could provide exploration of ecofeminist perspectives, not only through dance making, but other forms of creative practice such as music, film making and poetry. Topics such as climate change and disposition of land by marginalized communities, like the Dakota access pipeline are examples of relevant areas for investigation through an ecofeminist perspective. Specific issues that are currently of relevance in the context of Aotearoa could be the ethics of dairy farming and access to water.

As I contemplate the many women dancers, theorists, artists and activists whose voices are present in this thesis, I understand that we cannot afford to continue dividing ourselves from our body, each other, or our earth. Divides manifested in societies are only so because power is given to social constructs (Leland, 1983; Shapiro, 2016). However, ecofeminists ask us to understand that the web of ecology which binds us to the continuation of life on earth is a reality (Gaard & Gruen, 1993; Te Awekotuku, 1983). Each individual's connection to the earth needs to be recognised as inviolable. I believe that ecofeminism and contemporary dance making offer crucial praxis for the investigation of body and earth, providing alternative ways of knowing, based on interconnection and expressing lived experience.

Over the period of writing this thesis Susan Griffin's poem, '*Prayer for Continuation*' has been my constant companion. I took it into the studio when I workshopped and had it backstage when I performed. It is beside me now as I write. Why are these words important above all the others I have read? I think it has something about a question in the first verse,

Do you love

This world?

(Griffin, 1983, p.215)

Yes I do. I show my love of this world, of the environment, of this earth, through dancing. When I dance I feel care, I feel the force of gravity pulling me to embrace the ground, the sweat salty like oceans on my skin and the warmth of my beating heart like sun. It is in these moments that, with certainty, I know I am *this earth lingering*, I am *home*. We all are.



Figure 9. Video still from '*Daughter, there will be no home*' (12 May, 2017)

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Appendix One: Online video link

Link to online video of solo performance 'Daughter, there will be no home'

<https://youtu.be/Ok5Gjr96hqk>

Appendix Two: USB video documentation

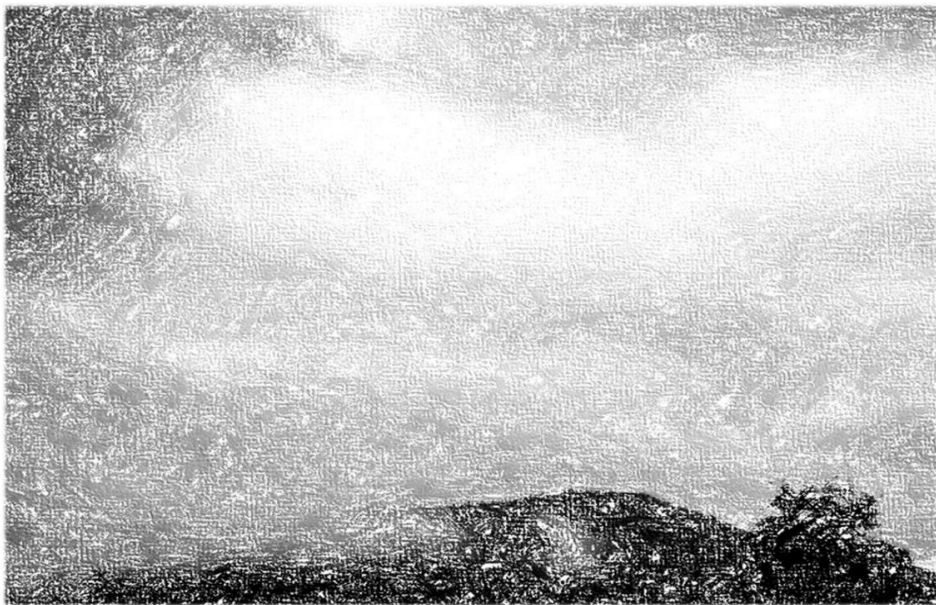
See USB stick attached to document

Appendix Three: Flyer and programme for live solo performance



Daughter, there will be no home

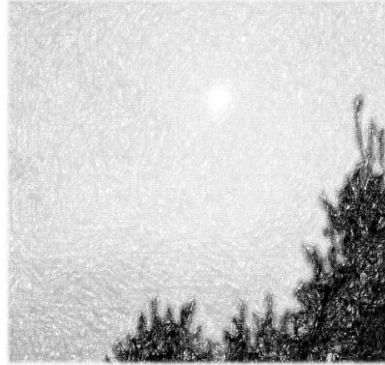
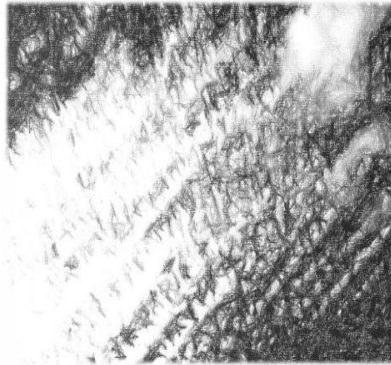
A dance performed and choreographed by Gabriel Baker



Performed in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Creative Research Project, for the degree of Master of Media and Creative Technologies.

Playhouse Theatre, Gallagher academy of Performing Arts,

5pm 12 May



Supervised by Associate Professor Karen Barbour

Lighting design by Dion Rutherford

Sound scape by Shamus Baker

Music sampled

'Intro' from Meredith Monk's Dolmen Music

'The River' by Broken Consort

Poems

'Nuclear Bomb test Mururoa atoll, 6 September 1995 by Lauris Edmond

'Prayer for continuation' by Susan Griffin

'This dream' by Gabriel Baker

This solo performance is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Creative Research Project, for the degree of Master of Media and Creative Technologies, The University of Waikato.

The Creative Research Project investigates the research question 'in what ways can contemporary dance express an ecofeminist perspective'. This solo performance of 'Daughter, there will be no home', comprises 50% of the Creative Research Project and is accompanied by a written thesis.

Inspired by the women of Greenham common and Aotearoa's anti-nuclear movement 'Daughter, there will be no home', explores visceral responses to nuclearisation.

Improvisational and choreographic methods used in the creation of this work allowed me to investigate how contemporary dance making can foster my relationship with the environment and can be an act of ecofeminist care.

To those who watched, helped and listened to me Aroha nui

