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**EMBODIED WAYS OF KNOWING:
WOMEN'S SOLO CONTEMPORARY DANCE
IN AOTEAROA, NEW ZEALAND**

**A thesis
submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy
at the
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by
KAREN NICOLE BARBOUR**

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ABSTRACT

**Embodied ways of knowing: Women's solo contemporary dance
in Aotearoa, New Zealand.**

Feminists have offered critiques of dominant dualist Western 'knowledge' and epistemology, arguing that such knowledge is oppressive to women. Acceptance of reasoning as the only way to 'knowledge', 'somatophobic' privileging of mind and exclusion of body, and the stereotypical and oppressive construction of women/femininity are particularly problematic aspects for feminists. Consequently, feminists have deconstructed Western 'knowledge' and developed multiple, alternative 'knowledges'. Feminist research is able to offer alternative ways of knowing, understandings of embodiment and recreations of femininity. Developing the work of feminists Mary Belenky et al. (1986), Iris Young (1989, 1998) and Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1999), I offer an alternative epistemological strategy - an embodied way of knowing.

Alternative ways of knowing that may contribute to new knowledges arise in the lived experiences of individual women, within specific contexts and communities. This feminist research project explores individual women's lived experiences, particularly focussing on embodied ways of knowing, and recreation of femininity, within the context of solo contemporary dance.

Much feminist research in contemporary dance has focussed on deconstructing dance and dancing bodies as ‘texts’, rather than investigating the dance maker’s lived experience. Therefore, my feminist research offers an alternative perspective on women’s solo contemporary dance.

My feminist and phenomenological perspective provides a methodology for investigating the lived experiences of individual women, using the specific methods of dance making, creative journalling and interviewing. In this research I undertook solo dance making myself, reflecting on my lived experiences and embodied ways of knowing through creative journalling. I also interviewed five women contemporary dancers about their solo dance work, and discussed the influence of feminism and stereotypical femininity on their dance making. We found that solo dance making was an opportunity for recreating femininity, and we developed understandings of our dance making as embodied ways of knowing. I represent and discuss my findings through a personal experience narrative and interactive CD-Rom of my solo dance, and a group narrative about our solo dance making.

My research thus offers an understanding of women’s solo contemporary dance making as an embodied way of knowing – an alternative feminist epistemological strategy.

I dance to know.

Tena ra koutou katoa. Greetings to you all.

I begin with greetings to the life force of the Earth,
and to the spirits of the land and waters of Aotearoa.

I acknowledge my ancestors across the seas in Scotland and the lake areas of Canada.

I give heartfelt thanks to those who have gone before me in the development of
performance dance, for their glorious inspiration and commitment to
intelligent moving.

With respect, I acknowledge the tangata whenua - the people of Tainui.

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I greet my colleagues and friends Dorothy Coe and Raewyn Whyte, and all of my dance family throughout Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Kia ora, my name is Karen Barbour and I come from the mountains of Maungamangero, and the rivers Mangaotake and Waitanguru near Piopio, North Island, Aotearoa, New Zealand. It is with love that I recall the wild and the peaceful spirits of the rivers, the rugged hills and the night calls of the Ruru. However, I make my home now at The University of Waikato in Hamilton, beside the Waikato River. He piko he taniwha.

I offer my research with love. I dance to know.

Kia ora mai tatou katoa, greetings to all.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Belonging

I grew up in a remote rural area of the North Island of Aotearoa, New Zealand,¹ surrounded by bush, rugged farmland and cool fresh rivers. In my memory, my childhood was full of clear blue days of adventure and nights filled with family discussion. My sisters and I ran barefoot, playing in the river, climbing trees and hills, watched casually by our parents until adolescence. Or at least, this is what remains in my memory. And then the realities of being a young woman and eventually an adult began to sink in. The days suddenly got shorter and there was not enough time for wandering and adventuring. I became more engrossed in reading and studying, running and swimming competitively rather than for pleasure. I began to notice changes in the environment and the different people around me in the local community.

Although I was born in Aotearoa, New Zealand, I trace my genealogy back to the highlands of Scotland and, through Canada, also back to Scotland and Ireland. As the first child of my family born in Aotearoa, New Zealand, neither indigenous Maori nor British colonial history is mine. But British colonial history, with a smattering of Maori history, was what I was taught as a child at school. I knew I was not Maori, but I was born in Aotearoa, New Zealand. I certainly was not British, but then again, I wasn't really Scottish either, and I was not taught about my Scottish history in school.

¹ I adopt the practice of using both the indigenous Maori name 'Aotearoa' and the European settler's name for 'New Zealand' when referring to the islands of my home.

So, I figured I must be 'Pakeha', a common Maori word describing fair-skinned people originating from Europe (King, 1991, 1999).

As a young person, what little I knew about being Pakeha related to British colonial history and culture. This was a history and culture I did not identify with, perhaps unknowingly inheriting some of my Scottish ancestors' resistance to British dominance (Laidlaw, 1999). I was part of an emerging Pakeha culture of peoples who shared the islands of Aotearoa, New Zealand as home, and who were influenced by Maori, South Pacific and European cultures. But what Pakeha culture might be I was not really sure, like many others living in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Consequently, as a young person I felt somewhat displaced, and I sought to identify myself individually, and with artistic communities, rather than with dominant culture. I found a sense of belonging at an early age in the dance community (Barbour, 2001b, 2001c).

As a naive but precocious nine year-old, my parents took me to see Limbs Dance Company perform in the local Community Theatre. I remember sitting near the stage, my eyes wide as dancers transformed into reptiles, moths and all the fancies of my young imagination. I was enraptured with the strength, fluidity and charisma of the dancers. I might have been from the bush and rivers of the rural North Island, but I knew then that contemporary dance was what I wanted to do. Recognising my aspirations, and perhaps unable to cope with my continued pleading, my parents saved to send me to a Limbs Dance Company workshop.

At age eleven, filled with excitement and nervousness, I arrived for my first day of the ten-day Limbs dance workshop in Auckland city. After catching buses from my aunt's house to the central city, I walked through the tumbledown houses and boarded up buildings of the early 1980's inner city suburb of

Ponsonby. I climbed the creaky wooden stairs to the third floor of the Limbs Dance Company brick building. Dressed in my new black footless tights, leotard and t-shirt under my street clothes, I was ready to become a dancer. To my elation, I was greeted by one of the marvellous dancers I remembered seeing perform, and from then on I imagined myself one of them. I remember distinct things from that workshop, like trying to let my head relax in a strange adult's hands, the smell of one woman's perfume, dancers undressing in front of me, and the absolute thrill of moving in new ways. Though always in awe of those around me, somehow I also felt at home too.

My parents kept sending me to these Limbs workshops in my school holidays, and my sense of displacement each time when I returned to my rural home was palpable. I loved the bush and the rivers, but I just didn't fit back in very well with my peers at school. I consoled myself that I did fit into the dance community.

When I was a teenager, there were no options to study modern and contemporary dance at tertiary level in Aotearoa, New Zealand. My parents were quite convinced too, that I should study at University and get a 'good' education. At that stage, becoming a dancer was not something I really considered as an option. So I went to University to learn and to gain 'knowledge', studying social sciences and eventually choosing to major in philosophy over psychology. I stayed at university to complete my Bachelors and Masters degrees in philosophy, and for a while it seemed as though the hallowed, dusty halls of the department of philosophy could be home to me. Somewhere in this time though, my underlying sense of equality and justice created a tension for me in my study. I recognised with concern that in five years of study, I had only read two women philosophers.

And somehow I also recognised a widening gulf between the rational, logical thought processes of the predominantly white male British analytical philosophy I was taught, and my experiences as a woman in the world. As I wrote my Masters thesis, I grew less and less interested and accepting of these ways of knowing, and I turned to choreographing and dancing to express myself. I realised that I understood myself, and my world through dance, more than I did through the 'knowledge' I was gaining in my study. My desire to dance grew quietly stronger. Finally, two years after completing my Master's degree, and at the age of 24, I moved to Auckland and enrolled in a full time contemporary dance training course.

Dance training opened up a personal world of creativity, improvisation and choreography that I relished. My childhood dream of being a contemporary dancer was at last realised. However, when I completed my dance training, I was unsure of what to do. The lack of choreographic and performance opportunities in the professional dance community at that time was disheartening. My solution was to found Curve Dance Collective. Curve – creating space for women in dance – was an all women's contemporary dance collective with basic feminist agendas (Curve, <http://www.url.co.nz/arts/curve>). Imagining the collective could be a way of bringing together my growing interest in feminism and my dance knowledges, I worked hard to make Curve a success. Our debut season in Auckland was well received, and my experiences working with the other women were incredibly enriching. However, like so many New Zealand dance artists, competing for funding and resources began to take most of my energy and left little for creative innovation. I began to get frustrated and disheartened with the challenges of being a dancer. Burnt out and unsure of what to do next, I took time

out from dancing and left New Zealand to travel, searching as many New Zealanders do, for inspiration, clarity and the big 'overseas experience'.

Through travelling, I found that inspiration and clarity, and had many challenging experiences ocean sailing in the South Pacific, and going to dance classes and contact improvisation jams in North America. Dancing well and confidently in morning class one day at the Trisha Brown Studios in New York City, I felt at last a huge boost of inspiration and I was encouraged to continue dancing. Nevertheless, despite my growing confidence and the adventures of travelling, I longed for home and for different challenges. When I applied for and was offered a Doctoral Assistant position at The University of Waikato in the Department of Sport and Leisure Studies, I accepted immediately and returned home to Aotearoa, New Zealand with relief.

Travelling had given me a new perspective on what home meant to me. I acknowledged my commitment to the people and environment Aotearoa, New Zealand and I began to understand something about being Pakeha. I felt, as Christine Dann (1991) put it, a sense of oppression that I should validate dominate European cultural understandings, when the realities of being Pakeha were very different. I realised that I was not alone in coming to understand and accept being Pakeha, as others around me began to identify some of the ingredients of Pakeha culture (Dann, 1991; King, 1991, 1999; Laidlaw, 1999; Rosier, 1991). I shared with other Pakeha a view inherited from my ancestors that people ought to succeed on their merits, rather than on genealogy or social class (King, 1991), and "an awareness of history, an attachment to the land, a commitment to social justice" (King, 1991, p.13). To me, being Pakeha meant living together with Maori and recognising the Treaty of Waitangi, despite its inadequacies, as the

founding document of the peoples of Aotearoa, New Zealand. Being Pakeha also meant to me identifying with the landscape and environment of Aotearoa, New Zealand, and caring to protect and preserve it – an environmental consciousness. It meant standing against social injustice and working towards an acceptance of cultural and gender differences – a cultural consciousness, and for some a feminist consciousness. These things may have been part of an inheritance from my ancestors, but it seemed to me that they were also basic ingredients of being Pakeha.

While travelling, I was proud to describe many people in Aotearoa, New Zealand as concerned about environmental issues, as leaders in anti-nuclear campaigns, as passionate about sport and adventure but not in the face of social and political injustice, as led politically by women Prime Ministers, as living comparatively harmoniously with many cultures, and as committed like our many different ancestors, to making a better world. I felt I knew who I was, but I was surprised that I had to leave Aotearoa, New Zealand, to know why I had to return.

Arriving back in the summer of 1999, from grey, rainy Vancouver, I knew I was home at last. The opportunity to travel had allowed me to reflect not only on my Pakeha culture, but also on my dancing experiences. Beginning to understand being Pakeha, and discovering a sense of belonging and identity for myself in Aotearoa, New Zealand, meant that as I undertook my PhD research into embodied ways of knowing in women's solo contemporary dance, I gained a growing clarity about my own cultural and artistic contexts. These experiences informed my development as a feminist researcher and interwove through my PhD research process.

Becoming a feminist researcher

As a young woman I had read Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1953/1972) and one or two other feminist classics, and I had always been interested in women's writing, art and music. I recall my father advising me as a teenager that if I wanted to be a social scientist I should learn to observe people closely and to reflect on culture. Both of my parents instilled in me a desire for social justice and respect for different people and cultures, through our family conversations and by their example. I began to express my reflections on social justice and culture in a broadly feminist perspective. However, it was during my time studying dance that I first really began reading feminist writing. Sensing I needed more of a challenge than undergraduate dance history readings, one of my dance tutors invited me to explore her bookcase. I borrowed a pile of books, including Judith Butler's (1990) *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*, Chris Weedon's (1987) *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory* and Peggy Phelan's (1993) *Unmarked: The politics of performance*. This was not an entirely easy or logical place to start with feminist theory I think now. Nevertheless, that is where I began, and on finishing my dance training I continued to read feminist writings, gaining multiple understandings and 'knowledges' that for the first time I related to personally. These feminist 'knowledges' and ways of knowing inspired me as a dancer too, being part of my motivation for beginning Curve Dance Collective.

On beginning my PhD I was clear that I wished to undertake research into women's solo contemporary dance with feminist perspective. Because my introduction to reading feminist theory had been through predominantly poststructural feminist writers, I anticipated undertaking feminist poststructural

research. However, as I read more widely to gain a better understanding of feminist theory, I discovered that there were actually ‘feminisms’ - a multitude of perspectives that were feminist (Reinharz, 1992). I found that I related to many of these feminist perspectives. As I discuss in Chapter Two, I found that writings on liberal feminism, eco-feminism, poststructural, postmodern feminisms, and feminist developments of phenomenology, all had interest and relevance to me. Within the work of individual theorists having different feminist perspectives, I found understandings that resonated with my experiences and with my interest to explore embodiment, knowing and dance. However, I struggled to definitively label myself as one particular type of feminist. I chose to be ‘theoretically promiscuous’ (Middleton, 1993), making use of the notions of ‘patriarchy’, dominant ‘knowledge’, ‘resistance’, ‘reconstruction’, ‘lived bodies’, ‘stereotypical femininity’, ‘lived experiences’ and ‘embodiment’, drawn from different feminist perspectives. I developed my own feminist philosophy for my research (Markula, 2001). In considering a research methodology, I found that phenomenology, rather than poststructuralism offered an approach to research that was most relevant for my interests.

Through feminist and phenomenological research into individual women’s lived experiences, I found that I could explore how women’s embodied ways of knowing (thinking in movement) provided ways to understand and recreate stereotypical femininity. I began with my own experiences, making solo dance myself to experience and understand embodied ways of knowing, and reflecting on my experiences through a creative journal. I then focussed my research on the specific experiences of other women attempting to recreate femininity within solo contemporary dance in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Through seeing their solo dance

and interviewing them to hear their own understandings, I was able to further develop my understanding of embodied ways of knowing, and see the specific influences of feminism and stereotypical femininity on their dance making. To guide my research, I developed a central research question

How do I, and other women solo contemporary dancers in Aotearoa, New Zealand, understand dance making as an embodied way of knowing ourselves as women?

In addition to this central question, I also considered

How do I, and other women, understand the effects of stereotypical femininity in the process of dance making?

How do I, and other women, recreate stereotypical femininity through the process of dance making?

How do I, and other women, relate to feminism in the process of dance making?

Throughout my research these four questions guided my work. I outline below how I structured my thesis document around investigating these questions.

Embodied ways of knowing

At times I have been frustrated by the challenges of writing a PhD thesis about embodied way of knowing, feminism, femininity and women's solo dance making. My potentially contradictory experiences sometimes have overwhelmed me, as I understand my world through moving and yet chose to represent my understandings in words; as I am feminist and challenge dominant 'knowledge' and yet work in a university where dominant 'knowledge' is held aloft; and as I offer new 'knowledges' and must also demonstrate that I sufficiently understand

'knowledge', in the traditional sense. I realise that I am not alone in experiencing contradictions as a feminist in a university context (Middleton, 1993), and I have persisted. I outline the structure of my written thesis document below.

In Chapter Two: Feminist reconstructions, I reflect on dominant 'knowledge', considering Western epistemology and dualistic ontology. I focus particularly on the dualisms of knowledge/experience, mind/body and masculinity/men and femininity/women on which Western knowledge is based. I offer a feminist critique of dominant knowledge, arguing that dominant constructions of knowledge, knowing and knowers are oppressive to women. I outline feminisms and consider how feminists have been able to recreate knowing and experience through research on women's ways of knowing (Belenky, Clinchy, Tarule & Goldberger, 1986) and on phenomenology (Young, 1980, 1998; Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). I reflect on feminist recreations of the mind/body dualism through understandings of embodiment, and of femininity. This chapter concludes with a statement of my feminist interest in researching embodied ways of knowing.

Chapter Three: Feminist and phenomenological literature on dance, provides a background to the enriching dialogue between feminisms and dance in practice and in literature. I focus on contemporary dance. I review phenomenological literature on dance, outlining how a phenomenological approach has allowed other women, and allowed me, to research embodied ways of knowing in dance. I also consider how embodied ways of knowing in dance have been represented in research.

Following my literature review, I develop my feminist and phenomenological research design in Chapter Four, considering some relevant guidelines and qualities of feminist research. I define my feminist and phenomenological research as the investigation of the lived experiences of women by a feminist. I outline the research methods I chose – dance making, creative journaling, and interviewing. In this chapter I introduce my research participants and describe my processes of making and gaining consent, interviewing and creating interview transcripts. I consider ethical issues associated with research participants and then focus on issues in representing the findings of my research into women's lived experiences through personal experience narratives, CD-Rom and group narrative.

Chapter Five: Findings and discussion, relates to my own solo dance *this is after all the edited life*. I represent my work through both an interactive CD-Rom and narrative writing about my journeys in solo dance making and research. In both my CD-Rom and personal experience narratives I consider dance making in relation to my embodied lived experiences, to feminism, and to stereotypical femininity. I derive a number of choreographic strategies from my own dance making, and I reflect on my own movement in relation to Young's (1980, 1998) theorising about alternative modalities of feminine movement. This chapter allows me to express and demonstrate visually my embodied ways of knowing.

In Chapter Six: Embodied ways of knowing, I represent my interview findings through a group narrative. I created a fictional context for the group narrative, but I quote directly from my interview transcripts. Within this narrative I present and discuss interview material on feminism, on stereotypical femininity, on recreating femininity, and on embodied ways of knowing in women's solo

contemporary dance making. Enhancing my understanding of choreographic strategies derived from my own work, I explore the choreographic strategies of these women. And I reflect on and develop Iris Young's (1980, 1998) work on modalities of feminine movement, in relation to their solo dances. Drawing my findings together, I further enhance my understandings of embodied ways of knowing in solo dance making, and I reflect upon this as an epistemological strategy.

I offer my conclusions in Chapter Seven, reflecting on solo dance making as an embodied way of knowing. I consider how my work departs from other literature on ways of knowing and on solo dance making, and outline the strengths and limitations of my work. Finally, I offer suggestions for further research.

* * *

I write at my computer now, as a woman dancer, a feminist and doctoral candidate at The University of Waikato, and I wonder how you will connect with me, with my different experiences, ways of knowing, cultures and environment. In this thesis document I share with you some of my on-going investigations as a feminist dance researcher.

In this chapter I have shared something of my understandings of belonging to Aotearoa, of being a dancer and of becoming a feminist researcher. In the following chapter I develop my feminist perspective that is the basis for my investigations into how I, and other women solo contemporary dancers in Aotearoa, New Zealand, understand dance making as an embodied way of knowing ourselves as women.

CHAPTER 2

Feminist knowledges

Introduction and reflections

The blinds in my room struggle to filter the full sun streaming in my window. Clasp my hands over my head, I stretch, feeling the sun warm my back. My desk in front of me is littered with books and papers. I have drawn lines under and around the words in the topmost article, and added numerous comments of my own. Reading Kristine Kellor's (1999) words of resistance in this article, I recognise my own experiences. I too have had "soul wrenching struggles to synthesise and theorise" in the flesh (Kellor, 1999, p.25). This is how Kellor had described her experiences of attempting to reconcile her 'storied' body with the academic 'knowledges' she gained at University. I can relate to these comments myself, returning to University as a doctoral student with a body of dance and life experience.

Over the last three years researching my doctorate, I have recognised my experiences more and more in feminist writings. I have been able to locate myself within a community of feminist knowers for whom 'knowledge' can be experiential and personally relevant. I am able to argue from a feminist perspective, as I will do in this chapter, that Western 'knowledge' is a historical construction created by dominant white Western men, which is constructed as truth.

Prior to reading feminist writings, I had been unable to reconcile my 'storied' body and my personal experiential 'knowledges', with the academic 'knowledge' I had gained from my study in philosophy.

I had studied the dualistic ontology of Western knowledge, particularly in relation to mind/body dualism, but I was unable to articulate my experientially based alternative understandings. As a student of philosophy, I did not understand the need to critique the mind/body, knowledge/experience and male/female dualisms on which Western knowledge seemed to be built. However, with the insight of feminist writings that are personally relevant to me, I can see now that this Western system of dualisms is oppressive for women and has resulted in, among other things, an acceptance of reasoning as the only way to 'knowledge', a 'somatophobic'² privileging of mind and exclusion of body, and a stereotypical and oppressive construction of women/femininity.

Feminists have been concerned to critique and to change this oppressive system. They have deconstructed Western knowledge and dualisms, and have outlined alternative understandings of the epistemology I had learned in my study of philosophy. I can see that feminist research is able to offer reconstructions in the form of alternative understandings of ways of knowing, embodiment and femininity. However, rather than attempting to create feminist knowledge as a replacement for dominant Western knowledge, I am interested in offering alternative feminist perspectives to contribute to the range of accepted 'knowledges'. Alternative perspectives that may contribute to new knowledges arise in the experiences of individual women like myself, within specific contexts and communities. For me as a feminist, such perspectives are not ultimate 'truths' about all women, but instead should be recognised as individual women's alternative perspectives.

² 'somatophobic' is a term used by Grosz (1994) to describe widespread Western fear of the body.

It is for these reasons I decided that one way to contribute to 'knowledges' would be to explore individual women's recreations of ways of knowing, embodiment and femininity, within their specific contexts and communities.

I begin this chapter by outlining a feminist view of Western epistemology and the central dualisms of Western knowledge that are personally relevant to me. I draw on feminist writers who offer a critique of Western knowledge, and who understand ways of knowing, embodiment and femininity differently. Bringing these themes together, I argue that embodied ways of knowing provide a possible way for individual women to recreate femininity.

As I write, my voice as a feminist researcher and as a dancer interact, although at times one is more dominant than the other. In this chapter, my feminist researcher's voice is more dominant.

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Western epistemology

Epistemology is a term broadly used to refer to the theory of knowledge (Stanley & Wise, 1990), and is concerned with acts of cognition, and with the nature of knowing and understanding (Code, 1991; Jagger & Bordo, 1989). In traditional Western philosophy, epistemology has been a transcendent, objective, neutral pursuit, an attempt to establish "necessary and sufficient conditions for the possibility and justification of knowledge claims" (Code, 1991, p.1). Much of the basis of epistemology originated in the 'Enlightenment' period writing of Rene Descartes (1637/1968), and developed into 'the Cartesian tradition'.

The Cartesian tradition took the task of epistemology to be “to identify a method by which individual investigators may best use their faculties to gain knowledge of the objective structure of reality” (Jagger & Bordo, 1989, p.3).

Within Western contexts, ‘knowledge’ is that information gained through reason, which is the process or method of knowing (Code, 1991). Western reason required that a statement or knowledge claim be evaluated against objective standards and criteria to determine its truth-value. Methods for determining truth were reliable and valid. As Alison Jagger and Susan Bordo commented, “The recommended methods typically endeavour to show how systematic knowledge may be inferred validly from certain or indubitable premises” (1989, p.3).

Knowing utilized both inductive and deductive reasoning as methods to draw conclusions about the truth of statements. Statements that could be proved true could be accepted as fact, and as objective and universal knowledge.

Knowers were the discoverers of truth, in a world accessible through reason. Knowers were neutral and independent subjects in the proposition ‘S knows that p’ (Code, 1991). Dominant Western epistemology required an undetermined knower or subject who could be the discoverer of truth. Jane Flax suggested that Western epistemology also required “a particular view of reality – rational, orderly, and accessible to and through our thought” (1993, p.95). The pursuit of objective knowledge required a neutral subject, and therefore differences between individuals would be overcome (Jagger & Bordo, 1989).

Alongside these epistemological assumptions, sat a dualistic ontology that constituted the basis of Western knowledge (Stanley & Wise, 1990; Warren, 1996).

This dualistic ontology was recognised and accepted within Western knowledge, and not considered problematic until feminist critique in the twentieth century (Jagger & Bordo, 1989). Both Western epistemology and dualistic ontology were understandings I accepted without question, as a philosophy student. I will go on to offer a feminist critique.

Dualistic Western knowledge

Discovery about the world through the process of reasoning meant that certain statements and facts could be established and accepted as universal truths, according to Western thinking. Western knowledge and society was based on such a system of truths, which resulted in a specific ontology. This system involved many dualisms that dated back to the work of ancient Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle³, and later philosophers, Descartes and Kant⁴ (Bordo, 1987; Stanley, 1990). These underlying dualisms included knowledge/experience, mind/body, object/subject, culture/nature, reason/emotion, thought/sensation, public/private, and universal/particular (Code, 1991; Bordo, 1987; Brown, 1994; Gatens, 1995; Grosz, 1994; Jagger & Bordo, 1989; Markula & Denison, 2000; Stanley & Wise, 1990; Warren, 1988; Weiss, 1999; Williams & Bendelow, 1998). The basic rules of this system of dualisms aligned the first of each pair of the dualisms together, and the second of each pair together (Code, 1991; Grosz, 1994; Hartsok, 1983; Warren, 1988). Crucial to these dualisms was the association of the male/female and masculine/feminine distinction.

³ Plato lived 428 to 348 B.C. Aristotle lived 384 to 322 B.C. (Allen, 1966).

⁴ Rene Descartes lived 1596 to 1650 (Descartes, 1968), and Immanuel Kant lived 1724 to 1804 (Scruton, 1982).

As Nancy Hartsok explained, "these dualisms are overlaid by gender; only the first of each pair is associated with the male" (1983, p.297). Consequently, Western knowledge was based on dualisms in which being rational, thoughtful, objective, cultural and public, were all aligned with being male and masculine. Being female and feminine was aligned with the body, emotion, sensation, subjectivity, naturalness, and privacy.

This system of dualisms gave higher value or superiority to those qualities associated with knowledge, mind and men, than those associated with experience, body and women (Gatens, 1995; Grosz, 1994; Warren, 1988). As Elizabeth Grosz wrote, such dualistic or "dichotomous thinking necessarily hierarchies and ranks the two polarised terms so that one becomes the privileged term and the other its suppressed, subordinated, negative counterpart" (1994, p.3). Consequently, Western 'knowledge' can be understood as based upon a system of dualisms that privileged men and associated qualities, over women and associated qualities. The system of dualisms also utilised a logic of domination which resulted in the assumption that men were superior to women, and that mind and knowledge was superior to body and experience (Warren, 1988). The superior people were then also morally justified in dominating the inferior. Therefore, men were morally justified in dominating women, just as knowledge and mind was dominant over, and superior to, experience and body (Code, 1991; Warren, 1996).

I consider three of these dualisms - knowledge/experience, mind/body, and masculinity/femininity - in more detail below. At times I draw briefly on feminist critiques of these dualisms, though a more detailed discussion of feminist perspectives follows later.

Knowledge/experience

Within Western society, men were the legitimate subjects of knowledge, capable of discovering truth and reality through the rational method. Impartiality, detachment and objectivity were the aim of those engaged in the pursuit of 'knowledge' (Goldberger et al., 1996). Women were generally thought to be unable to reason, and consequently, could not have access to 'knowledge' (Code, 1991), until feminists began to argue otherwise.

Despite the dominance of Cartesian thinking in the Western world, some theorists did attempt to present non-dualistic understandings that valued experience. In particular, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962) asserted the relevance of lived experience in his phenomenological account of human perception. Phenomenology offered a method or practice of studying human experience (Grosz, 1994; Nettleton & Watson, 1998). Within phenomenology, experience was acknowledged as the way that individuals come to know - experience was considered the touchstone of knowledge (Grosz, 1994)⁵. However, despite phenomenological contributions, within Western societies experience remained of lesser value in the knowledge/experience dualism, and remained associated with women. Within dominant Western culture, experience was not considered a valid or reliable basis from which to establish truth. Experience, along with intuition and subjective understanding, was not considered to be a useful, reliable or valid way of knowing within dominant culture.

In summary, the ways of knowing available to individuals in Western society were narrowly defined as rational methods, involving appeals to inductive and deductive reasoning.

⁵ See my section below on mind/body dualism for an explanation of Merleau-Ponty's contribution.

Experience, despite phenomenological perspectives advocating its relevance, was not deemed as an appropriate way of knowing. And within Western societies, the valid subject of 'knowledge' was universally male (Grosz, 1994). However, feminist analysis has challenged this view, as I go on to argue. Before outlining this argument, I consider the mind/body dualism and the masculinity/femininity dualism.

Mind/body dualism

The association of 'knowledge' with mind, and experience with body, derived from the beginnings of philosophy. The mind/body dualism has been an important dualism in Western knowledge and culture, arguably since Plato's writing. In a sense, a separation between mind and body was built into dominant Western knowledge. As Majorie O'Loughlin commented "the sense of bodily contact with objects in the world, with others, and with oneself, retreated as traditional philosophical "foundations" were laid" (1995, p.1). This separation was further theorised by philosopher Rene Descartes (Code, 1991; Grosz, 1994), and mind privileged over body in his philosophical statement "Cogito ergo sum: I think therefore I am" (Descartes, 1968, p.53). The privileging of mind over body has relegated the body to the fringes of human interest. Simon Williams and Gillian Bendelow (1998) expressed the uncomfortable dualistic relationship between mind and body as follows - "the rational, objective, detached human mind, as the seat of truth, knowledge and wisdom, has constantly struggled to free itself from the 'shackles' of the human body and the slimy desires of the flesh" (Williams & Bendelow, 1998, p.1). Their comments implied that the unruly body and desires of the flesh should be controlled by the rational mind.

Bodily sensations, desires and experiences were to be repressed, along with emotions. The body was seen as a mechanism for the mind to direct or use.

In addition to distinguishing or separating the mind and body, the mind was privileged over the body under the logic of domination (Warren, 1996). The body was thought to be inferior, and needed only be of concern when it did not function appropriately, as in illness, injury or death. Consequently, discussion and attention to the body in the history of Western knowledge tended to be limited to the fields of medicine and pathology, and focussed around the corpse.

“Cartesian thought is profoundly shaped by the figure of the dead body... the non-living takes primacy over the living” (Leder, 1998, p.120). The body in everyday life was simply taken for granted, or ‘absent’ in the sense of being unimportant (Leder, 1998). The sexual body in philosophy, while not a corpse, has remained a passive body, or was ignored. Few Western philosophers attempted to theorise about the body, though exceptions are evident in recent work of Baruch Spinoza (1986), and phenomenologists Martin Heidegger (1967) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962). However, feminists (see Butler, 1990; Grosz, 1994, Young, 1980) raised concerns about the way in which even phenomenology represented the lived body as a male body, as I go on to argue.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962) contributed some phenomenological understandings especially relevant for feminists, beginning with distinguishing between the corpse and the living body. He aimed to locate the lived body at the centre of individual experience, arguing that it is the body, not the mind that understands and experiences the world. Merleau-Ponty sought to provide an alternative to the mind/body dualism of Western knowledge.

For Merleau-Ponty “the union between soul and body is not an amalgamation between two mutually external terms, subject and object, brought about by arbitrary decree. It is enacted at every instant in the movement of existence” (1962, p.88-89). He argued that mind and body are interfused or entwined, and as a result, individuals were embodied. Embodiment was the existential condition of being in the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). According to Merleau-Ponty (1962), the mind/body dualism of Descartes could be replaced with an understanding of the ‘body-subject’, within a phenomenological perspective (Williams & Bendelow, 1998). The body-subject did not privilege either mental activity and mind, or body and physical activity, but expressed the relation of a person to their world. As Majorie O’Loughlin described it, the 'body-subject' was an experienced structure -

an intelligent, holistic process which directs behaviours in a fluid integrative fashion, thereby coordinating relations between behaviours and environment. The idea of the 'body-subject' provides a way of conceiving the relations between body and world without privileging either mental or material (1995, p.3).

The body-subject, the lived body, was intentional in its relation to others and to the environment. The body-subject utilised bodily knowledge to understand and relate to the world. It was through bodily sensation that an individual could experience and respond to the world. Merleau-Ponty (1962) called this bodily knowledge a 'corporeal schema'. Central to his understandings of 'body-subject' and 'corporeal schema' was the individual's connection to their environment. Thus, the geographical location of the body-subject was an integral part of what it was to be a body-subject.

Merleau-Ponty was able to bring the lived body, and thus experience and sensation, into understanding (Grosz, 1994). Through an understanding of mind and body as inextricably entwined, “the inflection of mind into body and body into mind can be grasped and the binary divide effectively overcome” (Williams & Bendelow, 1998, p.3). Merleau-Ponty’s work has been a useful reference for feminists wanting to focus on the body and to create an alternative to mind/body dualism. A number of feminists have drawn on his notion of the body-subject in the development of theories of embodiment (Bigwood, 1991; Diprose, 1994/1995; Gatens, 1995; Grosz, 1994; Nettleton & Watson, 1998; O’Loughlin, 1995; Weiss, 1999). However, feminists have criticised Merleau-Ponty for not recognising individual difference in his account of the body-subject, and for continuing to use the male body as a model for all people (Grosz, 1994). I turn now to a discussion of the masculinity/femininity dualism.

Masculinity/men and Femininity/women

The dualisms at the foundation of Western knowledge are overlaid by gender distinction, according to feminist thought (Gatens, 1995; Grosz, 1994; Hartsok, 1983; Warren, 1994). This distinction has translated over time into a social theory of what it is to be male/masculine and to be female/feminine. Masculinity and femininity are the attributes and practices conventionally associated with being male or female in a specific culture (Macdonald, 1995). Consequently, the male/masculine and female/feminine distinction has also translated into stereotypes for men and women. Men came to be understood as the rational, thoughtful, objective, active, biologically stronger people.

Men were dominant and superior to women, and were involved with public and cultural life, and the pursuit of knowledge and truth (Code, 1991). In contrast, women were understood as the inferior, emotional, body-driven, biologically weaker, passive people who were involved in private, family life and reproduction (Code, 1991; Stanley, 1990). Men had power, money, resources, knowledge, and strength at their disposal in Western society. Women were thought to be weak and were rendered effectively powerless, as they were thought to have little need of, and subsequently should not require access to, money, knowledge and resources.

The notion of a stereotype, according to Myra Macdonald, draws attention to “the reduction of the three-dimensional quality of the real to a one-dimensional and distorted form” (1995, p.13). Masculine and feminine stereotypes became accepted as ‘truths’ and as ‘natural’ ways for men and women to be, within Western society. Stereotypes were even used as proof that people knew what men and women were like, and knew what they could and could not do (Code, 1991)⁶.

Cultural and feminist analyses showed that dominant stereotypes for men and women were socio-cultural constructions rather than a natural phenomenon, as generations of Western people had come to believe. Femininity is a practice, a set of behaviours and attitudes that have been culturally constructed and learned, rather than a feminine essence (Young, 1980). As a construction, the stereotype of femininity was productive in creating and conditioning individual women. Individuals, desiring to be socio-culturally acceptable, conformed to the stereotype and became mediums for the reproduction of stereotypical masculinity and femininity (Bordo, 1989; Gamble, 1999; Greer, 1999; Macdonald, 1995).

⁶ I will continue to problematise the notion of a ‘stereotype’, following Macdonald (1995).

Such stereotypes have been upheld in social and institutional practices also; for example in the traditional teaching of cooking for girls and woodwork for boys within schools, and the promotion of men over women in the workplace as a result of assumptions about women's child-rearing commitments (Waring, 1985).

While feminist critique has effected some changes in institutional practices, stereotypes are still upheld in much of popular culture (Greer, 1999). Television, film and media serve to transmit and reinforce stereotypical masculinity and femininity through visual images and rhetoric (Macdonald, 1995). Individuals learn through these images, practices and rhetoric, how to construct the appropriate self through attention to behaviours and appearance – ideal body, appropriate make-up and hairstyle, and fashionable clothing (Macdonald, 1995). This is more clearly seen in the practices of femininity – dress, diet, gesture, movement, facial expression and behaviour (Bordo, 1989; Greer, 1999). Particularly affected are women, “whose forces and energies are habituated to external regulation, subjection, transformation, “improvement”... rendered less socially oriented and more centripetally focussed on self-modification” (Bordo, 1989, p.14). Used to oppression, many Western women thought it was natural to focus their energy on feminine ‘self-improvement’, rather than seeing this as a reflection of the cultural construction of femininity (Macdonald, 1995). As Germaine Greer (1999) commented, despite women's liberation and the feminist movement, stereotypical femininity is still compulsory.

From a feminist perspective, stereotypical femininity served to maintain existing power relationships between men and women. Even as feminists have challenged and improved women's access to resources and knowledge, the pursuit of 'ideal femininity' continued to consume women's energy (Bordo, 1989; MacDonald, 1995; Wolf, 1990). Stereotypical femininity is thus a form of oppression (MacDonald, 1995; Wolf, 1990).

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As a philosophy student at undergraduate and graduate level, I studied ancient and modern philosophy, learning from Plato and then Descartes of the 'virtuous' and 'necessary' separation between mind and body. I leapt into readings on philosophy of the mind, not questioning the missing philosophy of the body. With my classmates, I engaged in amusing thought experiments regarding the possible relationships between body and mind, but I never related this to my own experiences as a woman and as a dancer. I had never valued experiential learning. I went to university to gain 'knowledge', and I privileged thinking over experience as a way to learn. I thought that my 'body' was an object that gave my mind a place in the world.

I realised as I began my readings on feminist theories, that I needed to become resistant to the practices in my knowing that worked to keep my mind and body disassociated (Kellor, 1999). As Kristine Kellor described herself, I too felt a "passionate and deeply embodied desire and commitment to find ways to intervene" in the dominant ways of knowing and in 'knowledge' itself (1999, p.28).

I wanted to discuss and understand my experiences as a woman and as a dancer. I wanted to share my embodied experiences - in an attempt to acknowledge, contextualise and to theorise them. I could no longer divorce my knowing from my embodiment as a woman. I could not be a 'philosopher', conducting disembodied thought experiments about possible understandings of mind and body, or 'knowledge'. My desire to 'know' in such a way that recognised and valued my womanly and dancing experiences became stronger as I explored feminist theories.

Initially, my understanding of feminist theories, having not studied feminism at university, was based on my knowledge and experience of liberal feminism and women's suffrage. In history classes at school I learned about the struggle of women to gain the vote, achieved first in New Zealand in 1893. Growing up in the 1970's and 1980's, I knew of the successes of liberal feminists in gaining equal access for women to education and employment (Middleton, 1988). The sweat and tears of these feminist women in government and local politics, aiming to create an egalitarian society, was what made it possible for me to be a doctoral student and teacher at university.

I also knew that there were radical feminists on the fringes – those outspoken, tough women who argued that society was patriarchal⁷ and that we women had to fight male power in the home and in government, to change society. But I did not have enough general knowledge then to appreciate and relate personally to these feminist arguments for radical social change. It was more recently that I came to relate feminisms to my personal experience.

⁷ Feminists understand patriarchy as "a system ruled over by men, whose authority is enforced through social, political, economic and religious institutions", and although there are different understandings of patriarchy, feminists all oppose it (Gamble, 1999, p.293).

I find feminist understandings of patriarchy useful in my research, although I acknowledge that an analysis of 'patriarchy' cannot provide one unified understanding but rather needs to relate to a specific culture and context.

I soon read about many different feminist perspectives, struggling (as I still do), to label myself definitively as one or other type of feminist, but finding a whole community of feminist women I could relate to. Socialist feminists, I discovered, combined radical feminist critiques of patriarchy, with Marxist understandings of class societies. They too advocated widespread social change, and as I began to read the writing of New Zealand feminists like Sue Middleton (1988), I recognised feminist understandings of patriarchy and class.

Typically, feminist perspectives were grouped under the labels of 'liberal', 'radical' and 'socialist', or first, second and third wave feminisms (Gamble, 1999; Middleton, 1988; Weedon, 1987). These groupings or labels seemed to be somewhat problematic to me, as each individual feminist offered relevant 'twists' to theory drawn from their different personal experiences, and as feminism continued to change over time (Luke, 1998). In addition, as Sue Middleton (1993) pointed out, dividing feminism into neat categories implied that feminists should and do chose only one type of feminism, and that feminists might be 'deviant' if they did not fit definitively into one category. As I had discovered, there were many other feminist perspectives. Some of the other feminist writers I explored with interest included those who wrote on eco-feminism, postmodernism, poststructuralism, and phenomenology.

Reading eco-feminism allowed me to relate my feminist understandings of patriarchy and oppression, to my ecological understandings. I could feel the connections eco-feminist Karen Warren (1994, 1996) articulated between the way in which both women and the environment were oppressed by patriarchy. Along with my recognition of environmental and female oppression came further commitment to feminist action for change.

I read postmodernism too, and was interested to see the common aims of postmodernism and feminism to reject the idea that there is universal 'knowledge', and that individuals are constant unified subjects over time (Fraser & Nicholson, 1990; Gamble, 1999; Luke, 1998). Intrigued by the tensions between creating postmodern theory and acknowledging individual difference, I took from postmodern feminism a commitment to recognising the need for multiplicity in feminist theories.

I also immersed myself in poststructural writings for some time (Mills, 1997; Weedon, 1987), challenged by feminist understandings of 'discourse'⁸ and 'text'⁹ within the legitimating power structures and rules of patriarchy (Gamble, 1999). While I was interested in the feminist poststructural project of deconstructing discursive patriarchal 'texts', I soon felt uncomfortable with the notion of bodies as texts. As a woman dancer, I felt bodies (people) were more appropriately understood as lived and experiential, rather than as 'textual'.

⁸ Chris Weedon, drawing on Foucault (1986), described 'discourses' as "ways of constituting knowledge, together with social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and the relations between them" (1987, p.108). Sara Mills added that "a discourse is something that produces something else" (1997, p.17).

⁹ A 'text' is a product of a discourse, and is used to refer not only to standard written and spoken communications, but also to refer to films, live performances and even bodies (Mills, 1997).

The poststructural notion of individual ‘resistance’ to dominant discourse also seemed promising to me for feminist political action¹⁰, and I found it useful to consider feminist understandings as resistant to dominant ‘knowledges’.

I became particularly interested in how feminists had developed phenomenological understandings of ‘lived experience’ and of the ‘lived body’¹¹ to create understandings of ‘embodiment’¹² that I find most valuable and explore in detail in my research.

Finally, I began to develop my own feminist perspective, including my own personal ‘twists’ and developments of other feminist perspectives, based on my different experiences as a feminist and as a dancer. I drew on different theoretical feminist understandings of patriarchy, dominant ‘knowledge’, resistance, recreation, lived experience, stereotypical femininity, the lived body, and embodiment. I became ‘theoretically promiscuous’, as Sue Middleton (1993) put it, borrowing and adapting useful understandings from a variety of feminist perspectives in the creation of my own perspective. While my ‘theoretical promiscuity’ created tensions, as I discuss below, it opened up possibilities for me to be creative as a feminist researcher.

¹⁰ Within the rules and practices of discourses, there is the possibility for deliberate resistance, and as Chris Weedon argued “resistance to the dominant at the level of the individual subject is the first step in the production of alternative forms of knowledge” (1987, p.111).

¹¹ Phenomenologists study ‘lived experience’, the explication of phenomena and the description of the experiential meanings as lived by individuals (Van Manen, 1997). According to Sandra Fraleigh, the ‘lived body’ is a non-dualistic understanding of the conscious, intentional and unified body, soul and mind in action (1987, p. 4).

¹² I discuss ‘embodiment’ at length throughout this document (see Chapter Two, p. 47-49). In brief, I develop my understanding of embodiment as simultaneously and holistically cultural, biological, spiritual, artistic, intellectual and emotional, with recognition of difference in terms of race, gender, sexuality, ability, history, experience and environment.

I became able to articulate a feminist critique of Western knowledge and the dualisms that I saw as oppressive to women and serving to maintain existing patriarchal power relations between men and women. I could see that the dualisms of male/female, masculinity/femininity, knowledge/experience and mind/body contributed to the oppression of women. In developing a feminist critique, I drew on my readings in socialist feminism, poststructuralism, postmodernism and in phenomenology.

* * *

Feminist challenges to Western knowledge

Feminism is the name for the multitude of perspectives of women (Reinharz, 1992) who have been concerned to critique what counts as knowledge, what knowledge counts, and who can know (Du Plessis & Alice, 1998). Central to many feminist perspectives is an argument that the epistemological project to articulate neutral, objective and transcendent knowledge has actually been a project to articulate the understandings of dominant Western white men (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986; Code, 1991; Gatens, 1988; Grosz, 1994; Hawesworth, 1989). Such understandings and 'knowledge' claims have been constructed as neutral and objective claims. As Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger and Jill Tarule argued, "Drawing on their own perspectives and visions, men have constructed the prevailing theories, written history and set values that have become the guiding principles for men and women alike" (1986, p.5). Feminists have argued that these guiding principles are not relevant for all people, and particularly not relevant for women.

The claim that Western 'knowledge' is not gender-neutral is central to contemporary feminisms (Jagger & Bordo, 1989).

Feminists have aimed both to critique Western knowledge and to attempt to change it (Stanley, 1990). Feminists are political in the sense that they are often "directed at changing existing power relations between women and men in society", as Chris Weedon commented (1987, p.1). So, feminists are both resistant to dominant Western 'knowledge' and power relations, and also active in constructing new 'knowledges' and power relations. Alison Jagger and Patricia Struhl described feminists as offering simultaneously "a description of women's oppression and a prescription for eliminating it" (1978, p.xi).

However, a simple resolution to the dominance of masculine/feminine stereotypes, the overwhelming bias of Western knowledge, and the exclusion of body and experience, has not been easily realisable. These dualities have been tightly woven into the fabric of Western 'knowledge'. Victoria Davion (1994) commented that reconceiving dualistic knowledge was required. Davion argued that

the solution does not lie in simply revaluing the side of the dichotomy that has been devalued in Western patriarchal frameworks. Rather, traits associated with both sides of these false dichotomies need to be reconceived and reconsidered; if these traits are to be retained totally new ways of thinking about them in a nonpatriarchal context are needed.

(Davion, 1994, p.26)

Feminists began to see that what was required was not simply the addition of women's understandings into 'knowledge', but also a reconstruction and acceptance of multiple 'knowledges'.

Reconstruction of 'knowledge', power, and authority became central to feminist projects. Exploration and articulation of women's lived experiences was especially important as women sought to understand knowledge, power and authority in relation to their alternative experiences. The feminist slogan 'the personal is the political' indicated feminist recognition that the individual experiences of women could be understood as contextual and also as political (Mills, 1997). This slogan prompted a feminist focus on women's experiences as a basis for reconceiving 'knowledge' and epistemology.

Feminist Epistemology

There is continuing debate between feminists about whether or not there can be feminist epistemology (Code, 1991; Harding & Hintikka, 1983; Jagger & Bordo, 1989). According to some feminist theorists, epistemology should be more broadly understood than as simply the theory of knowledge concerned with acts of cognition. An epistemology "is a theory of knowledge which addresses central questions such as: who can be a 'knower', what can be known, what constitutes and validates 'knowledge', and what the relationship is or should be between knowing and being" (Stanley & Wise, 1990, p.26). Epistemology, for me as a feminist, is about thinking differently about how I know, and about understanding knowledge in my specific context, evaluating it on its own terms and in relation to myself, the knower (Stanley, 1990).

I am interested to review the descriptions and critiques feminists have made of dominant Western dualisms. In particular, I am interested in the knowledge/experience, mind/body, and masculine/feminine dualisms, and to explore how other feminists have attempted to reconstruct ways of knowing, mind/body and femininity. I turn to this discussion now. Through exploring feminist understandings of dominant Western knowledge, I will provide the theoretical basis and justification for researching individual women's lived experiences. I explore these feminist understandings in order to adapt, develop and recreate them so that I can investigate the embodied ways of knowing of women who explore femininity.

Feminist understandings of knowledge and knowers

Much feminist theory to date has focussed on critiquing Western 'knowledge'. Feminist critiques have revealed the masculine bias and the constructed nature of knowledge, bringing 'knowledge' as commonly understood into question. Because the beliefs, practices and experiences of individual women and people other than the privileged group of white Western men, have been left out of dominant 'knowledge', some feminists have described 'knowledge' as alienated from its context (Stanley, 1990). Feminists argued that 'knowledge' must be reconstructed and reconceived entirely, not simply by addressing the missing aspects of femininity, but by revealing and challenging and reshaping the underlying assumptions of knowledge (Keller & Grontkowski, 1983). Lorraine Code argued that "epistemologies that cannot account for women's experiences, and/or that denigrate their experiential knowledge have to be displaced" (1991, p.251).

According to Stanley (1990) 'knowledge' must be recreated as in-alienated, and grounded in individuals and their contexts. The gender, age, race and ability of the knower are thus all relevant to the ways of knowing and to knowledge. An understanding of 'knowledges' as multiple is useful for me as it provides a context for investigating and validating individual women's different lived experiences.

Although men have been the only legitimate 'knowers' throughout the history of Western philosophy, feminists have sought to create women as knowers, and have argued that "gendering is an integral part of the process of becoming and being an individual subject" (Flax, 1993, p.97). But it is not only gendering that is integral to subjectivity, but also individual identity. Gendering and identity are socially constructed (and embodied) aspects of subjectivity. Chris Weedon commented that while the individual is contextualized, "she none the less exists as a thinking, feeling subject and social agent, capable of resistance and innovations produced out of the clash between contradictory subject positions and practices" (1987, p.125). Individual knowers or subjects are specifically embodied in terms of gender, race, age, context, ability and individuality. Presupposing a fixed and unified subject or knower does not allow for the inclusion of the very features of being a knower (Code, 1991). Being a subject or knower entails multiplicity and diversity, and recognition of the ways in which socio-cultural, political, historical and embodied differences structure the knower (Hawkesworth, 1989). Subjectivity, (like knowledge), can be redefined as constructed and socially produced in an individual, rather than totally biologically determined. 'Subject' is thus an unstable, fragmented and fluid notion, rather than a single and unified identity constant over time.

Subjectivity is incomplete and heterogeneous (Flax, 1993, p.93) and “shifting and multiply organized across variable axes of difference” (Rail, 1998, p.xv).

Knowing is a much more complex process than the phrase ‘knowing that’ can explain. There has been an epistemological focus on individual, autonomous knowing – the kind of ‘knowing that’ which should transcend experience to achieve the objective, rational and impartial characteristics of pure knowledge (Code, 1991). However, knowing can also come through experience, with an acknowledgment of what Lorraine Code called the “constitutive role of communal, dialogic credibility-discerning and – establishing activities” (1991, p.224). Mary Hawkesworth (1989) described knowing as a human practice, rather than as the method of deductive and inductive reasoning. Knowing “presupposes involvement in a social process replete with rules of compliance, norms of assessment, and standards of excellence that are humanly created” (Hawkesworth, 1989, p.548). Feminists understood knowledges as conventional rather than transcendent, and as based on the “judgements of a community of fallible inquirers who struggle to resolve theory-dependent problems under specific historical conditions” (Harding & Hintikka, 1983; Hawkesworth, 1989, p.549). As Code defined it “knowledge is an intersubjective product constructed within communal practices of acknowledgment, correction and critique” (1991, p.224). Recognition of the different natures of knowledge, the alternative ways of knowing, and the relevance of the particular knower, is crucial from a feminist perspective and crucial for my research. In recognising difference, I think knowledge should be grounded in lived experiences and built out of the experiences of many different people. Consequently, I value investigating individual women’s lived personal experiences.

A particularly strong feminist argument is that the personal is the political. Many personal lived experiences that women have can be understood much better in the light of the particular socio-political context in which they occur. Sara Mills commented that "those problems which many women once considered to be their fault...have come to be seen...as problems which are structural and therefore political" (1997, p.79). The particular experiences of an individual woman thus determine her priorities for feminist action and her interests in specific feminist theories. What might count as a feminist issue depends largely on the historical and socio-cultural conditions of women's lives (Warren, 1996).

It seems that the feminist challenge to Western epistemology has been to reveal the constructed nature and male bias of 'knowledge', to recreate 'knowledges' to include other perspectives, and to validate women as knowers. Feminists have attempted to displace dominant 'knowledge'. In this sense, feminists are both resistant to dominant 'knowledge' and active in creating new 'knowledges'. As a feminist, I am resistant to dominant 'knowledge' and wish to leave continued debate about dominant Western knowledge, in order to focus specifically on developing new understandings and 'knowledges' based on women's lived experiences.

Some feminist researchers have undertaken projects to further understand ways of knowing, to validate subjective experience and to offer alternative understandings. The research of Belenky et al. (1986) on women's ways of knowing is such as project, and I consider it below.

Feminist understandings of knowing - women's ways of knowing

Beginning from the premise that much of the work on ways of knowing has focussed on the experiences of white Western men, Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger and Jill Tarule (1986), undertook extensive interviewing of many women to listen to their experiences and to understand their epistemological assumptions. From this research, the authors were able to articulate five epistemological positions that characterised the women in their study. They were careful to point out that the positions they outlined were not universal, fixed or exhaustive, and not necessarily exclusive to women. The epistemological positions, as Belenky et al. (1986) described them, were useful choices they made together in organising their findings. They also acknowledged that these positions “cannot adequately capture the complexities and uniqueness of an individual woman’s thought and life” (Belenky et al., 1986, p.15). Nevertheless, they offered five epistemological positions, which can be summarised as follows;

- 1) silence – woman experiences herself as mindless and voiceless, dependent on external authority.
- 2) received knowledge – woman conceives of herself as capable of receiving and possibly reproducing knowledge from authority, but not of creating her own.
- 3) subjective knowledge – woman conceives of truth and knowledge as personal, private and subjectively known or intuitive.
- 4) procedural knowledge – woman is learning and applying outside procedures for getting and communicating knowledge.

5) constructed knowledge - woman views all knowledge as contextual and experiences herself as creator of knowledge, valuing both her own and objective strategies for knowing (Belenky et al., 1986).

Belenky et al. (1986) described the characteristics of each position and commented that the “quest for self and voice” (p.133) was a central motivation in the transformation women experienced in developing their ways of knowing. As a result, many feminists (Goldberger, 1996) have understood the epistemological positions as a developmental scheme.¹³

The articulation of constructed knowing (the fifth epistemological position) resonates with feminist creative and emancipatory agendas, and provides a useful understanding for my research. Hence, I will outline the constructed knowing position in further detail (Belenky et al., 1986).

The authors commented about the fifth epistemological position of constructed knowing, that women who attempted to integrate their own and other voices “had learned the profound lesson that even the most ordinary human being is engaged in the construction of knowledge” (Belenky et al., 1986, p.133). They suggested that women came to constructed knowledge “as an effort to reclaim the self by attempting to integrate knowledge they felt intuitively was important with knowledge they had learned from others” (Belenky et al., 1986, p.143).

Such women were characterised by self-reflectiveness and self-awareness, a high tolerance for ambiguity, awareness of the inevitability of conflict, attempts to deal with the rich complexity of life as a whole and the desire to share their knowledge in their own way.

¹³ (For discussion about women’s ways of knowing as a developmental scheme, see Code, 1991).

Belenky et al. suggested that

Once knowers assume the general relativity of knowledge, that their frame of reference matters and that they can construct and reconstruct frames of reference, they feel responsible for examining, questioning, and developing the systems that they will use for constructing knowledge.

(1986, p.138-139)

Such knowers asked questions about the nature of knowledge. They became 'passionate' knowers, "weaving their passions and intellectual life" together (Belenky et al., 1986, p.141). Constructed knowing, according to Nancy Goldberger, "entails a flexibility in approaches to knowing and ability to assess the appropriateness and utility of a particular way of knowing given the moment, situation, cultural and political imperatives, and relational and ethical ramifications" (1996, p.356). Passionate knowing created a way for women to live their lives (Goldberger, 1996). And, as Nancy Goldberger (1996) has continued to argue, constructed knowing is flexible and multiple, and perhaps more in line with a postmodern sensibility.

There were some difficulties for feminists in accepting the women's ways of knowing epistemological positions at face value. Feminist concerns focused on the need to avoid essentialising women's knowing, the potential misrepresentation of the multiplicity of women's knowing by white feminists, the potential slide into subjective relativism, and the value of women's ways of knowing as a developmental scheme (Code, 1991; Goldberger et al., 1996). Some of these concerns have been met by the authors and I think they can be resolved through further attention to the importance of difference and to an understanding of the ways of knowing as strategies available for women, rather than as positions into

which each women must fit (Goldberger et al., 1996). Goldberger commented, “When context is factored into the study of knowing, one begins to see the advantages of thinking of five categories as strategies for knowing (rather than person types)” (1996, p.362). Individuals might chose and use different strategies depending on their personal contextual requirements.

Belenky et al. (1986) have also been criticised for assuming that the women they studied were fixed, unitary subjects who were capable of giving authentic reports about their knowing. Lorraine Code commented that “they sustain the fiction of an unencumbered, self-making subject learning to speak authentically in her own voice” (1991, p.256). However, it seemed to me that the focus of Belenky et al. (1986) on epistemological positions (or strategies) had put the issues of subjectivity and authenticity at the centre of their research. By commenting on the knower’s many alternative strategies for knowing, Belenky et al. (1986) reveal that she is open to shifts and radical changes in how she knows and what she knows. She has no ‘authentic’ voice, or alternatively, her voice is ‘authentic’ in as much as any voice ever could be. Authenticity, (it should be recognised) is also a rationalist criterion for validating the truth of statements over time. The subject cannot be a fixed and unitary one, as Belenky et al. (1986) described the women in their study, if they are also open to constant epistemological shifts and changes.

I think there is much that is useful for feminists in understanding the epistemological strategies that Belenky et al. (1986) outlined. And, as I commented above, the strategies of constructed knowing seemed to describe epistemological strategies characteristic of, and appropriate for, feminists in the post modern context.

However, as Nancy Goldberger (1996) argued, the focus of women's ways of knowing did not include consideration and investigation into bodily ways of knowing, (or community forms of knowing)¹⁴.

Nancy Goldberger (1996) and Elizabeth Debold, Deborah Tolman and Lyn Brown (1996), have begun some investigation into bodily ways of knowing. They were interested in knowledge that was grounded in bodily experiences, sensations and bodily cues. Such knowledge was seen as rich, complex, and non-propositional (Goldberger, 1996). Goldberger (1996) and Debold et al. (1996) commented that bodily knowledge should not be mistaken for women's use of bodily metaphors however. While women using the subjective knowing strategies tended to use bodily metaphors like 'knowing in my gut', these bodily metaphors were only 'skin deep' or superficial, according to Goldberger (1996). The bodily metaphors of subjective knowers were likely to reflect current linguistic use, "rather than a preferred heuristic, and deeply embodied knowledge perspective" (Goldberger, 1996, p.355). Debold et al. (1996) argued that knowing might be reconceptualised through corporeality. Such a reconceptualisation would avoid reinscribing the knowledge/experience and mind/body dualisms. However, this step was not taken further in the women's ways of knowing research (Belenky et al., 1986).

It seems to me that bodily knowing might offer a way of knowing that is available as part of the repertoire of constructed knowing strategies. Or alternatively, it might represent a new way of knowing, in addition to those outlined in Belenky et al. (1986) (Goldberger, 1996).

¹⁴ Discussion of community ways of knowing is outside my interest here, so I do not include it.

Whether bodily knowing is part of constructed knowing or a new way of knowing, it is an interesting area for feminist exploration into alternative ways of knowing, and this indicates a direction for my research. I will explore this possibility further, through attention to the mind/body dualism and understandings of this dualism as embodiment. However, before I move to discussion of feminist recreations of mind/body dualism, I consider in more detail some of the understandings of experience developed in phenomenology.

Phenomenological and feminist understandings of experience

Phenomenologist Iris Young (1980) drew on understandings from Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1964) and feminist Simone de Beauvoir (1986) to develop an understanding of women's lived bodily experience. She wished to articulate the specifics of women's lived movement experience and embodiment, something feminists had noted that Merleau-Ponty did not acknowledge (Grosz, 1994). Young focussed on movement experiences aimed at achieving specific tasks, such as throwing a ball, and outlined the basic modalities of feminine body comportment (1980). She argued that a common experience of many Western women involved being both a subject for herself and object to herself. This kind of experience meant that women often tended to mediate their actions by imagining how they appeared as objects to others, at the same time that they also experienced their actions as intentional subjects (Weiss, 1999; Young, 1980). This experience meant a kind of discontinuity between her intention as a subject undertaking a task and her action as an object that she saw in the world from an external perspective.

According to Young (1980), feminine bodily experience was: intentionally inhibited (by perception of inability to achieve the task undertaken); ambiguously transcendent (by concentrating action in one part of the body while the rest remained uninvolved); and had a discontinuous unity (by breaking the connection between intention and action, between possibility and actual bodily achievement). Young concluded her comments by stating that “An essential part of the situation of being a woman is that of living with the ever-present possibility that one will be gazed upon as a mere body, as shape and flesh that presents itself as the potential object of another subject’s intentions and manipulations, rather than as a living manifestation of action and intention” (1998, p.270). It seems to me that Young’s work set precedence for feminist study of women’s movement experiences separately from men (1980, 1998), and is a basis on which I might consider researching women’s dance making experiences.

Phenomenologist Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1999) contributed a great deal to understanding of bodily knowing and the experience of movement as knowledge (although she does not work from a specifically feminist perspective). She developed Merleau-Ponty’s (1962, 1964) and Young’s (1980) phenomenological work significantly, arguing for the primacy of movement over the primacy of perception. She commented that perception results from movement, and so movement was “the originating ground of our sense-makings” (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, p.161). Sheets-Johnstone (1999) argued that humans learn about themselves and others initially through moving; by attending to bodily sensations of movement, rather than by looking and seeing what is moving (1999). Movement is experienced through the kinesthetic sense, rather than through vision.

The kinesthetic sense provides the individual with information about space, time, movement and objects, and their relationship to these things, as it changes in the moment (Stinson, 1995). In understanding these aspects through the kinesthetic sense, an individual is able to develop an understanding of what constitutes her, and others, and to develop concepts to understand the world (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). In many discussions of the senses, the kinesthetic sense is left out, but, as Sheets-Johnstone argued, it is fundamental to knowledge of what we are, to our basic knowledge of the world, and our ability to move knowledgeably in the world (1999). She continued, “creaturely movement is the very condition of all forms of creaturely perception; and creaturely movement, being itself a creature-perceived phenomenon, is in and of itself a source of knowledge” (1999, p.132). In this sense, movement experience is of profound epistemological significance (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). At the foundation of ‘knowledge’ is experience of movement. Therefore, movement experience must provide individuals with knowledge, though not knowledge as narrowly defined as dominant Western ‘knowledge’ has been.

It follows from the work of Sheets-Johnstone (1999) that experience is as a valid a method of gaining knowledge as rational knowing. Therefore, by studying the experiences of individual woman, researchers can learn about knowledge. Sheets-Johnstone’s work validated investigating women’s lived movement experiences, precisely my area of interest. Intimately tied to the study of experience is body. I will now go on to discuss mind/body dualism and embodiment within feminist literature and return to discussion of movement experience in Chapter Three.

Feminist understandings of mind/body

Feminist critiques of mind/body dualism and of the body-subject of Merleau-Ponty, such as that outlined by Elizabeth Grosz (1994), aimed to refigure the body at the centre of understandings of subjectivity and knowing. Like Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1964), Grosz drew on phenomenology and worked with the notion of a lived body, as opposed to the corpse. She argued that “philosophy has established itself on a profound somatophobia” (Grosz, 1994, p.5) and aimed instead to develop an alternative figuration of bodily subjectivity. Development of alternative understandings of bodies engaged a number of feminists including Carol Bigwood (1991), Rosi Bradotti (1994), Elizabeth Grosz (1994), Luce Irigaray (1985), and Iris Young (1998).¹⁵

Elizabeth Grosz began her theorising by commenting that bodies not only had "all the explanatory power of minds", but they also immediately drew attention to the question of gender, and other markings like race and age (1994, p.vii). Grosz continued that, “There are always only specific types of body, concrete in their determinations, with a particular sex, race, and physiognomy” (Grosz, 1994, p.19). Thus, the issues of difference are central to understanding individuals. Difference has to do both with the corporeal aspects of an individual, and with the "manner in which culture marks bodies and creates specific conditions in which they live and recreate themselves" (Gatens, 1995, p.71). While not completely biologically or socially determined, a body does provide a sense of continuity as the intersection of biological, social and linguistic understandings (Braidotti, 1994).

¹⁵ The feminists I have listed here represent a range of feminist perspectives and each offers a slightly different understanding of body. I borrow and adapt understandings where relevant.

As Carol Bigwood described it, "we are always already situated in an intersubjective (and thereby already cultural), spatiotemporal, fleshy (and thereby already natural) world before we creatively adopt a personal position in it" (1991, p.66). The body is continually both in the process of being shaped by social practices, and is at the same time, the means by which we are able to express our resistance to socio-cultural and bodily norms. Grosz expressed this by commenting that "bodies are not inert; they function interactively and productively" (1994, p.xi). Bodies function interactively within both their specific socio-cultural context and their geographical environment. Moira Gatens suggested that "By drawing attention to the context in which bodies move and recreate themselves, we also draw attention to the complex dialectic between bodies and their environments" (1995, p.69).

Detailed feminist understandings of lived bodies in their specific instances, revealed both the effects of cultural construction and of corporeality, as I discussed earlier. However, a woman will remain continually embodied (Albright, 1997). The lived body may be culturally constructed, but its embodied options are limited by individual history. Rosalyn Diprose made this point when she commented that "what you can become is limited by the social history of your body" (1994/1995, p.15). Nevertheless, a lived body is always in a process of becoming, is always an experience in the making, rather than existing as a fixed entity (Albright, 1997; Grosz, 1994; Weiss, 1999). Such lived bodies strain at the seams of socio-cultural and biological fabric, being unstable and open to change (Albright, 1997; Grosz, 1994).

Feminist understandings of the lived body provide a basis for my understandings of embodiment, a central concern in my research. I discuss feminist understandings of embodiment below.

Feminist understandings of embodiment

A number of feminists have discussed Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1962) understanding that every person is uniquely embodied, and that embodiment is the existential condition of being a person (Braidotti, 1994; Grosz, 1994; O'Loughlin, 1995; Weiss, 1999). Feminist analyses of dualistic perspectives, particularly of the body in culture, revealed the futility of the attempt to separate the mind from the body. Quite simply, minds never exist without fleshy bodies. As Jane Flax (1993) argued, we never encounter a person without a body, or knowledge without embodied knowers. Everything that a person does requires a body, from speaking and thinking and working, to eating and sleeping and dancing (Nettleton & Watson, 1998). As Gail Weiss (1999) pointed out, there is no 'one' universal body, but many specific embodied individuals. The knowers or individual subjects of Western knowledge are each uniquely embodied.

An understanding of embodiment informed feminist work as it drew attention to the specificity of different individuals (O'Loughlin, 1995), and to their particular differences in gender, race, age, ability, sexuality, history and experience. As Elizabeth Grosz argued (1994), the body can be better understood as a process. Consequently, it is perhaps more relevant to develop an understanding, not of the body as distinct from the mind, (though fleshed out and validated as a site of cultural production), but instead an understanding of embodiment.

Embodiment has been understood as a subject's existence at the point of overlap between the physical and the cultural. Rosi Bradotti expressed embodiment as follows - "The body, or the embodiment, of the subject is to be understood as neither a biological or a sociological category, but rather as a point of overlapping between the physical, the symbolic, and the sociological" (1994, p.4). Embodiment neither refers exclusively to, nor privileges natural/corporeal or cultural/social understandings. This is an experientially grounded view of an embodied person, as "from this viewpoint, meaning inheres in our bodily behaviours and its gestural significance rather than being the product of some prior disembodied 'Cogito'" (Williams & Bendelow, 1988, p.8). This view required recognition that to be a person, you are necessarily only able to exist and to know anything, as a result of being embodied.

To some extent, even describing 'embodiment' as a point of overlap requires an understanding of biological and cultural categories in opposite relationship. However, from my perspective, embodiment incorporates many things as one, a person's biological (somatic), intellectual, emotional, bodily, artistic and spiritual experience, within their cultural and geographical location. Embodiment is not completely arbitrary – it includes recognition of individual difference in terms of race, gender, sexuality, ability, history and culture. Embodiment thus indicates the holistic experiencing individual. I use the term 'embodiment' holistically to avoid the tendency to reinscribe the biological/cultural distinction, even while trying to theorise a relationship. My understanding is drawn from 'embodiment' theorised as the existential condition of being a person (Merleau-Ponty, 1962), and as a non-dualistic understanding of an individual as existing in the overlap between cultural and biological (Braidotti,

1994; Grosz, 1994; O'Loughlin, 1995; Weiss, 1999). I develop my understanding of embodiment as simultaneously and holistically cultural, biological, spiritual, artistic, intellectual and emotional, with recognition of difference in terms of race, gender, sexuality, ability, history, experience and environment.

Having considered embodiment, I now turn to exploration of the ways in which feminists have reconstructed femininity.

Feminist understandings of femininity

Alternative femininity has interested feminist researchers as a potential site of resistance to, and as a recreation of, dominant stereotypes of women. Feminist poststructural theorists have offered insights into understanding both stereotypical and alternative femininity, helping to make sense of women's 'practices' in the pursuit of idealised femininity¹⁶. For example, feminists provided a way of understanding the extensive dieting and fitness practices of women as practices in creating the ideal feminine body. These practices might perhaps be understood as an appropriate expression of the public, masculine characteristics of discipline and control, resulting in the achievement of idealised femininity (Bordo, 1988). The rhetoric and imagery of women's fitness magazines constructs such self-controlling practices as empowering and appropriate for women (Bordo, 1988; Macdonald, 1995). But, as Susan Bordo (1988) argued, the pursuit of slender femininity through fitness training is more likely to represent a further form of tyranny – the 'tyranny of slenderness' – rather than empowerment. Victory in achieving the slender ideal feminine body seemed rather hollow to feminists, as it could be seen as simply complying with dominant stereotypes.

¹⁶ Feminist poststructuralism presents some difficulties that I discuss below.

Combining aspects of masculinity and femininity, or aiming for androgyny, is also unlikely to provide alternative understandings or experiences of femininity that are empowering, since masculinity and femininity have been constructed in opposition to each other. Instead, it is more likely that women pursuing stereotypical femininity through fitness training will experience unresolvable contradiction (Bordo, 1989; Markula, 1995). For example, Pirkko Markula (1993, 1995) investigated aerobicizing women and found that many women held contradictory positions about their relationship to their body. While they were aware of the construction of the ideal body in dominant stereotypical femininity and 'the tyranny of slenderness' (Bordo, 1988), they did not "visibly resist the patriarchal body ideal" (Markula, 1995, p.449).

One possible way to understand both women's compliance with, and possible recreations of femininity, is as a habitual performance of gendered behaviours – a gender performance. Judith Butler (1990) argued that gender is a stylised repetition of bodily acts, which produces the effect of a naturalised body. She described gender as "a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (p.33). Through the congealing of actions, bodily gestures and desires, the illusory effect of a natural and stable gender is produced. This congealing action produces the appearance of a compulsory sexuality - male or female (Bigwood, 1991).

Judith Butler (1990) developed her understandings of gender performance further to include the emancipatory agendas of feminisms. She wanted to expand the possibilities of what it is to be a woman - to 'reconstruct' femininity.

Butler (1990) chose to describe 'woman' as fluid to destabilise male and female identity and to stimulate and acknowledge a proliferation of gender identities. She (1990) argued that because gender is an unstable construct, the possibility of re-drafting and re-designing femininity exists. Although performances of gender operate within specific understandings of masculinity, femininity and heterosexuality, there is the possibility for resistance. In repeated acts of gender performance or stylisation, Butler (1990) argued that the potential for variation of style exists. Deliberate failure, excessive and defiant stylised acts can be part of a gender performance. As Roslyn Diprose summarised, "we can subvert strict categories of identity and so add style to our existence, because the production of identity is open to disruption" (1994/1995, p.12). Resistance to and subversions of gender are possible through an understanding of femininity as performance. And perhaps resistant and subversive performances might lead to recreated femininity.

Some potential examples of recreated femininity might be seen in women who do not visibly or behaviourally conform to the slender feminine ideal – extraordinarily thin, heavily muscled or fat women, and women who behave in 'inappropriate' non-feminine ways. These women have interested some feminist researchers. However, many potential recreations through disciplinary practices of the body (eating disorders, fitness regimes, psychological 'deviancy') and technology (cosmetic surgery) can be seen as illusory experiences of empowerment or recreation (Bordo, 1988, 1989; Butler, 1990). Investigations into cases of anorexia nervosa and bulimia (Bordo, 1988, 1989), hysteria (Showalter, 1985), women's bodybuilding (Grosz, 1994; Steinman, 1994), and fitness practices like aerobics and running (Eskes, Duncan & Miller, 1998;

Markula, 1995; Smith, 1991), reveal that such practices collude with stereotypical femininity.

When Butler (1990) commented that gender performance could be resistant or subversive, she had different practices in mind than the ones I've mentioned above. She argued that a subversive act in a gender performance might be a self-critical, parodic act that draws attention to the constructed nature of femininity. A parody, according to Myra Macdonald (1995), is an attempt to mimic with ironic intent. Within a performance of femininity, moments of self-critical parody could be included, such as deliberately over-playing feminine body language, or drawing attention to discomfort with stereotypical femininity¹⁷.

Butler commented that there is "a subversive laughter in the pastiche effect of parodic practices in which the original, the authentic, and the real are themselves constituted as effects" (1990, p.146). Understanding femininity as performance provides space for resistant action and subversion for the individual, within the dominant stereotypes of femininity and masculinity. However, as Susan Bordo commented, "in this image-bedazzled culture, we have increasing difficulty discriminating between parodies and possibilities for the self" (1989, p.19).

Recreations of femininity should be developed with care (and interpreted with scepticism), in order to retain the potential for resistance and avoid unwitting collusion and complicity with stereotypical femininity (Macdonald, 1995).

¹⁷ A potential example might involve 'dressing up' as the stereotypically feminine woman within 'inappropriate' contexts, such as members of a woman's rugby or softball team wearing makeup, styling hair and dressing in feminine clothes and shoes.

While Butler's work provided further understanding of the production of femininity, and the potential for recreating femininity, some critics have commented that Butler went too far in her analysis of gender as performance (Bigwood, 1991; Flax, 1993; McNay, 1992). As Jane Flax stated, "we never encounter a person without a body or discursive practices without embodied practitioners" (1993, p.98). The notion of femininity as performance seemed to me to ignore the relevance and specificity of the embodiment of the individual. There simply are involuntary and biological aspects of femininity that cannot be overcome through self-stylisation (McNay, 1992) - race, height and physical disability or ability, for example. The possibilities for self-stylisation are also limited by social history (Diprose, 1994/1995), in the sense that the achievement of the ideal slender body is affected by (for example) childhood diet and exercise histories. Carol Bigwood commented that Butler's argument leaves us with "a disembodied body and a free-floating gender artifice in a sea of cultural meaning production" (1991, p.59), a view I sympathise with.

In order to develop Butler's (1990) work, I feel that the individual needs to be extracted from being read as text, and acknowledged instead as embodied. Individuals are not only discursive 'bodily texts', they are embodied, experiencing individuals. Nevertheless, an understanding of gender as performance is helpful for me in thinking about femininity because it includes recognition of the culturally constructed aspects of femininity. It also provides an understanding of resistance for me and suggests the possibility for alternative individual action in recreating femininity, as I have commented. To me, recreating femininity is an on-going process of living and reflecting on living as a woman in my specific culture and environment.

This embodied process involves acknowledging and understanding the tensions inherent in being a woman in a Western patriarchal culture and creatively adapting personal beliefs and behaviours in order to resolve these tensions.

* * *

I had begun reading feminist theory as a dance student, in an attempt to understand my experiences as a woman and as a dancer. Reading poststructural feminist writers, I thought of the power of the dominant images of femininity that influenced me as a teenager. Those images seemed to have encroached on my thinking and actions and crept into my muscles. I had learned to be a 'woman' - to sit with my legs together, to keep my limbs tidily organised under me. This learning had become a muscular habit, creating tightness in my hips. Reading Judith Butler's (1990) work on performing gender, I could see how I performed what it was to be a 'woman' – performing femininity - just like I performed dance choreography. This made sense to me, as I could feel in my bones, tissues and muscles how I had learned to be a 'woman'. This was not merely an attractive theoretical notion or even an interesting thought experiment for me, like those experiments in philosophy class. This was an embodied realisation.

Thinking about embodiment as I worked on my doctorate led me to ponder my experiences as a dancer at length. Reflecting on my experiences as a dance student, I dug my creative journal out from under papers and books and flicked through some of my stories. I've been writing stories about my life for a while now, in some attempt it seems, to write myself into the here and now, to hold a

moment for some undetermined future (Barbour, 2000c). I remember a particular story, find it and read:

"Stop intellectualising Karen!" my dance teacher yells at me. "Go back again and do the sequence like I showed you".

What sort of injustice is this? I think angrily.

But I go back to the corner of the studio, my muscles screaming as I duly attempt to stem the flow of my thoughts. I re-adjust my sweaty singlet, roll up the waistband of my pants and try to breathe evenly. The accompanist plays an introductory three counts and I move. I let the pulse of the drum and my memory of the sequence carry me through the space. I commit to the movement, dropping my weight into the floor, trying to release in my hip sockets. Close to tears, I hear him yell "now....travel...on five!" My classmates wait anxiously, variously hoping I will get it right, pleased that I was the target today, bored at my inability, or sympathising with my brimming tears. And then I'm finished. Plucking my sticky singlet away from my back, I walk past the open windows to join my classmates. Anna rubs my arm as she waits in line beside me. 'He' ignores me for the rest of the class.

I finished reading my dance story and slowly closed my creative journal. My back was still comfortingly warm from the sun and I breathed deeply to calm myself. I remember that day. How I just felt big and messy, not physically articulate like my teacher. I struggled to release my pelvis into the space and to extend my limbs. I raged privately, angry to be told not to think, discouraged at the lack of consideration for my experience.

I had been frustrated then by the expectation that I should submit to the 'expert' knowledge of my teacher and to what I felt was disempowering pedagogy. But most of all, I felt that my experiences and 'knowledges' had been ignored. Not able to see how I might have been resistant to such training, I had just followed instructions, losing my intelligent habits and my ability to voice my concerns. In a sense, I became less vocal, less critical and less resistant as I became a dancer.

My mentors in the dance program had described the process of becoming a dancer as one of stripping away my previous training to begin anew. I had read Elizabeth Dempster's description of the process of becoming a dancer as deconstructive - "involving a period of de-training of the dancer's habitual structure and patterns of movement...Through this process the dancer reconstructs a physical articulation based on an understanding of what is common to all bodies and what is unique to her/his own" (1988, p.22-23). As I was supposed to be letting go of muscular tension and my own movement habits, I would be opening the door to recreating myself as a dancer. At least that was the idea... The reality of the situation for me, in learning from this particular 'expert' male teacher, was that I was simply expected to dance and act like him. Presumably it was better, but my hip sockets felt otherwise!

As a dance student I had felt silenced by the pedagogy. That is, silenced by the way my teacher expected me to follow instructions and copy his way of dancing. Rather than being able to recreate myself as a dancer in my own way, I was expected to construct myself in one particular way. There was simply not enough acknowledgement of what was unique to me in this performance.

As I ponder that dancing experience, I realise that I have come to understand how to resist the processes of indoctrination in dance, through understanding how to resist stereotypical femininity. Thinking about both as performances, I can see how I can resist by deliberately failing to conform, exceeding expected behaviours and using moments of parody in dance. I suspect I may have failed my dance technique classes had I embodied these understandings in class. However, I am now able to embody my feminist understandings in my life and in my dancing to recreate femininity myself.

Considering feminist approaches to recreating femininity, particularly Judith Butler's (1990) work on performing gender, has provided me with possible practices to explore. I now bring my interests in feminist recreations to my specific research project.

* * *

Feminist recreation – my research into embodied ways of knowing

Exploration of feminist understandings of the dualisms in dominant Western knowledge provided the basis for my research into recreating femininity through embodied ways of knowing, particularly in women's solo contemporary dance making. However, I now leave behind ongoing discussion about dominant Western 'knowledge' and dualisms, in order to focus on alternative feminist 'knowledges'. I am not only interested to document feminist critique of Western epistemology and ontology, but also to move on to feminist creation of knowledges.

I am interested in how feminists might be able to 'recreate femininity' in empowering ways in their own lives to break down dualistic and oppressive masculine and feminine stereotypes. I use the phrase 'embodied ways of knowing' to indicate my alternative understandings of 'knowledge' and 'body'. Embodied ways of knowing offer an alternative understanding of the mind/body dualism, and the knowledge/experience dualism. Just as embodiment acknowledges individual differences as a result of socio-cultural and corporeal aspects and location, an embodied way of knowing incorporates individual difference in knowing also. An embodied strategy for knowing acknowledges explicitly the importance and influence of who an individual is. Individual differences are not denied in the pursuit of knowledge or the quest for self, but brought to the forefront, and gender differences are a central part of individual differences.

Embodied ways of knowing

Developing the work of Belenky et al. (1986), I now theorise a possible sixth epistemological strategy, which I outline and discuss below (see p.37 for Belenky et al.'s (1986) five epistemological strategies).

- 6) embodied knowledge – woman views all knowledge as contextual and embodied. She experiences herself as creator of, and as embodying knowledge, valuing her own experiential ways of knowing and reconciling these with other strategies for knowing, as she lives her life.

An individual woman using an embodied way of knowing, (like a woman using a constructed knowing strategy (Belenky et al., 1986)), attempts to understand knowledges as constructed, and further, as something that she embodies, that she

experiences and lives. She attempts to integrate the knowledges that she feels intuitively are important with knowledges she has learned from others, and with a conscious awareness of how she embodies these knowledges. She aims to weave knowledges together with her passions, experiences and embodied individuality. For an individual woman using an embodied knowledge strategy, living with alternative understandings to dominant knowledge will likely create challenges and tensions that she will have to resolve individually. These challenges and tensions will be embodied, experienced and resolved throughout her life. Resolutions will not come purely through rationalisation, or through intuition, but through embodying and living out the possibilities. In living out the possibilities, she will necessarily come to discard knowledge that is not liveable.

Using an embodied knowing strategy, I theorise that a feminist might undertake to resist and deconstruct dominant stereotypes of femininity, and to recreate herself differently as a woman and live out the possibilities personally. As I noted earlier, I use the phrase 'recreating' femininity to indicate the process by which a woman might use embodied ways of knowing to creatively adapt personal beliefs and behaviours in order to resolve the tensions inherent in being a woman in a patriarchal context. This may well be a lifetime feminist process. Interrogation of her own daily behaviour and movement, her moral and political commitments, her spiritual beliefs, her artistic practice, her employment choices, her relationships with other individuals, with dominant Western culture and her geographical environment, will need to be thorough and involve a high degree of sensitivity and scepticism. In her recreations of herself as a woman, she will experience tensions (intellectual, spiritual, artistic, physical and emotional tensions) arising from her alternative perspectives and practices of femininity

within dominant culture. She will need to be articulate and compassionate in her embodied expression of her recreated self. And she will need extraordinary passion and commitment to live out her solutions! This, I theorise, is an embodied way of knowing herself as a woman.

It seems to me that a creative and artistic sensibility would be invaluable in embodied ways of knowing. In particular, I theorise a greater level of sensitivity to personal experience and relationships with others and the world, would be crucial.

Particular artistic practices and life choices might allow an individual to develop greater levels of personal sensitivity and to understand her relationship to others and the world in very different ways. For these reasons, I think individual artists may have unique alternative possibilities for recreations of femininity in their artistry, and may have a broader range of embodied human expressive options. Consequently, exploring the lived experiences of individual women artists, particularly dancer/choreographers, is a valuable context for exploring embodied ways of knowing and feminist recreations of femininity. This is the central focus of my research project.

My research into women's lived experience is appropriately considered from and undertaken with a feminist and phenomenological perspective and methodology.

Summary

I began this chapter by outlining the central feminist and philosophical argument of my thesis, including my dancer's voice alongside my feminist researcher's voice. With reference to a range of feminist writers who have critiqued and deconstructed Western 'knowledge' and dualisms, and who have offered alternative understandings of 'knowledges', I have explored some attempts to understand ways of knowing, embodiment and femininity differently.

My exploration has led me to articulate the possibilities for understanding ways of knowing more broadly than as 'reasoning', reflecting the research of Belenky et al. (1986). I identified that bodily ways of knowing was an area for further research. However, in exploring feminist understandings of mind/body dualism as embodiment, my interests turned to researching embodied ways of knowing. This turn reflected my reading of phenomenology, specifically the work of Iris Young (1980, 1998) and Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1999). With reference to the valuable work done by Belenky et al. (1986) and Goldberger et al. (1996) on women's ways of knowing, and to the diverse commentary offered on embodiment, I have suggested what an embodied way of knowing might be. I have also explored understandings of gender as performance, drawing from and developing Judith Butler's work (1990). Developing an understanding of femininity as performance indicated a direction for my research in exploring how I, and other women, might recreate our selves as women.

Drawing these possibilities together, I see exploration of embodied ways of knowing, specifically in relation to recreating femininity in dance, as my research focus. In investigating lived experience, a feminist and phenomenological perspective and methodology is appropriate.

As I research the possibilities of recreating femininity through embodied ways of knowing, I am interested in both exploring my own experiences and the lived experience of other individual women.

In conclusion, I have theorised what embodied ways of knowing might be, by drawing together an understanding of constructed knowing strategies with a recognition of embodied difference. I theorise that embodied ways of knowing are invaluable to feminists, particularly feminist dancer/choreographers, attempting to recreate femininity throughout their lifetime. In the following chapter, I consider contemporary dance literature to investigate feminist dancers and writers' phenomenological research and feminist recreations.

* * *

So here I am, the filtered sun streaming across my desk and my back. I am attempting to write from an embodied, feminist perspective. I feel and I experience as an embodied individual, and nothing is clearer to me now than the reality of my own embodiment. I can no longer divorce my knowing from my embodiment. I cannot be a 'dancer', reconstructing myself to meet some 'admirable', external standard, without attempting to understand and theorise my experiences. I cannot be a 'philosopher', conducting disembodied thought experiments about mind and body either.

So I am trying to write now as an embodied dancer, rather than as a disembodied academic. I am writing about embodiment, because I am embodied.

* * *

CHAPTER THREE

Feminist and phenomenological literature on dance

Introduction

In the preceding chapter I outlined the central feminist argument of my thesis and explored relevant feminist and phenomenological understandings of embodied ways of knowing and stereotypical femininity (Belenky et al, 1986; Bordo, 1988; Butler, 1990; Code, 1991; Macdonald, 1995; Sheets-Johnstone, 1999; Young, 1980, 1998). I concluded that embodied ways of knowing are invaluable in the recreation of stereotypical femininity by individual women, and particularly by artists such as dancer/choreographers. I stated that embodied ways of knowing, specifically in relation to recreating femininity in dance, was my feminist research focus.

In this chapter I explore relevant feminist and phenomenological dance literature that provides a context for my research. I begin by making some comments about the intersection of feminist theory and dance literature. I review the literature that discussed stereotypical femininity in Western contemporary dance, considering briefly the discussions on women's roles and archetypes in dance, critiques of the 'male gaze' and resistance to stereotypical femininity in dance. I consider practices and choreographic strategies undertaken by Western contemporary dancers as early dance research to recreate stereotypical femininity. I also outline Western contemporary dance, as I focus specifically on contemporary dance, rather than exploring a range of dance forms. I then consider research that provides insight into embodied ways of knowing in contemporary dance, from a phenomenological perspective.

I make comments and develop criticisms of this research, drawing links to my feminist phenomenological project. I conclude by arguing that Western women's solo contemporary dance is a context for embodied way of knowing and that it potentially provides an ideal context for recreating stereotypical femininity. I will begin by making some preliminary comments about feminism and dance.

Feminism and dance

Prior to the twentieth century, Western performance dance had been marginalised, both as an art form and as an area for intellectual inquiry, due to its constant association with the culturally marginalised areas of body, experience and women (Albright, 1997; Thomas, 1996). Even feminist writers initially seemed to be wary of studying dance and other bodily activity (Grosz, 1994), perhaps because these areas were traditionally seen as inappropriate for intellectual enquiry.

However, with the application of theoretical frameworks to dance study, and growing academic interest in theorising the body over the last twenty-five years, research on dance has recently been acknowledged as valuable (Thomas, 1996). As Helen Thomas commented, theorising dance has helped to move dance into the academic arena and "re-positioned the body in the centre of the discourse" (1996, p.83-84).

Much of the recent research about Western performance dance has taken a feminist perspective and acknowledged the relevance of the body as an intersection of cultural and biological processes. The understandings feminism has brought to representing women's bodies have been particularly relevant for understanding dance (Daly, 1993; Forte, 1998; Gardner, 1993).

Feminist Jeanie Forte (1998) stated that representations of women in dance and performance reflected the wider socio-cultural context for women. She argued that

All women's performances are derived from the relationship of women to the dominant system of representation, situating them within a feminist critique. Their disruption of the dominant system constitutes a subversion and radical strategy of intervention vis-a-vis patriarchal culture (1998, p.236).

Dance, being primarily concerned with women's dancing bodies, has offered feminism understandings of kinaesthetic experience and movement analysis (Desmond, 1999). The interplay between feminisms and dance knowledges has enriched both disciplines (Albright, 1997; Daly, 1993; Desmond, 1999).

Feminist critiques of dominant Western dualisms and understandings of embodied ways of knowing in dance can be found in dance literature. Elizabeth Dempster (1993) has argued that women's engagement in dance and body-learning is a "distinctive and creative tactical response to a body-denying patriarchal culture" (p.16). She commented that reconstruction of Western dualisms is part of the project of feminist dance research and practice (Dempster, 1988). Dempster wrote that

Dance contains within itself gestures towards a dissolution of the dichotomous pairing of terms fundamental to the Western philosophical tradition. In moments of dancing the edges of things blur and terms such as mind/body, flesh/spirit, carnal/divine, male/female, become labile and unmoored, breaking loose from the fixivity of their pairings (Dempster, 1988, p.24).

Within dance, these gestures towards a dissolution of the knowledge/experience, mind/body and masculine/feminine dualisms might be revealed (Dempster, 1988). Dempster later commented (1993) that theories of embodiment offer a radically different sense of 'self' and 'identity' from that of Cartesian dualism. She described this sense of self as "sensual, physical and physically intelligent - how different from the Cartesian notion of the self as 'pilot of the (body) ship', or the self *theo-rized* as a place of seeing, as detached spectator of the world" (Dempster, 1993, p.13, italics original).

Attempts to articulate embodied ways of knowing (Albright, 1997; Daly, 1993; Rothfield, 1988) can stand as critiques of the dominant Western rational method of knowing. It is dancers and dance researchers such as Dempster (1993) who have attempted through their lived experience to articulate critiques of mind/body dualism and to offer alternative understandings. As Rachel Fensham expressed it, dancers have "traversed those dark, illimitable spaces of self and representation", searching for new ways to communicate, and creating alternative understandings of their own (1993, p.24). Dempster's (1988, 1993) comments (and those of others) resonate for me with the feminist agendas to challenge the dualisms dominant in Western knowledge. I consider the feminist dance literature below, in search for understandings and recreations of femininity in contemporary dance.

Femininity in the feminist dance literature

Within the dance literature a number of themes related to femininity emerged in the research documenting the history of Western performance dance. These themes provide a context and background for understanding the issues for

feminist contemporary dancers. I have identified these historical themes as; consideration of the archetypes and roles of women in dance; critique of the 'male gaze' in the production and consumption of dance; and consideration of the representation of women and stereotypical femininity in performance dance¹⁸. I will briefly outline these themes from the feminist dance literature.

Roles and archetypes of women in performance dance:

Throughout the development of performance dance, women dancers and choreographers have been interested in the roles and archetypes of women in society, and specifically in dance. Modern dance revolutionaries like Isadora Duncan and Martha Graham took active, central roles as choreographers and directors of their own companies, and they performed solo. They sought to break the traditional division of women as the corps dancers and men as the choreographers and directors. Duncan, Graham and other modern dancers made a significant contribution to the development of Western performance dance through their challenge to and rejection of the traditional roles of women. Duncan has been described as taking a clear feminist stance in her denouncement of ballet and promotion of her own alternative movement (Adair, 1992). She condemned ballet as glorifying a deformed female body (Duncan, 1928), and replaced the ballet image with her own image of a free moving, uncorsetted, barefoot, intelligent woman (Dempster, 1993).

As well as taking on leadership and revolutionary roles, women in modern dance were interested in social stereotypes and how women were represented in dance. Sharon Friedler (1997) commented that women in modern dance were portrayed within the mythic, archetypal categories of; goddess or priestess,

¹⁸ Much of the feminist dance literature is still focussed on these themes.

ancestress, mother or teacher, virgin or wife; and the counterpart archetypes: witch or devil or madwoman, warrior or martyr, and temptress or whore. These mythic archetypes can be seen in the work of Graham and others. Many of Graham's choreographies were reconstructions of classical tales with woman recast as the central figures (Adair, 1992; Banes, 1998). Christy Adair wrote that, "Instead of the chaste women characters of classical ballet who died of unrequited love or betrayal, Graham presented strong autonomous women" (1992, p.133). For example, in *Night Journey* (Graham & Hammid, 1961), Graham reworked the traditional myth of Jocasta and Oedipus to focus on their private relationship and Jocasta's eroticism, rather than the traditional story of Oedipus. However, Sally Banes (1998) argued that the choreography showed Jocasta to be tied to her incestual relationship. Somehow, Jocasta became the tragic, mythic heroine anyway, and in a sense, still represented the stereotypical feminine woman of the time (Banes, 1998; Friedler, 1997). According to Banes, "*Night Journey* is a complex product of Graham's sexual politics. It retains traces of her generation's sexual emancipation in the 1920's while buying into the postwar feminine mystique by tying its submissive heroine to a domineering male" (1998, p.167). Banes argued further that many of Graham's works were enmeshed in "the marriage plot", involved in both celebration and critique of cultural beliefs surrounding women and marriage (1998, p.5). Even Graham's central heroines represented stereotypical femininity, despite her implied feminism and creation of autonomous women characters (Adair, 1992).

Nevertheless, the initiatives of modern dancers like Duncan and Graham attempted to challenge women's roles in dance and to develop alternative representations of women through their dance. It was not until the 1960's and the

development of post modern dance that choreographers began to move away from presenting mythic archetypes of women in dance (Friedler, 1997).

Critique of the male gaze:

In the 1960's and 1970's post modern dancers began to move away from portraying women through mythic and archetypal stereotypes. Postmodern dancers were instead more interested in the positioning of women within the performance and production of dance (Adair, 1992). Applying Laura Mulvey's (1975) filmic notion of 'the male gaze' - where women are positioned in film as image and men as the bearer of the look - post modern dancers began to see how they also were positioned as passive objects within the dance 'spectacle', to be consumed by the active audience. Yvonne Rainer was particularly interested in rejecting 'the male gaze', reflecting an implicit feminism. She rejected the spectacle, virtuosity, magic, glamour and seduction of the feminine ballerina, and the heroic, eccentric, psychologically moving, drama of the feminine modern dancer (Rainer, 1974). Instead she offered a complex and intellectual vision of dance and of women (Banes, 1998). Illustrated in *Trio A: The Mind as a Muscle* (Rainer, 1966), Rainer sought to resist the traditional objectification and heroism of the dancer, by redefining the dancer as an ordinary pedestrian. She presented *Trio A* as three simultaneous solos which anyone, dancer or not, could perform (Albright, 1997). According to Tara Benbow-Pfalzgraf, this work "contained a continuous flow of equally stressed movements without a climax. The dancers, who retain a relaxed appearance and do not make eye contact with the audience make no attempt to hide the difficulty of performing the dance" (1998, p.658).

Rainer removed the drama, the staging, and the virtuosity and refocused the surprised audience on the experience of movement, rather than using movement as a vehicle for expression. Like other postmodern dancers, she performed with a relaxed body, in functional clothing and attempted to draw the audience to her intricate movement, rather than to her body (Adair, 1992). Rainer refused to enter the debates of her era regarding femininity but instead attempted to disorder the visually dominated nature of dance that focussed on the dancer's body. She attempted to reduce the visual spectacle and to demystify the dancing body by foregrounding her kinesthetic experience of dancing (Albright, 1997). Although *Trio A* was not created as a feminist dance, Sally Banes commented that

when danced by a woman, *Trio A's* messages about the economy and skill of the human body become a vision of the intelligence, competency and strength of the female body in contrast to the way the female body was generally regarded in the culture at the time (1998, p.223).

Rainer's pedestrian movement and performance drew attention to her experience and to her self-recreation through dance (Albright, 1992). Parallel with the activism of the women's movement, Western women like Rainer and Pina Bausch began to include implicit, and sometimes explicit, feminist agendas in their performance dance.

The work of German tanztheater choreographer and dancer Pina Bausch focused specifically on relations between men and women, and was rife with feminist subtext (Manning & Benson, 1986). Christy Adair argued that "many of Bausch's images comment vividly on the apparently insoluble problems between men and women and their different social roles and expectations" (1992, p.209).

A feminist reading of choreographers such as Bausch is nevertheless controversial, as Carol Brown pointed out (1994). Brown argued that

The ambiguity of response to a feminist reading of Bausch's choreography exposes one of the difficulties for women choreographers in representing the lived experience of the feminine body subject, that however real a speaking and moving subject a woman is within performance, she is always forced to negotiate the phallogomorphic construction of the symbolic order within which she is represented (1994, p.100).

Brown's comment reflected the development of feminist critique and growing understandings of the issues of representation as applied to dance.

Modern and post modern women choreographers and dancers were obviously "influenced by and reacting to their historic mentors", and to their wider socio-cultural context (Friedler, 1997, p.120). At the same time, these women were "producing their own individual harmonious and discordant figures", according to Friedler (1997, p.120). With a variety of strategies, women throughout the development of Western performance dance have challenged popular socio-cultural representations of women through resisting, engaging with and challenging dominant stereotypes of femininity. According to recent feminist dance researchers, much of this engagement and challenge has been implicitly rather than explicitly feminist.¹⁹ I consider feminist representational issues below.

Representation of women in performance dance

While dancers have criticised and resisted stereotypical images of women, and attempted to present new images, the political power of women's dance work has been undermined by cultural stereotypes of the dancer that exaggerate cultural

¹⁹ See Sally Banes (1998) and Elizabeth Dempster (1993, 1995/1996) on images of women.

stereotypes of women. Dancers have been portrayed as stereotypically feminine with idealised, unattainable bodies, displayed for visual consumption by the spectator. While feminist critique of the gaze of the spectator, and of the traditional passive positioning of the dancer as visual object has concerned feminist dancers (Adair, 1992; Albright, 1997; Brown, 1994; Rainer, 1974), in many ways, the dancer has continued to represent an idealised Western image of femininity (Brown, 1999). As Elizabeth Dempster argued, "The dancing body is in this cultural context constructed as a female, feminized, and sexualized body" (1988, p.15). The slender dancer, as an object for consumption, may reinforce ideal femininity for women in her audience and in society, regardless of her implicit feminism. So the historical construction of the dancer as an object for consumption may continue to undermine the power of recreations of femininity in dance.

However, the female dancer now not only has the stereotype of femininity to contend with (including the 'tyranny of slenderness'), but also the fitness industry's 'firm, fit and shapely' image (Eskes, Duncan & Miller, 1998), and the 'rhetoric of empowerment' through building muscles (Albright, 1997; Markula, 1995). Ann Albright (1997) described such a shift in idealized femininity in dance. She said, "The romanticized image of the ballerina as an embodiment of feminine grace and beauty, or even the image of the early modern dancer poised proud and tall in her weighted stance has been replaced by a fearless, aerobicized physicality" (Albright, 1997, p.35). According to Carol Brown (1999), to some extent the female dancer inevitably embodies some of the stereotypes of femininity in terms of fitness and strength developed through training.

Brown (1994, 1999) considered stereotypical femininity and attempted to recreate

herself through feminist choreographic practices. She theorized her own experiences in recreating herself as a woman through solo dance performance.

For Brown, her embodiment was the intersection of feminist theory and choreography in her dance work in the early 1990's. Brown (1994) attempted to both deconstruct essentialist assumptions about women's bodies, and to revalue women's bodies through her feminist solo contemporary dance making. Brown commented that,

The female dancer is constructed as a stereotype of femininity within dominant representations of Western culture, yet the activity of dancing has operated as an enclave of female/feminist endeavour within modern and postmodern dance practices...Strategies for reinscribing the body through feminist choreographies engage in the deconstruction of essentialist assumptions about the female body whilst simultaneously seeking to revalue its significance for women. (1994, p.i).

Brown's research project was to investigate feminist choreographic practices through choreographing dances herself.²⁰ In her solo dance work *The Mechanics of Fluids* (Brown, 1995a),²¹ Brown brought feminist understandings of femininity to her choreographic practice, which enabled her to explore and manipulate her own gendered movement. As Brown wrote, she could "engage with the codes, conventions, behaviours, gestures and configurations of movement which condition our location as 'women' and to reassemble these through consideration of the possibilities for moving 'otherwise'" (1994, p.158).

²⁰ I will focus on Brown's solo dance work in my discussion, incorporating her comments about making dance with my own responses having seen her solo performance.

²¹ Carol Brown (1994) choreographed dance work as 50% of her assessed doctoral work. Her PhD work was titled "Inscribing the body: feminist choreographic practice".

Christy Adair described Brown as "concerned with, but not confined by, displays of femininity through highly tuned physicality", presenting and playing with stereotypes to dismantle them in performance (1999, p.13).

Within her choreography, Brown presented stereotypical feminine gestures, postures and movements, and in the next moment dismantled and subverted them, revealing their construction (Barbour, 1995). In one section of *The Mechanics of Fluids*, Brown focussed specifically on posing - a common way in which she felt women had become objectified for an audience's consumption. She enunciated the criteria for becoming an object in three steps: remove clothing, display the body, and pose. Brown then did this herself, creating herself as a grotesque caricature in her attempt to fulfil these criteria (Barbour, 1995). She lay in her underwear on a plinth, on her back with her head towards the audience. She assumed a distorted, uncomfortable position, more reminiscent of a dead insect than a submissive, reclining woman (Brown, 1995a). Brown managed to fulfil the criteria for becoming an object, but she did not fulfil the stereotypical image of the submissive, reclining woman. In her movement she drew attention to the power of cultural expectation of appropriate behaviour for women, resisting feminine image and recreating herself as grotesque. As she demonstrated and then subverted femininity, she was able to reveal dominant practices of femininity.

Brown articulated her feminist agenda, commenting that "dancers need to be aware of how their bodies, often unwittingly, reinforce certain bodily ideals, and to begin to undo some of the assumptions made about them, through what they hopefully do best: movement invention" (1999, p.16).

As a member of the politically enfranchised (as a white, middle-class, well-educated woman) and a petite dancer, Brown herself embodied many of the dominant stereotypes of femininity. However, through her movement she managed to undo some of these stereotypes. In this sense her work had resistant and subversive feminist power, and she was constructive and seemed empowered in her recreation of femininity through dance.

Brown's (1999) feminist agenda is appropriate in relation to Western women's solo dance making. In a solo dance performance, the dancer/choreographer is both the creator of her identity through her choreography, and in the moment of performance, she is also living her identity. A woman's solo dance is a lived experience, and she is, in this sense, a 'phenomenal' dancer (Way, 2000). She is able to consciously analyse her own performance of femininity in her choreographic process, and in performance of the dance she is able to utilise her ability to simultaneously move and express her understandings of femininity. In her dancing, the solo dancer can live her own recreated femininity, embodying it as she moves.²² Therefore, women's solo dance making is an appropriate context for recreating and living alternative femininity. This suggests to me that women's solo dance making can be an embodied way of knowing. Brown (1995a, 1999) is a contemporary dancer, and contemporary dance, (arguably more so than earlier Western performance dance forms), lends itself to feminist agendas, as I argue below.

²² By contrast, a dancer performing another choreographer's movement will be, to some extent at least, embodying that choreographer's understandings of femininity.

Contemporary dance

For the dancer working with a feminist consciousness, contemporary dance provides a context to foreground the responsive body, and to engage with Western socio-cultural images of women, such as the stereotype of femininity (Albright, 1997). Ann Albright stated that “contemporary dance foregrounds a responsive dancing body, one that engages with and challenges static representations of gender, race, sexuality, and physical ability, all the while acknowledging how deeply these ideologies influence our daily experience” (1997, p.xiii-xiv). I use the term ‘contemporary dance’ then, to refer to a multitude of current ways of working in dance, by dancers who have an interest in cultural representations of identity.²³

According to some feminists, women’s contemporary dance and research lends itself to feminist endeavour (Dempster, 1993; Forte, 1998). Feminist issues are more likely to be explicit in contemporary dance practice and dance literature, than perhaps they were in either modern and postmodern dance practice and literature (Albright, 1997; Banes, 1998; Brown, 1994; Dempster, 1993; Gardner, 1993). As Albright commented, contemporary dance gives “brilliant examples of how physical bodies are both shaped by and resistant to cultural representations of identity” (1997, p.xiii-xiv). Dancer/choreographers take up and play with questions in movement and meaning in personalised and specific ways (Albright, 1997). There are multiple ways in which contemporary women dancer/choreographers might choose to work.

²³ Other Western dance forms, such as ballet, folkdance and even some codified modern dance, do not often foreground a responsive dancing body, but instead present a character or archetype, use movement for recreation, or for its own aesthetic interest and dramatic narrative.

The particular way they choose to engage with and challenge representations of gender, race, sexuality, and physical ability, relates to the specific context they operate within, and their own embodiment.

An understanding of embodiment in the feminist dance literature acknowledged both the similarities and the differences between women. This was an acknowledgment that resonated with feminist interest to avoid 'essentialising' women. Rather than being a fixed body, a woman is a living individual, able to continually adapt and transform herself. She is able to respond to the play of multiple influences and sources of information, from personal kinaesthetic information to popular cultural practices (Dempster, 1988). Elizabeth Dempster (1988) commented that this multiplicity can be interpreted as a disruption of dominant Western 'knowledge'. She wrote that "the body, not disciplined to the enunciation of a singular discourse, is a multi-vocal and potentially disruptive force which undermines the unity of phallographic discourse" (Dempster, 1988, p.24). The dancer is potentially able to enact and resist her own representation simultaneously, to be both the object of the representation and the subject of experience (Albright, 1997). The dancer is both appropriating and distorting the productions of her body, "simultaneously making an image and unmaking it", as Rachel Fensham described it (1993, p.33). She is potentially able to dance holistically in the moment of performing, simultaneously both subject and object – embodied. The dancer is unique, specifically embodied and culturally located.

Feminist contemporary dance literature includes a wealth of attempts to express embodiment.²⁴ The notion of embodiment reflects complex, holistic and

²⁴ A more detailed discussion of such expressions is beyond the scope of my work here. Instead I will pick up on work that relates specifically to femininity in the following section.

interconnected personal experiences - precisely an area of interest for feminist dance writers and practitioners. However, my concern is that some of the attempts to express embodiment continue to reinscribe mind/body dualism, along with the culture (cultural)/nature (somatic) dualisms, and the subject/object dualism (Young, 1980). The dancer is inherently unstable and in an embodied, experiential process, rather than slipping between two aspects. As Albright wrote, she is “always in a paradoxical process of becoming” (1997, p.5). A description of embodiment that acknowledges ‘simultaneities’ (Farnell, 1999), and embodied ways of knowing in lived experience, is more appropriate for my feminist research. Consequently, I turn specifically to the dance literature that provides a means for description and understanding of embodied ways of knowing in dance. This literature draws on a phenomenological perspective.

It is my interest to develop a feminist and phenomenological approach that allows for interpretation and consideration of the dancer as a holistic experiencing embodied being, simultaneously cultural, spiritual, biological, intellectual, environmental and personal. Rather than focus on the body and dancer as a site of textual analysis (or the body as text, as in some approaches to dance research), my interest is in the lived experiences of individual dancers. Hence I use a phenomenological approach to talk to women about their lived experience, rather than taking a poststructural approach and reading their dance as a text.

Some feminist dance literature has specifically taken a phenomenological perspective in focussing on the lived experience of dancers, though much of this literature reports on ethnographic studies done on community and ethnic dance.²⁵

²⁵ For example see Buckland (1999).

I include a review of dance literature that relates more specifically to the lived experiences of Western women in contemporary performance dance (Fraleigh, 1987, 1999, 2000; Novack, 1990; Stinson, 1995; Way, 2000). However, investigation of women's lived experience in contemporary dance has only been a recent addition to the body of phenomenological research and literature. It is a fruitful area for feminist investigation (Fraleigh, 1999; Stinson, 1995; Sheets-Johnstone, 1999), and the area in which I focus my research. I consider phenomenological dance research below.

Phenomenological research into women's dance making

Phenomenological dance research is research that investigates the lived experiences of dancers using appropriate methods.²⁶ Motivated by a feminist consciousness, research into dancers' lived experience is a relevant area for feminist enquiry. Dance particularly, and movement generally, has rarely been studied academically as an experience, which, according to Bonnie Cohen (1993), is a result of dominant Western culture's denial and repression of the body and of experience as a source of knowledge. However, as Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1999) argued in her development of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's work (1962, 1964), movement is primary to knowledge of the world. Consequently, lived movement experiences such as contemporary dance practices can allow an individual to develop knowledge of the world through moving. Contemporary dance practice is (obviously) an embodied and experiential movement practice, and so lends itself both to phenomenological investigation into lived experience,

²⁶ I will discuss appropriate methods for my research in Chapter Four.

and to feminist political agendas to articulate women's knowledge and experience.

Sheets-Johnstone (1966, 1999) contributed a great deal to the understanding of bodily knowing and the experience of movement as knowledge. In her early work on the phenomenology of dance (1966) she recognised the value of bringing phenomenology into understandings of dance. She commented that "One of the promising features of a phenomenological approach to dance is ...the possibility of bringing movement and philosophy, creation, performance and criticism into some kind of meaningful relationship" (1966, p.8). Through lived experience of movement and dance, Sheets-Johnstone argued that meaning comes alive and we experience movement as foundational to our knowledge (1966).

Phenomenology, Sheets-Johnstone argued, could provide a method of description that focused on the wholeness of dance in the immediate encounter, in lived experience (Sheets-Johnstone, 1966). However, while being a method of description, Sheets-Johnstone also saw phenomenology as reflecting backwards and elucidating the structures of consciousness. Through description, phenomenologists were "elucidating lived experience, the world as it is immediately and directly known through a pre-reflective consciousness. This initial and direct knowledge constitutes the foundation upon which all knowledge is built" (Sheets-Johnstone, 1966, p.13).

In later work, Sheets-Johnstone developed Merleau-Ponty's (1962, 1964) and Iris Young's (1980) phenomenological work significantly, arguing for the primacy of movement over the primacy of perception. She commented that perception results from movement, and so movement was "the originating ground of our sense-makings" (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, p.161).

Movement is experienced through the kinaesthetic sense (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999; Stinson, 1995), as I discussed in Chapter Two. Through experiencing her own movement, an individual can understand how movement is central to her knowledge of the world (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). In this sense, movement is of profound epistemological significance (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). At the foundation of 'knowledge' is experience of movement. Following on from Sheets-Johnstone (1999), phenomenological investigation of lived movement experience is as valid a method of gaining knowledge, as reasoning was thought to be. Therefore, by studying the lived movement experiences of individual woman, researchers can learn about knowledge and ways of knowing.

Sheets-Johnstone commented on "how self-movement structures knowledge of the world – how moving is a way of knowing and how thinking in movement is foundational to the lives of animate forms" (1999, p.xv). The basis of knowledge comes through movement. Experiential knowledge through dance provides a basis for understanding, just as the experiential knowledge all humans have through everyday movement forms the basis of human understanding. Dance is a movement experience that can help individuals understand their own intentions, effects on and relationship to the world. Ruth Foster commented that the knowing that comes through dance "underlies our attitudes, our awareness of ourselves, and of the world we inhabit" (1976, p.112). In this sense, dance is a source of self-knowledge, a way of knowing about the self, and a way of knowing about the world (Foster, 1976; Fraleigh, 2000; Fraleigh & Hanstein, 1999). Dance is not simply an experience, but can also be an experiential method of understanding and potentially generating knowledge (Fraleigh, 2000).

Dance, as a lived experience, is an embodied way of knowing (Foster, 1976; Fraleigh, 2000; Sheets-Johnstone, 1999; Stinson, 1995).

Some feminist ethnographic and educational research into lived experience in dance has been undertaken, but little into Western women's contemporary dance making and performance. However, research by Sondra Fraleigh (2000), Sheets-Johnstone (1999), Susan Stinson (1995), and Ruth Way (2000), explored contemporary dance using a phenomenological approach. I consider their work below, broadly focussed within the two areas of phenomenological research on movement and dance, and representation of lived dance experience. I build on this research in developing my own methodology, and relate this dance literature to my interest in understanding embodied ways of knowing in dance.

Embodied ways of knowing: phenomenological research in movement and dance

Maxine Sheets-Johnstone developed an understanding of movement as primary in animate life, through her phenomenological research (1966, 1999). As I outlined above, she argued that “thinking in movement is foundational to being a body, as much an epistemological dimension of bodily life as a biological built-in that makes sense” (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, p.494). Her research work on movement focused specifically on dance in a number of publications. I commented on her early work on the phenomenology of dance briefly above (1966), and I now consider her later work (1999).

Sheets-Johnstone (1999) offered a phenomenological account of the experience of dance improvisation; what she described as “a first-person descriptive account...of the experience of thinking in movement as it is lived first-

hand” (1999, p.486). Within a dance improvisation, the dancer dances ‘this evening’s dance’ – whatever is created in the moment through perceiving and exploring the world (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). The dancer perceives the possibilities of her environment, perhaps interacting with other performers, audience members, features of the dance space, sound and texture. She explores possibilities within her own body, perhaps sensing space, gravity, time, dynamic, sound, touch and emotion. She responds to these explorations, instantaneously integrating her perception, exploration and responses in dancing. Within each moment of moving a world of possibilities open up for the dancer and are simultaneously engaged in, so that there is no real beginning or ending, but instead a dynamic on-going experience (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999).

Training in contemporary dance and improvisation develops the dancer’s kinaesthetic sense and self-knowledge in movement. Such training develops her ability to consciously acknowledge information from all the senses and to utilise that information without it remaining the primary focus of attention (Cohen, 1993). An ability to utilise the full range of sensory information means that this information can affect movement in dance directly. When improvising, the dancer is creating her movement as the movement unfolds, expressing her freedom and intelligence immediately through her movement (Fraleigh & Hanstein, 1999). There is no level of premeditative decision-making in the dance, but an immediate response to the specific information present in the moment (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). As Sheets-Johnstone (1999), put it, there is a non-separation of thinking and doing. The dancer is not separating thinking and doing, or not thinking, but instead she is “a mindful body, a body that is thinking in movement and that has the possibility of creating a dance on the spot” (Sheets-

Johnstone, 1999, p.487). The dancer is what Sheets-Johnstone called an “existentially resonant body”, creating and living a specific world simultaneously without mediation (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, p.490).

Sheets-Johnstone also made brief remarks about choreographed dance experiences, characterising non-improvised dance as “the creation of dance as artistic product” and improvised dance as “the creation of dance as artistic process” (1999, p.494). The process of thinking in movement relates differently in the making of dance that is choreographed. In choreographed dance the dancer thinks both *about* action (transcendent or outside thought), and *in* action (immanent or inside thought) (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999), whereas in improvisational dance the dancer thinks *in* action. Thus, a mindful body is at work in both improvisational and choreographed dance (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). Valerie Preston-Dunlop (1998) described such a mindful body as a phenomenal dancer - living every movement, rather than being an object moving to instructions. She continued saying that “a phenomenal dancer creates every movement for s/he turns an instruction into a creation” (Preston-Dunlop, 1998, p.57). According to Brenda Farnell, dance “in addition to providing the physical means for embodied activity in the world, [is] simultaneously a dynamic expressive medium used by embodied persons for the construction and negotiation of meaning” (1999, p.148). Farnell used the term ‘simultaneities’ to refer to the dancer’s capacity for simultaneous action and expression through movement, and this expression applies equally to choreographed and improvised dance. Preston-Dunlop’s (1998) and Farnell’s (1999) comments resonate with those of Sheets-Johnstone (1999). Sheets-Johnstone concluded that “whether choreographed from the inside or outside – in one non-stop choreographic swoop

or in sections over a period of time – the basic processes of thinking in movement is the same” (1999, p.495).

Sheets-Johnstone’s work (1966, 1999) provided an understanding of the foundational relationship between movement and knowledge. In contrast with the denial and repression of the body and experience in dominant Western knowledge, Sheets-Johnstone (1999) argued for an understanding of movement as primary, of movement as a way of knowing. Understanding embodied ways of knowing in dance, such as offered by Sheets-Johnstone (1999), can stand as a critique of dominant Western knowledge. Casting doubt on the central assumptions of dominant knowledge provides the space to create alternative understandings, like those embodied in dancerly knowing.

In offering her phenomenological account of improvisational dance, Sheets-Johnstone (1999) commented that this process led her to consider further the nature of thinking and epistemology. She argued that if the experience of thinking in movement demonstrated that movement constituted thought, then this seriously undermined the Western assumption that thought and knowledge exist exclusively through language and rationality (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). Thinking in movement undermined the epistemological assumption that the pursuit of knowledge is a rational endeavour. Further, if the experience of thinking in movement demonstrated that thinking occurred in the body (or is embodied), then this also undermined the assumption that mind and knowledge are separate from body and experience. The experience of improvisational dance, as Sheets-Johnstone (1999) presented it, would appear to undermine Cartesian mind/body dualism, and the dualist separation of knowledge and experience.

Obviously this argument resonates with my feminist interest to critique what counts as knowledge, what knowledge counts, and who can know (Du Plessis & Alice, 1998).

While not clearly expressing her research in feminist terms, Sheets-Johnstone's work has contributed to the feminist and the phenomenological projects to critique Western knowledge and epistemology. She has challenged the mind/body and knowledge/experience dualisms that contribute to the 'somatophobia' of Western culture (Grosz, 1995). This 'somatophobia' equated women with body and experience, which in turn contributed to the oppression of women. Sheets-Johnstone (1999) also offered the basis for a reconsideration of movement and dance as epistemologically significant, thus challenging the marginalisation of dance as merely a bodily activity for women. Instead Sheets-Johnstone (1999) offered an understanding of the relevance of dance experience that resonates with feminist inquiry, and particularly with my research interests. She outlined a phenomenological method of studying movement and dance through investigating lived experiences. Her arguments underlie my philosophical thesis that dance can be an embodied way of knowing, and my premise that phenomenological investigation of lived experiences in dance is a relevant area for inquiry.

My interest is to develop more explicitly feminist phenomenological research into dance, particularly women's contemporary solo dance. To Sheets-Johnstone's analytical phenomenological work on movement and dance (1999), I can add feminist understandings of the construction and production of stereotypical femininity and the impact of such femininity on women dancers.

Through feminist and phenomenological research into individual women's lived experiences, I can explore how women's embodied ways of knowing (thinking in movement) provide ways to understand and recreate stereotypical femininity.

I now consider feminist dance writers and their use of phenomenological understandings in consideration of dance.

Contemporary dance writer and feminist Ann Albright (1997) drew from phenomenologist Iris Young (1980) in her consideration of femininity in contemporary dance performance. She took up the issue of femininity in discussion of what she termed 'techno bodies' – highly muscular bodies that cross over gender norms. As an example, she discussed the 'techno body' of contemporary dancer Louise Lecavalier, (from Canadian company La La La Human Steps), a dancer known for her extraordinary musculature and strength. Albright (1997) commented that Lecavalier's body challenged feminine norms in its shape, size and muscle mass. Lecavalier "creates an intense physicality that both literally and figuratively crosses over gender norms, even in the midst of a cultural moment in which both men and women are encouraged to cultivate a muscularly defined look in their bodies", according to Albright (1997, p.29). However, in Lecavalier's dancing, Albright also saw a slippage between the actual strength and muscularity of her body, and the way in which she continued to perform stereotypical femininity (Albright, 1997). Albright's point was that while contemporary dance training encouraged the development of a fit, muscular physicality, this alternative physicality might not actually result in recreated femininity if the dancer continued to perform stereotypical feminine behaviour and roles.

To support her argument, Albright (1997) drew from Young's phenomenological research on the modalities of feminine movement in her discussion of contemporary dance performance. To review, Young theorised that girls and women exhibited typical characteristics of feminine movement - ambiguous transcendence, inhibited intentionality and discontinuous unity in activities such as throwing a ball (1980). Albright (1997) summarised Young's research as follows

By analysing the ways that young girls and women are trained *not* to take up the space around them, *not* to use the capacity of their whole body in engaging in physical activity, and *not* to fully project their physical intentions onto the world around them, Young describes the tensions inherent in experiencing one's body as a thing and as a capacity for action, both as passive subject and as active subject" (p.47, italics original).

Albright (1997) considered the performance of Lecavalier in relation to Young's research, and argued that, despite Lecavalier's muscular, atypical woman's body, she continued to exhibit the existential ambiguity of feminine movement and bodily comportment. In performance, Lecavalier moved her body as a series of disconnected parts, and often without clear spatial intention. Albright concluded that "While her built-up body radically challenges a conventionally feminine body or movement style, Lecavalier's disconnected intentionality reinforces her traditionally gendered role within the spectacle" (1997, p.50).

Albright then considered the choreographic and performance work of dancer Jennifer Monson in relation to Young's research on the modalities of feminine movement. She commented that dancers like Monson used physical dance as a basis for their choreographed and improvisational performances, rather

than for display of strength and muscularity. According to Albright (1997), Monson's movement had, in contrast to Lecavalier's movement, a clear and directed energy, clarity of weight, spatial intention and movement flow. Albright described Monson's performance as follows

Because her whole body is affected by her movement, she seems to ride the currents of the air around her, emphasising the spatial flow of her dancing rather than directly placing her limbs in a shape. This clarity of weight, spatial intention, and movement flow allow Monson to dance in an explosive, raw manner that is both physically subtle and pleurably rambunctious. She is strong but contained" (1997, p.51).

As Albright (1997) outlined in her discussion of Monson's performance, while Monson is strong and powerful, she is not framed in her performance as having either a fierce aerobicized physicality, or a feminine lithe delicacy. Monson is not deliberately resisting stereotypical femininity, but dancing an expanding norm of feminine movement through her explorations, according to Albright (1997). In this way, Albright argued that Monson's dancing is responsive, enduring, able to accommodate change, and can offer the audience a more profound connection with her dancing experience (1997).

It is interesting to note however, that Albright does not consider Young's (1980) brief comment about dance. Young (1980) did not consider dancing as movement to which her modalities of feminine movement would naturally or necessarily apply. Her view of dancing was that while it was structured body movement, it was movement without a particular aim, and she was interested in movement that she regarded as aiming to accomplish a definite purpose or aim (1980). Albright (1997) did not acknowledge this point in applying Young's

work to her analysis of dance performance, perhaps because to contemporary dancers, dancing does have a purpose or aim of some sort. Young's understanding of dance may simply reflect typical Western attitudes about dance as being unintentional, purposeless movement. I am inclined to accept that Young's modalities of feminine movement might well apply to dancing along with other movements like throwing balls. Albright (1997) must also have accepted that Young's work could be applied to dance.

An analysis of contemporary dance performance experiences, referencing Young's feminist phenomenology can provide me with more insight into understanding feminine movement. I am interested in relating Young's work to my own processes of creating and analysing solo dance work. I am also interested in relating Young's understandings, as Albright (1997) did, to my discussion of other women's solo dance work, considering how they describe their own movement and intentions in terms of embodiment and femininity.

However, there are further arguments to consider in the practical application of Young's (1980) work. With the benefit of twenty years of on-going feminism, Young (1998) reconsidered her own feminist research on the modalities of feminine movement. Young (1998) noted that she had assumed Merleau-Ponty's account of body comportment, motility and spatiality in her work on feminine movement. What is problematic about Young's assumption is that Merleau-Ponty provided an account that was supposedly abstracted from gender differences. He offered an account of body comportment, motility and spatiality, based on male experiences of movement, something feminists like Elizabeth Grosz (1994) have pointed out is inappropriate.

Young also admitted that she applied Merleau-Ponty's instrumentalist view of the person – that the person “as subject is a purposive actor, with specific objectives it moves out into the world to accomplish” (Young, 1998, p.288). Young went on to comment that “The instrumentalist-purposive model of action privileges plan, intention, and control. These are attributes of action most typical of masculine-coded comportment and activities” (1998, p.288-289). In this sense, Young assumed a masculine model of action for women's movement. Even with Young's application of Simone de Beauvoir's (1953/1972) framework for understanding women's oppression in Western cultures, she admitted (1998) that she constructed women as victims of oppression, assuming their inability to challenge and recreate their own movement. Of course, the application of masculine models of experience to women's experience, and the assumption of women as victims, is precisely what feminists continue to challenge, as Young herself noted (1998). Consequently, Young's work now seems somewhat problematic from a feminist perspective (1980, 1998).

In both of these critiques of her own work, Young raised some issues for consideration for feminists like Albright (1997), and for myself, in applying her phenomenological work. Nevertheless, I can see that there is still much value for feminists, (as Albright (1997) argued), in considering Young's (1980, 1998) work as it relates to women's movement in contemporary dance. But such a phenomenological understanding of the feminine modalities of movement would need to be developed to provide a different and more relevant understanding. Young (1998) went on in her later work to ask whether feminine movement might be understood differently – recreated - in the light of her own critique.

She suggested that a different understanding might be found by looking for “specifically feminine forms of movement that cannot be brought under the unifying instrumentalist model but are nevertheless about work or accomplishing goals” (Young, 1998, p.289). Rather than looking for plan, intention and control in women’s movement, Young asked “What might a phenomenology of action look like which started from the mundane fact that many of us, especially women, often do several things at once?” (1998, p.289).

Considering contemporary dance specifically, I argue that it is an ideal site for considering feminine movement that is about work and intention, though not necessarily about identifiable plan, singular intentional activity or control, as understood through the instrumentalist model. Consequently, I am interested in developing Young’s (1980, 1998) feminist and phenomenological work on modalities of feminine movement in the consideration of my own and other women’s lived experience recreating femininity through dance making. I will apply a phenomenological understanding of feminine movement to analysing my own solo dance and in considering how other women describe and experience their own embodied movement.

To continue my consideration of feminist phenomenological literature, I review the research of Ruth Way (2000). Way (2000) developed research to investigate choreographic processes, interviewing choreographers rather than deconstructing a performance product or ‘text’. Focussing specifically on the experience of choreographing contemporary dance, Way (2000) undertook a phenomenological investigation into the lived experience of the creative processes of dancer/choreographer Yolande Snaith. Way and Snaith both identified Snaith’s choreographic work as ‘theatredance’, that “carries the potential for her audience

to witness and experience the reality she creates because they can hear it, feel it and see it” (Way, 2000, p.53)²⁷. Way investigated Snaith’s lived experience of dance making through interviews, hoping to “begin to form an authentic picture of the methodologies and artistic sensibilities which nurture and inspire these creative processes and choreographic practice” (Way, 2000, p.51).

During the interview, Way (2000) asked Snaith questions regarding her choreographic influences, how she devised and constructed movement, and how meaning and movement developed together throughout the process. Way’s conclusions indicated that Snaith’s experiences were of rigorous investigation, indicating the need to avoid formulaic systems and to instead invent processes, and to employ a process of distillation to extract “the living moment from the kinetic, aural, somatic, spatial and emotional dimensions” (Way, 2000, p.60). Way’s (2000) research into Snaith’s lived experience described a dancer living every moment of performance, infusing movement holistically with kinetic, aural, somatic, spatial and emotional aspects. Way (2000) described processes that resonate with Sheets-Johnstone’s notions of thinking *in* and *about* movement. Her description of the dancer’s lived experience related also to my understanding of dance making as an embodied way of knowing.

Way’s work (2000) offers inspiration for the development of phenomenological methodology for researching dance, and for the use of interview methods. Way’s choice of interviewing as a method to gain understandings of the lived experience of creating dance, provided me with an example of an approach to research.

²⁷ Defined as Way (2000) does, ‘theatredance’ can be seen as a type of contemporary dance that foregrounds the dancer’s experience in the context of theatrical staging.

Although Way was most specifically interested in the collaborative processes of Snaith and her dancers, her methodology and method could be applied to investigate other processes in dance-making, such as understanding solo dance making processes. However, at least in Way (2000), discussion about phenomenological methodology is not evident. Again, Way does not specifically identify herself as feminist in this article, but her approach to researching women's lived experience in dance making resonates with feminist interests in phenomenological research. Based on Way's (2000) work, I can develop a specific interview method that reflects my feminist interest in investigating women's lived experiences in solo dance making.

However, investigation of women's lived experience requires the development of ways of writing (the main means of communicating research) that are appropriate for representing movement experience - embodied ways of knowing. The development of writing with a less analytical style than Sheets-Johnstone presented (1966, 1999), for the representation of lived dance experience is important to my research. Way (2000) also presented her research into Snaith's lived experience in a typical research style. Way's dancer's comments were included in a section of edited interview questions and answers, framed by Way's introduction and conclusions about relevant research issues. I am interested in developing alternative representations of lived experience in my research. Sondra Fraleigh (2000) and Susan Stinson (1995) discussed some of the issues around representing lived experience in phenomenological dance research. I will consider their discussions below.

Embodied ways of knowing: issues in representing dance as a way of

knowing

Sondra Fraleigh has undertaken phenomenological research into dance (1987, 1993, 2000), arguing that phenomenology has provided her with “a method for intuitive and theoretical reflections on dance from multiple perspectives” (2000, p.54). She saw phenomenology as both a descriptive method and a philosophy (Fraleigh, 1993). Fraleigh contributed a great deal to the study of dance in her work on dance, the lived body and aesthetics (1987). Her early work focussed on creating an aesthetic perspective of dance, using the phenomenological method “to describe the experience of dance as it is lived, necessarily, through the body” (Fraleigh, 1987, p.xiv). In Fraleigh’s more recent work (2000), she considered new ways of writing about dance, moving on from her more traditional methods of representation (1987). Fraleigh acknowledged the work of Sheets-Johnstone (1966), but commented that she wanted to write more descriptively, using an embodied voice, rather than writing analytically as Sheets-Johnstone had done (Fraleigh, 2000). Fraleigh stated that she “wanted to weave the intuitive voice of the dancer into a descriptive aesthetics, slipping from the first-person experiential voice to analytical third-person theory, as phenomenology does” (2000, p.54).

Fraleigh suggested possibilities for developing phenomenological dance research, two of which are relevant to my research specifically. Firstly, “*the validation of personal and shared experiences*” as dancers and researchers learn to communicate their research through embodied ways of knowing (Fraleigh, 2000, p.55, italics original). Secondly, ““*dancing as a way of knowing*” that brackets body-mind integrity” and is relevant for self-knowledge within phenomenological research (Fraleigh, 2000, p.55, italics original).

Through inclusion of short personal vignettes about her own learning experiences, and through the inclusion of segments of writing from her dance students, Fraleigh demonstrated her validation of dance experiences and her appreciation of dance as a way of knowing (2000). In describing the intentional basis of dance, Fraleigh wrote from her own experiences

When I dance, I am acutely aware of my movement, I study it, try out new moves, study and perfect them, until I eventually turn my attention to their subtleties of feeling, and meaning. Finally, I feel free in them. In other words, I embody the motion. When I make a movement truly, I embody it. And in this, I experience what I would like to call “pure presence”, a radiant power of feeling completely present to myself and connected to the world...These are those moments when our intentions toward the dance realized. (1993, p.104)

In another example, Fraleigh included the following short poetic vignette on her own experience, to show how she gained the desire to take care and responsibility of herself. She wrote, “I love to twist my spine. As a vertebrate, I respect the diamond chain of it, how it bends and extends exquisitely, even in the poverty of my illnesses, and how its nebulous brilliance writhes as I move...” (Fraleigh, 2000, p.58).

Within her writing, Fraleigh (2000) also included quotations from her student’s work. This example indicated her student’s growing self-awareness – “I lived in response to my body from others, detached in the clouds, in the physicality I was so shy of. Now my body lives within me, I have called it to me. My body is beautiful” (Fraleigh, 2000, p.59).

According to Fraleigh (2000), such phenomenological descriptions involve two levels of intuition: sense and meaning. She commented that phenomenological description “aims towards original, intuitive description of sense interpretation... and it informs philosophical theory” (2000, p.60).

Fraleigh thus takes Sheets-Johnstone’s (2000) work as a starting point for further exploration into phenomenological research in dance. Although she indicated that she wanted to add her woman’s perspective to the male-dominated field of phenomenology, Fraleigh does not contribute a specifically feminist perspective. Again, I argue for a specifically feminist phenomenology, involving the investigation of women’s lived experiences and undertaken with a feminist consciousness. Fraleigh (2000) moved toward a less analytical style of writing to represent embodied ways of knowing in dance with her inclusion of personal vignettes and quotes from dance students. However, I argue that much more development is possible in creating vivid and visceral first-person stories of experience, of embodied ways of knowing. Dance writer and researcher Susan Stinson (1995) undertook some alternative approaches to representing embodied ways of knowing in dance.

Exploring ways to represent her experience in dance was a focus for Stinson (1995). She began with a recognition that her lived experience in dancing was most influential in her thinking and writing as a dance researcher, and she aimed to move “beyond abstract language to use language that touches the readers on a sensory level” (Stinson, 1995, p.54). Through experiences of sensing form and shape internally in dance, Stinson came to understand how her kinesthetic sense, “the sensation of movement and tension”, operated (1995, p.43). The kinesthetic sense helps dancers understand movement and dance.

But it also helps audiences to understand dance as “the kinesthetic sense allows us to go inside the dance, to feel ourselves as participants in it, not just as onlookers” (Stinson, 1995, p.43). The value of the kinesthetic sense is not limited to watching and understanding dance however. According to Stinson (1995), the kinesthetic sense also helps individuals to connect with others moving, for example, with an athlete competing on television.²⁸

The kinesthetic sense contributes to an understanding of what another person is feeling, be they dancer, athlete or writer at a computer (Stinson, 1995). The possibility that Stinson (1995) recognised, was that the kinesthetic sense might also assist in understanding, representing and communicating dance research through words, the accepted means for representing lived experience.²⁹ Stinson (1995) argued that her lived experiences contributed to her development of representational forms of writing about dance.

She described her experience of ‘knowing in her bones’, as follows:

As a person whose professional home has been dance for many years and whose personal home has been my body, I experience thought as something that occurs throughout my body, not just above my neck. Until I know something on this level – in my bones so to speak – the knowledge is not my own, but is rather like those facts one memorises which seem to fall out of the brain the day after an exam (Stinson, 1995, p.46).

Dance research required thinking in movement (Sheets-Johnstone, 2000), or embodied knowing, or ‘knowing in her bones’ (Foster, 1976; Stinson, 1995).

²⁸ Also see Foster (1995) and Markula & Denison (2000).

²⁹ In some contexts dancing is accepted as research (Brown, 1994), but in most, language-based representation of research is also required to communicate with others.

The kinesthetic sense also helped the researcher to connect with other participants in the research, developing a sense of empathy and understanding of their unique lived experiences. When thinking about how to represent her own and other dancers' experiences in words, Stinson advised telling a story of rich lived experience (1995). She commented "I look for words that do more than communicate abstract ideas. I want to use sensory-rich images in hopes that a reader can feel the words and not just see them on the page" (Stinson, 1995, p.52). Through cultivating the kinesthetic sense and using kinaesthetically rich words in stories, the dancer may more appropriately represent dance and research experiences, and allow the reader a better understanding of embodied ways of knowing. Searching for an understanding of an abstract relationship between ethics and aesthetics in her dance research work, Stinson (1995) described how knowing in her bones helped provide her with this understanding. She related her lived experience in rich words that promote a kinesthetic response in me as a reader.

All of my attempts to figure out my theoretical framework felt disconnected from the concerns that had initially propelled me into the study. One day, still searching for my elusive framework, I went for one of those long walks that were a necessary part of my thinking process. When I returned, I lay down to rest and instantly became conscious of how differently I perceived myself and the world when I was standing compared to when I was lying down. Within moments I knew my framework, which was based on a metaphor of verticality (the impulse toward achievement and mastery – being on top) and horizontality (the impulse toward relationship and community – being with). I noticed how

lying horizontal felt passive and vulnerable while the return to vertical made me feel strong and powerful; these feelings offered important insights as to why we value achievement so much more than community. Once I had identified this dual reality in my own body, I found it in the work of others... While I had read each of these authors previously, I had to find my framework in my own body before I could recognize the connection between the concepts they had identified and the issues with which I was grappling” (Stinson, 1995, p.51).

What Susan Stinson’s work (1995) suggested to me was a method or means for representing a dancer’s embodied ways of knowing in story form. Through stories rich in kinesthetic images and words, I might allow the reader to connect her own embodiment to my embodied voice. Stinson’s (1995) suggested method of representing her lived experience informs my work as a basis from which I can develop. I can expand her work by using kinaesthetically rich words and images in stories about my own experience, and the experience of other women. As a researcher in dance education, her pointers are valuable for me in developing appropriate methods or means to represent my own and my research participant’s embodied ways of knowing in dance making. The result of this may be better understanding of embodied ways of knowing in dance, both for me as a dancer personally and for me as researcher with other participants, and for my readers.

Recreations: representing embodied ways of knowing in dance

My research project adds a specifically feminist focus to phenomenological investigation into lived experiences in dance – embodied ways of knowing in dance. Again, as I mentioned earlier in relation to the research of Sheets-Johnstone (1966, 1999), Way (2000), Fraleigh (2000) and Stinson (1995), phenomenological research in dance has not tended to focus on explicitly feminist concerns. By undertaking feminist and phenomenological dance research I am able to address gaps in the existing phenomenological dance literature. In particular, by developing Young's (1980, 1998) work on the modalities of feminine movement, in relation to dance, I am able to expand the literature on dance and on femininity. I represent my research appropriately through stories of personal dance experience, extending the phenomenological dance literature in this way. My feminist focus requires some development and recreation of the phenomenological dance research I have reviewed above. Through development I offer alternative investigations into embodied ways of knowing in dance.

Summary

In this chapter I reviewed literature that provided feminist and phenomenological insight into embodied ways of knowing in contemporary dance. I reviewed feminist dance literature that focused on the practices undertaken by Western women contemporary dancers to recreate stereotypical femininity, focussing specifically on the feminist solo choreographic work of Carol Brown, (1994, 1995, 2000). I then considered phenomenological dance literature, exploring the contributions to understanding dance from Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1966, 1999), Ruth Way (2000), Sondra Fraleigh (1987, 1993, 2000) and Susan Stinson

(1995). I considered Ann Albright's application of phenomenologist Iris Young's work to her analysis of two women dancers. Within my exploration of this phenomenological research on dance, I focussed on the themes of embodied ways of knowing in dance, and issues in representation of research.

I argued that Western women's solo contemporary dance is an embodied way of knowing and that it potentially provides an ideal context for recreating stereotypical femininity. The process of dance making for individual women dancer/choreographers is one appropriate context in which feminist issues can be considered and lived out. It is important for me to shift my feminist analysis into investigation of personal lived experiences in recreating femininity in dance making, and exploring embodied ways of knowing, using a phenomenological research methodology.

An appropriate methodology for investigating women's embodied ways of knowing in solo dance making would be a feminist and phenomenological methodology - the investigation of women's lived experiences by a feminist. I turn to my methodology in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

Research Design

Introduction

In the previous chapter I reviewed relevant feminist and phenomenological literature about contemporary dance as an embodied way of knowing (Fraleigh, 2000; Sheets-Johnstone, 1999; Stinson, 1995; Way, 2000). I considered literature that related to the practices undertaken by Western women contemporary dancers to understand and recreate stereotypical femininity (Albright, 1997; Brown, 1994, 1995a, 1999). I identified ways that my research project could develop understandings of women's solo contemporary dance making, through the use of a feminist phenomenological investigation into individual women's lived experiences. I also argued that such understandings might be appropriately represented through rich, descriptive narratives about women's lived dance experiences. Such narratives allow me to represent my own and other women's lived experiences in dance making, focused around my research questions, as I describe below.

In this chapter I outline the research design and research process for my project, interweaving the two throughout. I list the questions that focus my research project, and outline the feminist phenomenological methodology for my investigation of women's lived experiences in dance making. I describe the specific methods I used in my research process and explore some of the relevant ethical considerations. I outline how I represented my solo dance making and creative journalling as findings on CD-Rom and through personal experience narratives (Chapter Five).

I consider issues in representing lived experience through narrative and outline how I used a group narrative as my method of representing my findings from interviews and creative journalling.

Feminist and phenomenological research

Feminist research, like feminisms generally, is varied, plural, diverse and experiential (Lather, 1991; Olesen, 2000; Reinharz, 1992). Feminist research is often concerned to question epistemology, methodology and specific research methods, rather than to advocate or privilege orthodox practice in research (Reinharz, 1992). Shulamit Reinharz (1992) considered feminist research as that which the researcher self-identified as feminist, rather than imposing some sort of transcendent definition of what feminist research might be. Nevertheless, many feminist researchers accept Patti Lather's argument that "to do feminist research is to put the construction of gender at the center of one's inquiry" (1991, p.71). In doing so, feminist research should be able to "account for the conditions of its own production" and so be 'unalienated' knowledge, according to Liz Stanley (1990). Feminist research then, is complex and diverse, and as feminist theorists and researchers have moved beyond the reactive stage of the critique of Western knowledge, and into reconstructing alternative knowledges, research methodology and methods have developed further (Lather, 1991; Olesen, 2000; Reinharz, 1992; Stanley & Wise, 1993).

Phenomenological research is the study of lived experience - the study and explication of phenomena, and the description of the experiential meanings we live as we live them (Van Manen, 1997). Sondra Fraleigh (1987) described both phenomenologists and feminists as interested in deconstructing Western hierarchies, including rationalism, mind/body dualism and essentialism. Combined together, I understand feminist and phenomenological research as experiential research into women's lived experience with an agenda to both critique Western knowledge and to reconstruct knowledges (tempered by a 'feminist consciousness'). Feminism adds to phenomenology a scepticism about the innocence of 'experience' and recognition that experience is culturally mediated (Olesen, 2000). As Joan Scott commented,

“Experience is at once already an interpretation and in need of interpretation” (1991, p.779).

Feminist phenomenological research thus includes an acknowledgement of the importance of the embodiment, difference and the socio-cultural context of the individual woman participating in the research – both researcher and research participant. Consequently, a feminist phenomenological methodology is appropriate for my investigation into the lived experiences of women solo contemporary dance makers.

Research Questions

In order to research women’s lived experience in dance making as an embodied way of knowing, I developed the following central research question.

How do I, and other women solo contemporary dancers in Aotearoa, New Zealand, understand dance making as an embodied way of knowing ourselves as women?

This central question guided my interest in women’s solo contemporary dance making. I particularly wished to investigate lived experiences in the exploration of stereotypical femininity and feminism in the dance making process. My specific questions were

How do I, and other women, understand the effects of stereotypical femininity in the process of dance making?

How do I, and other women, recreate stereotypical femininity through the process of dance making?

How do I, and other women, relate to feminism in the process of dance making?

These research questions derived from my feminist and phenomenological approach and from my concern to research the lived experience of women solo contemporary dance makers.

Feminist phenomenological research methodology

My methodology is informed by my feminism. A methodology is a perspective or theoretically informed framework that includes fundamental assumptions and ideas about how research should proceed (Harding, 1987; Lather, 1991; Stanley & Wise, 1990; Van Manen, 1997). In my research, my methodology is feminist phenomenology; the investigation of women's lived experience, by a feminist (myself). Some, but not all, methodologies specify appropriate methods, such as interviewing, biography, autobiography, case studies, or textual deconstruction. Arguably (Stanley & Wise, 1990; Reinhartz, 1992), feminist phenomenology leaves the choice of the specific methods used to the researcher to decide upon.

In my research, investigating lived experience involved turning to the nature of lived experience, and in describing lived experience, acknowledging that any description is only one of the possible interpretations of this process (Van Manen, 1997). This type of investigation is "a process of deepening and extending the quality of our coming to know; a process of changing the way we understand the phenomena of our experience" (Brew, 1998, p.39). My research into lived experience can be seen as an investigation of an experiential process of dance making, rather than the investigation of a product. This focus on process means investigation of experience as I live it, or as other women live it (Van Manen, 1997).

Feminist phenomenological research focuses on experience and meaning – that is, it is experiential research³⁰. According to Angela Brew, experiential research "questions traditional rules about how research should proceed, because it necessarily rests on a recognition of the interrelationship of personal and research issues" (1998, p.32).

³⁰ My use of feminist phenomenology (investigation of women's lived experiences by a feminist) is different from Fraleigh's (1987) work, which she described as existential phenomenology.

My feminist phenomenological perspective and my personal interests intersect in the experience of solo dance making. As I mentioned above, both the investigation of women's experience and the inclusion of the researcher's personal experience are common features of feminist research (Reinharz, 1992; Spender, 1985), and also relevant to phenomenological research (Van Manen, 1997).

Guidelines

In undertaking experiential research, I found Angela Brew's three main guidelines for experiential methodology valuable (1998). Brew's guidelines were *to look again*, *to assume that everything is relevant*, and *to proceed with unbending intent* (1998).

I will consider each of these guidelines, and comment on other issues as they arise, including reflexivity, intersubjectivity, power, trust, rapport and empathy, objectivity and voice.

Brew's first guideline was *to look again* (1998). Looking again involved being reflexive about my own dance making and research. Sandra Jones (1997) argued that reflexivity is central to feminist research and praxis. Jones commented that "Reflexivity involves critical reflection of the ways in which the researcher's social positionality, background and assumptions affect the practice of research" (1997, p.348). To be reflexive is to critically consider the ways that who I am affected my research. In being reflexive I aimed to uncover and recognize the differences that my differences made to my dance making and researching (Reay, 1996). I included myself in my research in acknowledgement of my own subjectivity – my fluid and changing self - as I am continually in the process of becoming (Weedon, 1987). According to Brew, "we are always in the process of coming to know. There is always the journey, never the destination... We continually go round the experiential research cycle progressively deepening our understanding" (1998, p.32).

Looking again provided a guide to minimizing self-deception. This was especially relevant for me as I located myself as both a research participant and a researcher.

Looking again also included a consideration of themes and features of my own experiences and what made those themes and features significant for me (Van Manen, 1997). My research questions focused on understanding how dance making might be an embodied way of knowing, how I understood the impact of stereotypical femininity, what I saw as possibilities for recreating stereotypical femininity, and how I related to feminism. As well as acknowledging my own subjectivity, I also needed to acknowledge how my different experiences influenced my understanding of others. Consequently, I needed to develop intersubjectivity.

I wanted to know how other women responded to my research questions relating to embodied ways of knowing, stereotypical and recreated femininity, and feminism. Together we shared experiences and created understandings and meanings of our own. As Maureen Glancey (1993) wrote, we hoped to develop mutual understandings through sharing our experiences, which she described as intersubjectivity: "Intersubjectivity is the mental knowing and emotional sensing that something is mutually shared and understood" (Glancey, 1993, p.51). I helped to develop intersubjectivity through seeing other women's solo dances, hearing their words in interview discussions, reflecting and writing about our discussions, sharing my written reflections with them and asking for responses, and by reflecting again about their responses to my writing. The other women were participants in negotiating and creating shared understandings and meanings through their discussions and through their responses and reflections. In this sense, we were involved in considering, reflecting, and looking again and again at our experiences and at our understandings of them. Later in the research process, both myself as researcher and the other women as participants were involved in writing and re-writing our shared understandings (Van Manen, 1997).

Intersubjectivity is often a central part of feminist research and requires the qualities of trust, empathy and respect for voice from the researcher. Such research involves sharing so that the intentions and knowledges of the researcher and participant are known and are both part of the research. As Reinharz (1992) noted, feminist researchers often make a commitment to forming relationships, and participants to being involved with sincerity, leading to bonding and friendship. Through such intersubjectivity, researchers and participants may develop close relationships and friendships (Middleton, 1993; Reinharz, 1992). Developing intersubjectivity assisted me in my understanding and writing about dance making as an embodied way of knowing and as an opportunity for understanding and recreating stereotypical femininity.

According to Brew's (1998) guidelines for experiential research, *relevance* is a useful guide. She recommended that the researcher should *act as though everything is relevant*, rather than to draw too narrow boundaries around experiential research. Treating my lived experiences as a woman in Aotearoa, New Zealand, as potentially all relevant to my research helped to highlight the interconnections between my dance making, my research choices and my life. However, allowing everything to be potentially relevant required openness to new insights and honesty in recording material (Brew, 1998). An openness to hearing other women's stories with the anticipation that everything may be relevant, helped me to deepen my understanding of their dance making, and of my own dance making, and helped me to look again for connections and new ways of knowing in dance making. This guideline related to what Max Van Manen described as "balancing the research context by considering the parts and wholes" (1997, p.33). He suggested the researcher take time to look at the broader picture as well as the details, and in this way, what was relevant to understanding would become clearer (Van Manen, 1998).

The third guideline Brew offered for experiential research is *to proceed with unbending intent* (1998). According to Brew, "Reflection takes place on many different levels. If the research is pursued with unbending intent, it means not shirking its difficulties. The research process is part of the individual's process of becoming" (1998, p.35). Van Manen described this guideline as "maintaining a strong and oriented relation" rather than disinterestedness (1997, p.33). I needed time to immerse myself in experience, to look again and reflect, and to allow everything to be relevant. This meant that I worked hard to reflect from a multitude of perspectives on my own dance making and research. Continuing with unbending intent was the commitment I made. Proceeding with unbending intent helped me through the difficult moments in writing my own and other women's experiences. Negotiating and constructing meaning with other women was challenging. I had to be continually open to hearing other women's words, and while acknowledging my own interpretations, I had to focus on constructing meaning together with the other women.

Brew's (1998) guidelines for experiential research served me well in undertaking feminist phenomenological research into women's lived experiences. I consider some of the qualities required of feminist phenomenological research and researchers below.

Qualities of feminist research

An important quality of a feminist researcher is a commitment to breaking down power relationships between researcher and participant (Reinharz, 1992).

A common concern in feminist research has been to reconstruct the traditional power relationship between researcher and participants. In a traditional research situation, the researcher has power over the participants in determining the topic being researched and the methods used, and in controlling the final research account (Olesen, 2000).

This power relationship and the male bias in Western knowledge resulted in what Liz Stanley (1990) described as ‘alienated’ knowledge. To treat the other women as informants (as in the traditional research model), who must or should give me their knowledge would have situated me, as researcher, as more powerful. One of the common qualities of feminist researchers is their desire to break down the power differences (Reinharz, 1992), and to acknowledge that there are a multitude of experiences and ways of knowing. I considered the women involved in the research as participants and friends, as opposed to informants or subjects. I aimed to generate shared understandings, of both myself and the other woman who participated in this construction of knowledge. The experiences of each of the women I met were valid and important, and I acknowledged the individuality of each woman, rather than attempting to create an objective account independently myself.

Trust is a particularly important quality for researchers investigating women’s lived experiences. A relationship of trust is necessary in feminist attempts to understand other women’s experiences (Fontana & Frey, 2000), and to enhance the process of creating shared understandings and intersubjectivity. A research participant who does not trust the researcher, is unlikely to share their experiences without reservations. Trust assists the development of a good rapport, which is important when the goal of the research is to understand another person’s experiences and ideas (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Andrea Fontana and James Frey wrote that “the researcher must be able to take the role of the respondents and attempt to see the situation from their viewpoint, rather than superimpose his or her world of academia and preconceptions upon them” (2000, p.655). Rapport is also important in relation to trust and developing intersubjectivity.

Empathy is a further quality that relates to the development of rapport and to establishing trust and intersubjectivity. Susan Stinson, writing about the dancer's enhanced kinesthetic empathy, commented that "it is my kinesthetic sense that I must use if I am to know my relatedness with my embodied fellow participants in my research" (1995, p.49). She argued that in good interviews, her kinesthetic sense allowed her awareness about the level of trust, rapport and empathy developed between herself and the research participant. This, in turn, informed her understanding of the lived experience of the other person (Stinson, 1995). In being able to empathize kinesthetically and emotionally with the other women (as a dancer myself), I was able to understand their experiences and words, and this contributed to our ability to create shared understandings.

In undertaking feminist phenomenological research, I was not attempting to construct an objective account of dance making, but rather wanting to offer my subjective understandings and interpretations of my own experiences, and of hearing about other women's experiences. Offering a multitude of experiences of dance making was not an attempt to construct a singular authoritative perspective of solo dance making. Instead, I offered a plurality of experiences to include other voices and to invite the possibility of other ways of knowing (Du Plessis & Alice, 1998). In this way, the perspectives and experiences I offered as researcher were of a specific, embodied woman in a particular socio-cultural context, rather than an objective view. However, I acknowledged that I am a member of the community of solo dance makers. My experiences in dance making did inform how I understood, interpreted and wrote about the experiences of others. I acknowledged the interpretive role I played in my research with other women. I found Carol Brown's statement summarized my intentions; "By avoiding the 'objectivist' stance, prized amongst androcentric methods of research, and entering her own subjectivity into the research equation, the feminist recognizes how her cultural beliefs shape the orientation and outcomes of her research" (1983, p.202).

My research is an experience I shared with others, and we each contributed to the outcomes of the research.

The issue of voice relates to the feminist concern to allow women's voices to be heard, to avoid exploitation in this process, and to develop intersubjectivity (Olesen, 2000). Within my research I had both my own voice as researcher and dancer, and the voices of the research participants to consider. As I wanted to hear other women's lived experiences, and to develop and enhance intersubjectivity, I needed also to include my own voice in the research, both as a dance maker and as a researcher (Reinharz, 1992). As Reinharz commented "In addition to describing the personal origins of a research question, the feminist researcher is likely to describe the actual research process as a lived experience, and she is likely to reflect on what she learned in the process" (1992, p.258). As a dance maker, I included myself as I included other women - as a participant (Court & Court, 1998), as well as a researcher. I attempted to collapse the divide between researcher and participant, between subject and object (Brown, 1994), by situating myself both as researcher and as dance maker, as I have described above. But, as Marian and Helena Court (1998) commented, I not only wanted to have my voice implicitly part of the research as researcher, I wanted to include my voice and experiences explicitly as a research participant.

I also needed to consider the voices of the women I interviewed.³¹ According to Sondra Fraleigh, including the other women's voices "validates the personal voice, but in eliciting other voices, it works outwards toward comparative knowledge" (2000, p.56). I negotiated meetings and ways of sharing experiences with the other dance makers, to share the control of the research project. I endeavoured to respect the personal, cultural, religious and other values of the other women. I did this by allowing time for them to express their ideas in their own words. I also provided opportunities

³¹ Even though we were all involved in creating understandings, I remained the researcher doing the writing of the project (Olesen, 2000). Consequently, I worked with feminist research methods in which I was able to retain my own voice as well as the voices of the participants.

for the women to further clarify and extend their comments. I wanted to avoid any possible concerns about misrepresentation by negotiating and gaining consent for involvement in the research. I also emphasized that it was my intention to retain the presence of each woman's voice in the research. I quoted directly where appropriate, allowed for participants to clarify and develop their comments throughout the research process, and kept them fully informed about how I was using their comments. It was the experiences and the dance making of particular individuals that I was interested to hear about and discuss. It was not my intention to make evaluative judgments about a participant's solo dance making, but rather to provide the opportunity to discuss dance making, and to understand their lived experience.

Having explored feminist phenomenological research design and methodology, and some of the related issues, I now outline the specific methods chosen for my research project.

Research methods

There were three specific methods I chose to utilize in my investigation of lived experience. The methods I chose were dance making, creative journalling and interviewing. These methods allowed me to focus on both my own and other women's lived experiences.

I utilized dance making and creative journalling to explore my own experiences as a dance maker, in order to respond to the "how do I..." part of my research questions. To explore the "how do other women..." part of my research questions I utilized interviewing. In addition, I also drew on my own experiences as a dance maker to understand other women's lived experiences. I will discuss each of these methods in detail below.

Dance making

Dance making was a method I used to research my own lived experience. I used the skills of dance making and the craft of choreography to create my own solo dance. I was interested personally in recreating femininity for myself through dance performance. Most importantly for me was the possibility of using dance making as an embodied way of knowing (Foster, 1998; Fraleigh & Hanstein, 1999). Dance making became a way of analysing, understanding and resolving my own experiences in relation to feminisms. Dance making thus allowed me to explore the "how do I..." part of my three research questions.³²

I use the term 'dance making' to refer to a plurality of practices utilized in creating and performing a solo contemporary dance. 'Dance making' reflects more than just choreography - "the tradition of codes and conventions through which meaning is constructed in dance" (Foster, 1998, p.5). Dance making as a method, is the holistic process of creating an artistic solo performance work and is a method of giving expression and embodiment to my lived experience (Van Manen, 1997). Susan Foster characterized the dance maker's creative process "as a way of knowing, other than and outside of verbal knowledge" (1998, p.6). Sandra Fraleigh and Penelope Hanstein described dance as "something we do, also a way of studying ourselves: a way of knowing" (1999, p.353-354). Dance making allowed me to understand more about myself as a solo dance maker and as a researcher. As I described above, I also wanted to develop shared understandings with my research participants – intersubjectivity. By being involved in solo dance making myself, I enhanced possibilities for shared understanding and common experiences. Being involved in dance making allowed me to be more empathetic with the other women.

³² I also brought my experience of dance making to viewing and discussing other women's solo dances.

Dance making as a method includes the initial stages of conceptualisation or crystallization of an idea, image or experience as the starting point for the creative process. This stage of the dance making process might occur at any time, prompted by anything, often long before I enter the dance studio. Dance making includes initial movement improvisation and exploration around ideas, images and experiences to create specific movements and choreography. Improvisation provides opportunities for unanticipated and spontaneous elements to develop (Foster 1998). Dance making includes standard choreographic practices, such as creation of movement sequences using gesture, travelling and rolling (for example), to develop specific movements and physical images. This process involves what Foster described as "sorting through, rejecting and constructing physical images" (1998, p.7). In choreographing, I used techniques for manipulating movement sequences such as the use of dynamic, repetition, retrograde, splicing, reversal and accumulation. According to Foster, "The choreographer engages a tradition of representational conventions, knowledge which is shared to a greater or lesser extent...and selects from among these conventions, implementing, innovating, and even challenging aspects of the tradition" (1998, p.9). As Foster described, this is the labour of the dance maker in the craft of dance making (1998). Dance making could also involve interaction with and interpretation of music, as well as use of theatrical elements, multi-media, acrobatics, text, story telling and other elements that I might integrate into the dance.

As a method, dance making involves recording and reflecting on experiences with the use of creative journalling, video documentation, and audience feedback within the rehearsal process. In addition, specific performance techniques such as visualization, use of focus and characterization might be part of dance making for me. Foster (1988) included exploring qualities of focus, projecting attentiveness, awareness, and motivation as part of dance making. Framing a solo dance for performance through program notes, performance venue and the role of the audience is also part of dance making. Finally,

using the relevance guideline as suggested by Angela Brew (1998), there might be other aspects that formed part of the dance making process, such as stories or reference to an unusual experience or event in my life.

Dance making is a lived experience, an embodied way of knowing. I regarded it as a research method that allowed me to feel new connections, relationships and meanings between experiences in my life, when embodied through movement. For example, I discovered new relationships between theoretical concepts, my writing practices, and my movement practices, and I came to understand personal experiences through moving. As a knowledge strategy, it allowed me to experiment with integrating the knowledges I felt were intuitively important, with theoretical knowledges I had studied, and to consciously attempt to embody them. I could weave my passion, experience and embodied individuality together within my feminist research. Through this embodied method, I was able to explore and resolve the challenges and tensions that arose with my integration of knowledges and to take on knowledges that I found I could live. I was able to explore how stereotypical femininity impacted on me, what the possibilities for recreating femininity for myself were, and how I related to feminism in my solo dance making. The dance making process was a method that gave meaning to both my personal experiences, and the feminist and phenomenological theory I was exploring, through my embodiment of these knowledges.

I outline my other specific research methods below.

Creative Journalling

Writing, like dance making, is a way of knowing (Richardson, 1998a). During my research I wrote in a creative journal as a method of personal inquiry into my research and into my dance making (Richardson, 1998a). I recorded, reflected on and constructed meanings of my dance making process.

A creative journal is a personal document (Holly, 1984) that contains creative and artistic processes, rather than being only a diary or appointment document.

A creative journal is a collection of writings of varied styles, notes, lists, images, drawings and more, all organized as the journal keeper sees fit (Grove, 1999; Holly, 1984). Using Brew's guidelines for experiential research again, I found that creative journal writing was a method for me to look and reflect, to include material on the assumption that everything might be relevant, and to continue with intent with my research. Writing in a creative journal helped me to record and understand my dance making processes, in order to explore the "how do I..." part of my research questions. As Laurel Richardson argued, feminisms direct "us to understand ourselves reflexively as persons writing from particular positions at specific times; and...frees us from trying to write a single text in which everything is said to everyone" (2000, p.9). By reflecting on my research and dance making in a creative journal, I was able to explore and interpret my own experiences, knowing that there was no requirement that I make a true and accurate account. In this sense, "there is no such thing as "getting it right", only "getting it differently contoured and nuanced" (Richardson, 2000, p.10).

I undertook some writing specifically to record, reflect on and construct meanings of my experience. Such journal writing allowed me to write a flow of impressions, to record experiences, to write dialogues and interpretations, all of which I reviewed later and which allowed deeper levels of insight (Holly, 1984; Van Manen, 1997). Mary Holly described this process as writing to reflect. She stated that

Writing to reflect involves a cyclical pattern of reflection; first, reflecting on experiences before or as you write; and then, reflecting on the journal entries themselves at some later stage, which may provide material for further reflection and writing, and so on (Holly, 1984, p.7).

I began by writing in my creative journal about things that happened in my personal life, in dance rehearsals, when I saw performances, when I performed, my research, and even mundane things about living. I paid attention to my feelings, thoughts and emotions, recalling and understanding experiences that I lived through (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). I collected these stories, and I wrote lists, poems, and notes about conversations and feedback from audience members, and drew sketches. I tried to capture some of the richness of my experiences, including the textures, sounds, smells and sights of places, my fears and excitement in performing, my fascination as an audience member. Recording and reviewing personal notes, sketches and choreographic plans in a creative journal provided a means for me to interact with myself over time (Glancey, 1993). I was able to create a record that would be around later to review, in order to reflect on the development of my ideas and to assist my memory. Nancy Maris commented that although "the archives of memory... stay open longer hours than many of us would wish", sometimes finding specific things is harder, especially as time goes on (1994, p.33).

Valerie Janesick suggested that "the act of journal writing may be incorporated into the research process to provide a data set of the researcher's reflections on the research act" (1999, p.505). Journal writing was a way to get feedback from myself and to reflect on meanings as I constructed them. It allowed me to reflect, dig deeper, look again at my dance making process and at the other methods I used to research (Janesick, 1999; Richardson, 2000). As part of a way of coming to understand choreographic processes, other researchers have included journals and diaries as research methods (Grove, 1999). Keeping a creative journal is a common practice for dance makers and other artists (Janesick, 1999). Drawings, illustrations and reports on movement tasks were some of the ways that choreographers developed dances (Grove, 1999).

Tristine Rainer (1978) described some techniques for journal writing that I have utilized. Some of these were writing lists to record activities, developing scenarios throughout the research, using guided imagery, writing unsent letters, and writing dialogues to help sharpen writing skills. In addition, I developed my own processes, including responding to literature emotively, responding to performances, writing stream-of-consciousness and describing scenes. Using techniques and my own processes that arose throughout the research journey, I attended to my experiences, and was actively engaged in the research journey (Brew, 1998; Brown, 1994; Janesick, 1999; Maris, 1994; Reinharz, 1992; Richardson, 1998, 2000). My creative journal writing was then available for my use within my analysis of my dance making experiences, and of the interviews.³³

Working with Brew's guideline to treat everything as relevant meant that my creative journal included many types of writing about my dance making and research experiences. Of course, not everything turned out to be relevant and necessary in exploring my research questions. However, I began with the expectation that everything might be relevant and I found out what was relevant as I went through the process of reviewing and creating understandings of my dance making experiences. Particular stories and sections of writing were useful in creating the narratives I used in my thesis document, and others stimulated thought about my research experiences. Using a creative journal was a way for me to promote reflexivity about my own practice and to follow the experiential research guideline of looking again (Brew, 1998).

³³ Some of my research participants kept their own creative journals. I invited them to send me material from their journals. In some cases, they referred to their journals to recall information about their dance making, but as we each considered our creative journals private, I only used my own creative journal writing as a research material in the end.

Interviewing

In order to develop an understanding of how dance making might be an embodied way of knowing for other woman, I discussed their understandings of dance making during in-depth interviews, conducted with an interview guide. I also attended their performances and/or viewed their work on video, and kept a journal of my reflections about the research process (as noted above). I will talk about interviewing, specifically about my choice of interviewing style and then my interviewing method, below.

Interviewing is a commonly used feminist qualitative research approach to understanding the ideas and experiences of research participants (Reinharz, 1992). It is an approach that allows for understanding of other's lived experience. According to Max Van Manen (1997), interviewing is both a method for exploring and gathering experiential narrative material, and a vehicle for developing a conversational relationship. One of the fundamental ideas behind the use of interviewing is that people have individual perspectives and experiences. Interviewing was a valuable method for me to utilize, because it allowed me the opportunity to find out more than is possible from simply observing women's solo dances (Reinharz, 1992), and because it was consistent with my feminist interest in acknowledging a multitude of experiences and different ways of knowing. In addition, interviewing also helped me to develop intersubjectivity.

My choice of interviewing as a research method was guided by my commitment to feminist valuing of alternative ways of knowing, and to hearing multiple perspectives. Hearing other women's words was important for me in understanding how dance making is meaningful to them. Shulamit Reinharz commented that "Rather than giving phenomena conventional pigeonholes, we should pay attention to the particular descriptions women use. We should hear the richness of speech, and allow our writing to be similarly complex" (1992, p.40). As I indicated earlier, my experiences in dance making informed how I understood, interpreted and wrote about the experiences of others.

I acknowledged that as a dance maker myself, I played an interpretive role in my research with other women. Being mindful of this, I worked to avoid assimilating other women's experiences to my own (Jones, 1997). I tried to avoid projecting my own expectations onto other women, by listening to their words, by not labelling their experience, or directing their voice. Nadja Aisenberg and Mona Harrington (1988) wrote;

Because we did not know at the outset what the particularities of each woman's relevant experience would be, we did not conduct the interviews through present questions. Rather, we identified general areas we wanted to cover, but let the interviewee's responses determine the order of subjects, the time spent on each, and the introduction of additional issues (1988, p.x).

I kept Aisenberg and Harrington's (1988) comments in mind as I prepared for interviewing.

Interview style

There are multiple ways to conduct interviews. I used in-depth interviews, conducted with a written interview guide of topics (see Appendix Four). In-depth interviews allowed me to focus with the other woman on solo dance specifically. Allowing the interview to be guided by the interviewee (the other woman), but also working with an interview guide of topics, meant that I could find a balance between following the other woman's interests, and also being able to raise topics in which I was interested. I will discuss these choices below in relation to my interview method.

Using the experiential research guideline of relevance, I allowed the dance maker to determine what they considered relevant to share about their solo dance making experiences (Reinharz, 1992). I aimed to be consistent with the feminist aim to avoid exerting control over research participants, and to involve them in the construction of meaning (Jones, 1997; Reinharz, 1992).

Reinharz (1992) argued that interview research helps to develop strong interviewer-interviewee bonds, and intersubjectivity, which are often characteristic of feminist research. In-depth interviewing involved a commitment on my part as the researcher, and from the other woman, to forming a relationship and to participating in the construction of meaning. It also required a high level of trust and willingness from both of us.

As I commented within my discussion of feminist phenomenological methodology, I wished to negotiate shared understandings and meanings with the other dance makers. I negotiated and constructed understandings of dance making in collaboration with them, valuing their voices as well as my own in the research (Jones, 1997). However, I also maintained responsibility for the interview analysis and for retaining my voice in the analysis (Jones, 1997). Sandra Jones commented that while she wished to be faithful to the stories women told her and to enter into a genuine dialogue, she also retained her own voice (1997). She wrote that "I made choices about what to include and exclude in the analysis, and the analysis reflects the way that I made meaning of their stories as they were told to me" (Jones, 1997, p.349). While we undertook analysis together during the interviews, I also created an analysis of my own, for which I was responsible.

One of the concerns some researchers have about conducting in-depth interviews with only an interview guide rather than specific questions is that completely different information might arise from each of the participants, thus reducing the possibilities for comparisons to be drawn (Reinharz, 1992). However, comparisons between participants were not central to my research. Instead, I was more interested to hear about individual dance making processes. Reinharz (1992) commented that interviewing allowed researchers to really make use of and understand the differences among people, as opposed to only identifying similarities.

Interview method

As my interviews were in-depth, focusing on the process associated with a particular solo dance, I began by prompting the dance maker to talk about the process of making a particular solo dance. As they shared their experiences, I recorded the whole interview on Dictaphone. During the interview I encouraged the dance makers to reflect on and talk about their dance making in their own ways, through telling stories about experiences or describing choreographic tasks, or in other ways. I took note of specific words and topics to follow up with further questions during the interview.

While I wished to allow the participant to speak about their own experiences in the interview, I also had topics that I wanted to explore with the dance maker. I was interested in the impact of stereotypical femininity and possibilities for recreating femininity, and in dance making as an embodied way of knowing. I included these topics in my interview guide as a list of topics around which I constructed questions or prompts as appropriate during the interview (see Appendix Four). I anticipated that some of my topics would naturally arise during the interview, given that we likely both had some shared knowledge of solo dance making. If these topics arose within our discussion, I prompted the dance maker to elaborate in detail how she explored femininity in the process of her dance making, for example.

If the topics I was especially interested in did not arise within the discussion, I formulated a specific question during the interview to encourage them to reflect on and share their understandings. Noting the specific words and topics the other woman used, I constructed prompts and specific questions as the interview proceeded. I constructed questions such as "How do you understand femininity?", "What does feminism mean to you?", "Do your personal experiences as a woman influence your dance making?", "Are you in any way resistant to stereotypical femininity in your dance making?", "How would you respond to the idea that dance making is a way of knowing?", "How do you understand embodiment?"

While I hoped that such questions might encourage my research participants to reflect on these ideas, I sometimes needed to frame them within my own experience to illustrate them. For example, "I find that particular experiences in my life often stimulate my dance making and may become central ideas in the process of my solo dance making. For example, my experiences of coming home from travelling overseas became part of my recent solo. I wonder if you can relate to this? In what way do your personal experiences as a woman influence your dance making?" By framing questions from my point of view, I was able to share some of my experiences and to use self-disclosure as a way of contributing to the process of creating shared knowledges (Reinharz, 1992). Sandra Jones argued that the feminist practice of self-disclosure is necessary in negotiating meaning (1997). Consequently, both the other dance maker and I contributed to the direction of the conversation and the construction of shared meanings during the interview. We were both engaged in the analysis and construction of meanings, through listening, questioning and clarifying until we understood together. I clarified my understanding by repeating back some of what the other dance maker shared with me and asking them to confirm my understanding, or to clarify their comments until we reach a shared understanding.

However, this process of clarifying and developing shared understandings continued between us beyond the interview. I followed the interviews with further discussion where possible, in order to allow us both to reflect, look again, and to develop shared understandings. Discussion happened informally through email, letters, over the telephone, and in further personal conversations in some cases. I also extended our dialogue beyond the interview through the return of the interview transcripts. Jones (1997) described a common feminist method of providing interview transcripts for the interviewees and inviting corrections, clarifications and further discussion (Jones, 1997; Reinharz, 1992).

Reinharz (1992) also commented on the value of returning transcripts to the women interviewed. By returning the transcripts, she argued that women were able to have control and voice in the researcher's interpretations.

Having discussed the specific methods I chose to undertake my research project, I introduce the research participants, and then outline the research process I followed.

Research participants

In undertaking my research project, I shared understandings with other women involved in solo contemporary dance making. Some of these women are feminist dance theorists and researchers, to whom I have referred, and others are participants in my research. I began by approaching four women I knew personally, and through them I made contact with other women who were interested in participating in my research. I wanted to speak with women whose work I had seen and who were active in making their own solo contemporary dance to perform. I was most interested in solo dance makers who I thought might work with some sort of feminist consciousness.³⁴

While the contemporary dance community in Aotearoa, New Zealand is relatively small, there were at least ten women I might have approached. I chose to work with five women whose work I found personally interesting and inspiring because of its commitment to reflecting lived experience, and who I thought might be willing to engage in discussion about their dance making.³⁵

I included myself as the sixth participant. I had no specific intention of creating a representative sample of dance makers, because I was not trying to survey a population. Rather, I was specifically interested in the experiences of each individual woman.

³⁴ During the interviews I was able to discuss feminism with each participant, and to ask each woman whether or not they self-identified as feminist and choreographed with this in mind.

³⁵ I approached two other women about participating. One declined to be involved, and another was not involved in dance making during the research period. I spoke to two further women in the context of a pilot interview.

We six women happened to live throughout Aotearoa, New Zealand, and were then aged from 25 to 55. All of us were contemporary dance performers and choreographers, and had trained in an eclectic mix of dance techniques. We each performed and presented dance work in different contexts within Aotearoa, New Zealand, and were solo performers too.



Photo 1: Alison East

Alison East. Ali is a dance and improvisation lecturer at the University of Otago in Dunedin, South Island. She is Pakeha (born and raised in Aotearoa), in her mid-fifties and has two grown children. Ali has been a significant contributor in the dance community, as Director of Origins Dance Theatre in the 1980's and as Director of the contemporary dance training program in Auckland for many years. Ali is well known and respected for her teaching and performance in dance.

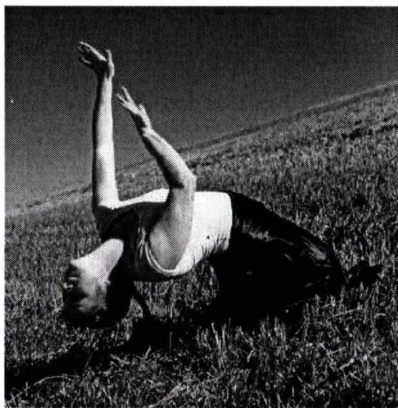


Photo 2: Bronwyn Judge

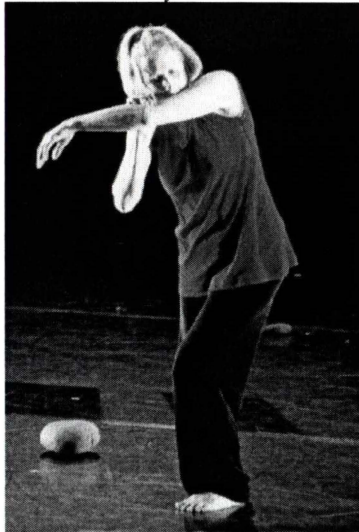
Bronwyn Judge. Bronwyn is a dance teacher and mother of school-age children living in rural Otago. She is Pakeha and in her forties. On occasion Bronwyn performs and dances for Dunedin-based choreographers, and she has created two solo video dance works. Bronwyn is isolated geographically from most of the dance community in Aotearoa, New Zealand.



Photo 3: Jan Bolwell

Jan Bolwell. Jan is a dance educator and writer, policy advisor and performer based in Wellington. For many years Jan was a lecturer in dance education at Wellington College of Education. She is well known for her choreographic works in Wellington, and is an active force in dance education throughout New Zealand. She is Pakeha, in her fifties, and born in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Photo 4: Raewyn Thorburn



Raewyn Thorburn. Raewyn is a Skinner Releasing Technique (SRT) teacher and body worker living in Auckland with her partner, and has grown children. She was born in England, is now in her early fifties and has lived in both Aotearoa, New Zealand and Austria in her adult life. Raewyn teaches SRT in the contemporary dance training program in Auckland, works widely in the community, performs and choreographs.

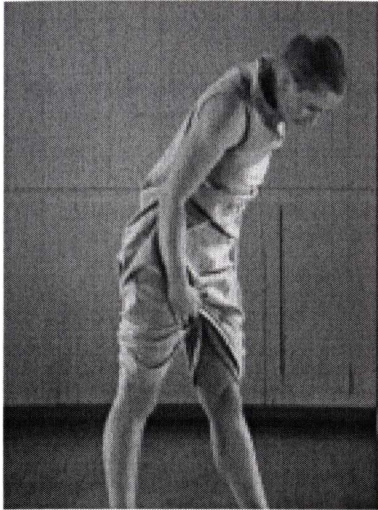


Photo 5: Susanne Bentley

Susanne Bentley. Susanne is a freelance contemporary dancer in her late twenties. She is Pakeha and based in Auckland, when in New Zealand. At present she is dancing in Europe. Susanne studied languages at University, and works as a librarian when not dancing. On completing her contemporary dance training in Auckland, she worked extensively with Curve Dance Collective, a women's contemporary dance collective, and with Touch Compass Mixed Ability Dance Company.

Photo 6: Karen Barbour



Karen Barbour. I am a PhD candidate, dance educator, writer, choreographer and performer, based in the Waikato region. I am in my early thirties and Pakeha. Before training in contemporary dance in Auckland, I studied philosophy to Master's level. I founded Curve Dance Collective, and worked freelance as a dancer, before returning to undertake doctoral research and to teach dance at The University of Waikato.

Making contact and gaining consent

I began by making informal contact with the women I hoped to include as participants. This was done at dance events in casual settings. Having gauged their interest, I followed up with a formal letter outlining the research project and asking the women to participate (Appendix Two). A condition of participating in the research was that the women agreed to being identified in my work. This was because I wished to discuss their public performance work and aspects of their experience that were relevant to their dance making. To conceal their identity, or to use a pseudonym, would have compromised the richness of the research, because it was the dance making of these particular women that was of interest to me. The research participants were individual women who lead "public" lives as performers (as I do). By this I mean that aspects of their life and dance work as performers was public knowledge, both as a result of performing and through the activities of arts marketing and arts criticism. I regarded it as meaningless to conceal their identity, especially when my inclusion of photographs of their solo dance clearly identified them. Some women had already featured in dance videos and documentaries, have had articles written about them, and had photographs and articles published themselves in newspapers, magazines and books. Most were experienced in speaking to journalists and critics about their work and were clearly identified by name in these contexts. It was also relatively commonplace within the performance community to be identified as a public performer and to be written about. Consequently, I anticipated that for these women being identified would be much less a concern than it might be for other research participants. Each of the women I approached consented to being identified by their real name in my research.

The terms of participation were open to discussion and negotiation on an individual basis, although I outlined my suggestions to them in a sample Letter of Agreement (Appendix Three). Following discussion with each participant, I wrote a Letter of Agreement (Appendix Four) for us both sign.

We negotiated an interview date and venue at this stage. The interviews were conducted in a place where the woman felt comfortable, and where noise was minimal. Four of the five interviews were conducted in homes, usually the participant's home.

Interviewing

I prepared for interviewing by creating an interview guide for my use, and when possible, by reviewing a video copy of the solo performances, and/or copies of any notes or published information I had about the woman involved. Each interview was preceded by some conversation and catching up on each other's work, in most cases over a cup of tea. I turned the Dictaphone machine on during our general conversation, and by the time we moved on, we had usually both forgotten about it being there.

We began each interview with discussion of and signing of the Letter of Agreement, and an outline of my interview approach. I opened up discussion of issues of method and content so that opportunity existed for comment and questions. I indicated that my interest was to hear their words and experiences, and that they should feel free to let the discussion proceed 'organically'. I let them know that I did not have specific questions, as I did not want to direct their comments too much, but that I would ask questions as they arose throughout the discussion. I also indicated that I had prepared an interview guide and that I might refer to it to raise issues if need be. However, I did ask a 'starter' question about solo dance making, to begin the interview. This question was very general – "tell me about your most recent solo dance work..."

I established a relaxed rapport with each of the women, most of whom I knew to some degree and three of whom were already close friends. As each had chosen the venue and knew me, the atmosphere was relaxed and informal. I thanked each woman at the end of our time, and outlined what I intended to do with the interview transcript. I also invited them to send me personal materials; photographs, videotapes and any written material they might like me to consider.

I asked them to indicate how I might use the personal material. For example, I asked them to note whether photographs could be used in the research document.

The length of each interview was decided between each of the women and myself, though I had suggested that the interview be of one and a half hours duration in the draft Letter of Agreement (Appendix Two). Most of the interviews were about two hours in length.

Transcriptions

I transcribed each of the interviews. Each participant was then sent a copy of our interview transcript and invited to respond by further clarifying, commenting on, adding to or deleting information, as they felt appropriate (Appendix Five). Some of the women added extra comments, corrections and alterations that they sent back to me. In some cases the transcript was discussed informally further through email, letters and over the telephone. I made sure to let the women know that the transcript was not a final document, and I welcomed changes and additions. I let them know that the transcript would not be included in entirety within my research document, although I might quote directly from the transcript in the creation of my research findings. Finally, in some cases I followed up on specific issues of interest to me that we did not discuss in depth during the interview.

Ethical issues

In feminist phenomenological research there are a number of ethical issues that should be considered in the selecting of research methods and the use of research materials. In general, feminist phenomenological research shares concerns about privacy, consent, confidentiality, and the avoidance of deceit and deception with other research approaches (Olesen, 2000). Some of these issues I raised and discussed above. More particularly, ethical issues relating to participatory research are of concern for me.

Virginia Olesen commented that “participatory research confronts both researcher and participants-who-are-also-researchers with challenges about women’s knowledge; representations of women; modes of data gathering, analysis, interpretation and writing of the account; and relationships between and among the collaborating parties” (2000, p.234). Olesen (2000) recommended that researchers exercise reflexivity and awareness of power and privilege - in a sense working with what I described earlier as a ‘feminist consciousness’. Van Manen recommended that the researcher be aware of the effects on both the participants and themselves as researcher, including possible discomfort, anxiety, self-doubt and irresponsibility, as well as possible transformative effects such as increased awareness, stimulation, insight and liberation (1997). On the whole, common sense, respect for individuality, and open communication and negotiation guided the research process.

Identification of third person/s

An ethical issue I considered was the identification of third person/s, (for example: colleagues or partners) within the interviews or in creative journal writing. I took care to make participants aware of this possibility, and I asked them to avoid identifying third person/s to me. They had the opportunity through editing the transcript to ensure this. If it was not possible, I undertook to disguise the identity of the third person/s in the use I made of the interview transcripts and in my creative journal. Finally, if particular difficulties arose with identification of third person/s, we agreed at the start to limit my use of sections of the interview transcript to retain confidentiality.

Withdrawal from the research

Participants had the option to withdraw from the project or to withdraw particular comments or written material, up until a date we negotiated together (around the time of the completion of my first draft). I discussed concerns raised by participants as they

arose and together we reached resolutions. Participants could request that segments of the transcript remain confidential and not be quoted within my research, but none did.

Handling research information

Copies of the Letters of Agreement were stored in my office and a copy given to each participant. I personally transcribed interviews, supplied each participant with a copy, and stored the transcripts (with participant responses to the transcript), in a secure place in my office. Original copies of the interview audio tapes, and personal materials – photographs, videotapes or written material forwarded to me by the participant – remained in a secure place in my office. Some were referred to or used within the research document when specified by the participant. Original materials were returned to the participants on completion of the research. Hard copies were filed in a lockable filing cabinet and computer files were password protected on my computer.

Representing findings from lived experiences

In the following section I discuss my methods of representing my findings. I chose to represent my lived experiences in solo contemporary dance making through personal experience narratives and CD-Rom. I chose to represent my own and the other women's lived experiences in solo contemporary dance making through a group narrative. I discuss my processes of representing my findings, and relevant issues below.

Issues in representing lived experience through narratives

One of the central feminist critiques of dominant Western 'knowledge' was that 'knowledge' was socially constructed rather than universal (Belenky et al., 1986; Code, 1991; Gatens, 1995; Grosz, 1994; Hawkesworth, 1989; Jagger and Bordo, 1989; Jagger & Struhl, 1978; Stanley, 1990). In coming to understand the consequences of this

feminist (and postmodern) understanding of knowledge, researchers and writers have acknowledged the role that writing and language play in creating a view of reality. This shift from thinking about writing and researchers as representing the truth, to thinking about writing as a construction by an individual researcher, has resulted in what sociologists have called ‘the crises of representation and legitimation’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). The crisis of representation indicated the recognition that written language could never fully represent or capture the richness of lived experience. ‘Scientific’ writing in the third person, was considered particularly inadequate as a means to represent lived experience. For example, Theresa Buckland wrote the following comment about researching dance in this ‘scientific’, third person style.

the problems of scholarly analysis of dance experiences are of an epistemological nature which require a more sophisticated approach, taking into account indigenous perceptions and the changing knowledge of the researcher in the field...Dance and movement ethnographers conduct scholarly inquiry which is fundamentally within the realm of social hermeneutics and thus ever-shifting; no one method of documentation can ever be granted pre-eminence (1999, p.6).

Such writing, while appearing ‘scientific’ and making the relevant point that “no one method of documentation can ever be granted pre-eminence” (1999, p.6), conveys little to the reader about the lived experience of researching and understanding dance. In addition, Buckland’s comment appears here masked as a ‘truth’ about the nature of researching and understanding dance, rather than as her own research perspective. I might have made a similar point, while also conveying some of my experience in researching dance and allowing my role in constructing research to be apparent, as this excerpt from my creative journal demonstrates.

I find myself struggling to understand my dancing experiences within the dominant academic frameworks for researching dance. My experiences just don't seem to fit so neatly into some one else's frameworks. To me, analysing repeated movement motifs and variation in choreographic dynamic, for example, does not allow me to express how my dancing is meaningful to me. Instead I need to develop new ways of representing my dancing experiences – new ways of knowing, if you like. How I do this of course, is challenging, because I do not have a nicely devised framework to squeeze into. I must be inventive and responsive to new possibilities. I begin by paying attention to my dancing experiences, noting how my understandings and interpretations change, and reflecting over time as my dancing comes to have meaning for me.

Representing research through first person narratives, in the manner illustrated above, is one method to address the crisis of representation. Other methods include a wide range of alternative writing practices and forms of narrative inquiry, such as autobiographical narratives of the self, self-stories, writing stories, evocative narratives, feminist methods, personal experience methods and autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

Writers such as Laurel Richardson (1997, 1998a, 1998b, 2000), Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner (2000) and others, argued that research might more appropriately be represented through narrative format in some cases. Use of narrative would draw attention to the constructed and subjective nature of research, rather than hide it behind the objective pretences of scientific research. Researchers could still write about their own and other people's experiences, but in doing so, they could use narrative and literary techniques to acknowledge their role or subjectivity in representing experience (Markula & Denison, 2000).

The crisis of representation is tied to the crisis of legitimation, again part of the shift from thinking about writing and researchers as representing the truth, to thinking about writing as constructions by individual researchers.

The crisis of legitimation relates to the crisis of representation, as it indicates that research, as a construction by an individual, is subjective and can no longer be legitimated by objective, universal standards (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Research and writing needs to be recognized as a subjective perspective, rather than read as the 'truth' that could be applied to all people and contexts. Statements such as that made by Buckland (1999) above, need to be recognized as her subjective perspective, rather than read as a 'truth' that can be applied to all dance researchers. Consequently, validity, reliability and generalisability, the central criteria of accuracy on which scientific research had been measured, have been discarded. Rather than being concerned about reliability, researchers can acknowledge that they are always situated within a particular context, and that there is no ultimate reliability. However, they might double check a narrative with someone else involved in the story perhaps (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Validity in narrative representations of research means that the research seeks verisimilitude (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). That is, the research seeks to evoke "in readers a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p.751). According to Ellis and Bochner, the validity of research might also be judged in relation to "whether it helps readers communicate with others different from themselves, or offer a way to improve the lives of participants and readers or even your own" (2000, p.751).

Generalisability is a concern in narrative research representation in relation to particularity because both are important in narrative inquiry. Ellis and Bochner commented that "a story's generalisability is constantly being tested by readers as they determine if it speaks to them about their experience or about the lives of others they know" (2000, p.751). In addressing the dual crises of representation and legitimation through narrative research representations, more appropriate criteria such as coherence, verisimilitude and interest (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Richardson, 1998a) became the standards by which to measure the value of the research representations.

However, it is important to reflect on the fact that while narrative research representation does provide a means to address the dual crises, to some extent all textual representations of lived experience fall short of the experience itself. Even a superbly crafted narrative cannot replace the experience of dancing or running (Markula & Denison, 2000). Pirkko Markula and Jim Denison (2000) discussed the crisis of representation in relation to representing movement experiences. Rather than representing their discussion in the third person ‘scientific’ style, they represent their experiences as writers through a narrative in which they both feature as characters. Markula and Denison (2000) discuss the difficulties they face in translating movement experiences into text, in relation to the crisis of representation. I quote an excerpt of their writing at length below, because this passage both demonstrates their use of narrative writing techniques and it also outlines their reasons for using narrative as a response to the crisis of representation. In addition, as both were my research supervisors, I have had conversations like the one below in relation to representing my own dance research.

Hamilton, New Zealand, March 17, 1999, Pirkko’s office...

...Crisis of representation stuff?

You know, the troubles around how to write up lived experience.

But I thought the crisis of representation was about the author’s right to represent other people through text – that before, we took it for granted that researchers had the right to write about others and that, somehow, we could do that objectively and accurately. Isn’t the whole crisis about when we started to question this right and the meaning of objective research?

Yeah, it is. I just frame that problem through language and writing because I see the new ways of writing, like fiction and poetry, that some researchers are turning to as a partial solution to this crisis because those forms allow you to go beyond words, into emotion, into feeling.

Okay, but wasn't our paper about us having a crisis even with those kinds of texts and our inability to represent movement experiences through any kind of language? I thought we problematized the privileged position writing has in academia, either realist interpretations or fictive ones, and how this is really limiting when it comes to writing up movement.

But is that related to any bigger problem with how we research people and understand experience?

It is. Movement research, which is always written, is an excellent example, don't you think, of the dominance of language. What can be further from language, writing, and text than moving? But still, we always try to turn it into language.

I know. When you really think about it, that's strange.

And I think because our understanding of movement depends on written representations, we've forgotten how it feels to move. So maybe there are all these aspects of movement we're not trying to understand just because we're locked into writing as the only legitimate form of representation?

So what's the alternative, what kind of research are you talking about?

I knew you were going to say that. I don't know. Let me think about it.

(Markula & Denison, 2000, p.408-409).

Obviously, there is still concern about ways of representing lived movement experiences through writing. However, as Markula and Denison (2000) commented above, at least new writing practices such as use of narratives, do provide some sort of partial solution to the crises of representation and legitimation. In choosing to represent my research through narratives and CD-Rom I am addressing the crises of representation and legitimation, at least partially³⁶.

³⁶ Considering my desire to understand other aspects of movement, I decided that my solo dance be method, findings and analysis in my research – demonstrating my embodied ways of knowing.

I acknowledge that in writing about movement, in particular dance, I am taking on the bigger challenge of attempting to represent how it feels to move. As Markula and Denison (2000) noted, dance movement is a difficult experience to represent in words. However, through use of personal experience narratives I can offer an alternative form of research representation, extending and developing the literature on dance and movement.

Within feminist research there is a rich history of use of personal experience and representation of lived experience through autobiographical writing (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Reinharz, 1992). Ellis and Bochner commented that feminist researchers “incorporate their personal experiences and standpoints in their research by starting with a story about themselves, explaining their personal connection to the project, or by using personal knowledge to help them in the research process” (2000, p.741). Nicola Armstrong and Rosemary Du Plessis (1998) commented on the value of narrative biographical practice for feminist researchers. According to Armstrong and Du Plessis, feminist researchers

write themselves into their texts as a way of making explicit their positioning as readers, as interpreters, and as constructors of theoretically informed stories...

The researcher is identified as actively constructing research narratives, rather than as engaged in the transparent transmission of ‘authentic’ or ‘true’ accounts of ‘real’ experiences...(1998, p.109).

Within phenomenological research, lived experience has also been regularly represented through writing techniques that included the researcher’s experience, and their reflection about the experiences of others. As I argued in Chapter Three, feminist phenomenological research that investigated women’s lived experiences in dance making would benefit from utilising story form, in which rich descriptions of dancing experiences might develop kinesthetic empathy and understanding in the reader.

Writing is a representation of the author's perspective on their experience in their world. Writing is, in a sense, a story in which the author is a character with intentions and assumptions that reflect her specific socio-cultural context. As Susan Friedman (1995) argued, personal narratives are not representations of lived experiences, but constructions that interpret the author's experiences. Individuals 'narrativise' or 'story' their experiences in every day life, by telling stories that relate causal links, justifications, characters and interactions between characters, and explanations of why things happen for them (Richardson, 1997). Story telling reflects the author's lived experience and provides the listener with access to the author's unique perspective and history. Narratives that involve story are therefore particularly useful techniques to represent lived experience as they can feature the researcher within the story, drawing attention to their role in constructing the research and their subjective experiences.

Feminist writer Karen Warren (1996) also advocated use of the first-person narrative particularly for feminist representation of lived experience. She argued that narrative provided a felt-sensitivity, an opportunity to express ethical attitudes and behaviours, had the effect of locating ethics within particular situations, and had argumentative force in indicating appropriate feminist action (Warren, 1996). For a feminist, methods of representing research that both offer critiques, and indicate ethical and political action, are preferable. The work of Richardson (1997), Warren (1996) and others has led many feminists, sociologists and writers to adopt the practice of using narrative or story to represent lived experience.

From the perspective of representing other people's lives, narratives can provide an understanding of the lived experiences of others (Richardson, 1997). Within biographical narratives, the researcher as author, can draw attention to the narrative as a construction, and feature themselves as a character within the narrative, alongside other characters.

Representing my own lived experiences in dance making through personal experience narratives

I chose to describe my narrative writings as ‘personal experience narratives’³⁷ (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Richardson, 1998a) to acknowledge my feminist interest in the personal as the political, my phenomenological interest in experience, and my interest in narrative representation of research. Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner wrote that “In personal narratives, social scientists take on the dual identities of academic and personal selves to tell autobiographical stories about some aspect of their experience in daily life” (2000, p.740). With this in mind, I wrote personal experience narratives to reflect on my experiences as a woman solo contemporary dance maker, considering my improvisational practices and choreographic strategies and aiming to share them. I also wrote to reflect on my role as feminist phenomenological researcher in researching other women’s solo dance making experiences. I was able to write interpretively as a researcher within my personal experience narratives, accepting the inevitable plurality that comes with interpretation, and considering changes, ambiguities, paradoxes and improvisations.

My creative journal writing and my lived experiences became material for my personal narratives. I selected material from creative journal writing about dance making and research experiences for use in particular stories. Then I developed this material to make it rich and engaging for others to read.

³⁷ I could have described my work as autoethnography, or as one of many other terms for writing that results from narrative inquiry (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). However, wishing to acknowledge and emphasize my feminist rather than sociological or ethnographic approach, I choose to use the term “personal experience narratives” as above. Denzin (1989) also uses this term, though not in the same way.

Laurel Richardson wrote that a narrative of the self, (which I regard as being similar to a personal experience narrative),

is a highly personalised, revealing text in which an author tells stories about his or her own lived experience. Using dramatic recall, strong metaphors, images, characters, unusual phrasings, puns, subtexts, and allusions, the writer constructs a sequence of events, a 'plot', holding back on interpretation, asking the reader to 're-live' the events emotionally with the writer (1998a, p.356).

I used such literary techniques within my personal experience narratives. My concern was not about the 'accuracy' of the narrative, but instead for coherence, verisimilitude and interest (Richardson, 1998s). What I was concerned about as I wrote my dance and research experiences, was whether or not my story would touch the reader. I used thick descriptions of emotions grounded in lived experience aiming to shrink the distance between my lived experiences and the reader (Ellis & Flaherty, 1992). I have included this passage from my writing about my dance training (see Chapter Two, p.54-55), as an example of my use of personal experience narrative.

Back at University again, I am now reading feminist theory, in an attempt to understand my experiences as a woman. I think of the power of the dominant images of femininity that influenced me as a teenager. These images seemed to have encroached on my thinking and actions and crept into my muscles. I had learned to be a 'woman' - to sit with my legs together, to keep my limbs tidily organised under me. This learning became a muscular habit, creating the tightness in my hips. Reading Judith Butler's (1990) work on performing gender, I can see how I was performing what is to be a 'woman' – performing femininity - just like I was performing dance movement. This makes sense to me, as I can feel in my bones, tissues and muscles how I had learned to be a 'woman'. This is not merely an attractive theoretical notion or even an interesting

thought experiment for me. This is an embodied realisation. (Barbour, 2000c, p.101)

My interest in creating this personal experience narrative was to share some of my own experience as a learner of dance, and as a feminist researcher. As a researcher I was able to share my personal and academic selves in this story about my experience (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). I wove references and links to feminist theory and research into my narratives, sharing my experiences and offering the reader the opportunity to interpret my experiences themselves. In particular, I was interested in sharing some of the feelings and sensations I had in the embodied realisation of dance making, such as I described above.

As I commented in Chapter Three, dance researchers Sondra Fraleigh (2000) and Susan Stinson (1995) had indicated the value of developing kinesthetic empathy in the reader, through use of rich narratives that connect with the reader. I developed richness, texture, resonance, flow and vitality within my narratives. I used rich descriptions about movement, feelings, emotions and sensations, so that the reader could know how I felt. My aim was to write so that after reading my story, the reader would have a sense of who I was and how my experiences in dance making were embodied ways of knowing myself as a woman. I compiled a number of shorter narratives to create my long personal experience narrative for Chapter Five, to compliment my CD-Rom. I consider my CD-Rom below.

Representing my own lived experiences in dance making through CD-Rom

I chose to represent my own lived experiences in dance making on a CD-Rom containing an edited version of my solo dance, short narratives, interpretive text and still images. This CD-Rom complimented my personal experience narrative in Chapter Five, and demonstrated my embodied ways of knowing in dance.

Given the difficulties I discussed above of representing lived movement experiences in words, I wished to visually demonstrate my embodied ways of knowing in solo dance making. What is unique to embodied ways of knowing is experienced in flesh, and representing my solo dance through video on CD-Rom seemed appropriate to me.

Use of video and film is common practice for dancers in the choreographic and rehearsal process, in marketing themselves, in recording and archiving performances and in developing innovative video-dance and screen-dance. Use of video on CD-Rom in dance research is growing, as evidenced in the work of Susan Jordan (1999) on technology and reconstructing historic dances, and William Forsyth (1999) on technology and improvisation. I chose to develop an interactive method of linking edited video footage with interpretive text so that aspects of my solo dance could be highlighted for the viewer and linked directly to my choreography. I developed this method in order to effectively demonstrate my embodied ways of knowing.

Over my three-year research period, I developed my own solo dance - *This is after all the edited life*, which I performed first in March/April 2000. I spent a year significantly reworking my solo to perform it again in March 2001, and then in October 2001. My solo dance became a 23 minute integrated performance work, incorporating choreographed and improvised sections of dance and movement, story, projected video, props, costumes and a commissioned sound score. I performed the final version for a small audience and for camera in October 2001. This version of my solo was edited using Final Cut Pro editing software and is included in entirety on the CD-Rom.

The CD-Rom is arranged so that upon opening the viewer many chose to view the full video of my solo, view interactive video, and read text that compliments my written Chapter Five. There are menus for both the interactive video sections and text links, and instructions on how to use the CD-Rom to assist the viewer to navigate around the CD-Rom.

In order to link video, interpretive text, narratives and still images, I divided my solo dance into interactive video sections. Each section can be viewed independently on the CD-Rom, and as the video plays, brief text clips and still images flash up at the side of the video. Viewers can scroll forward and backward through the video, and pause it where needed in order to reflect on my dancing. The viewer may then go to the text menu to read more detailed information on choreographic strategies, read a transcript of my story and read the personal experience narrative in Chapter Five.

My solo dance - *This is after all the edited life* - is a demonstration of my embodied ways of knowing in contemporary dance using CD-Rom technology to assist understanding and interpretation. Together with my personal experience narrative, the CD-Rom demonstrates my findings and integrates discussion about my embodied ways of knowing in solo dance making, as Chapter Five.

I describe my method of representing other women's lived experiences in dance making below.

Representing women's lived experiences in dance making through group narrative

In order to represent other women's lived experiences in solo dance making, I created a group narrative that included the interview transcripts, my creative journal notes about their solo performances and about my research experiences, and any personal materials the other women gave me. Consequently, I now outline my process for writing my group narrative.

In my narrative dealing with other women's experiences, my aim was to introduce the other women as characters in the narrative. I included their own descriptions of their experiences as well as describing their experiences from my perspective, drawing on my creative journal writing. I also included my own descriptions of my experiences, again drawing from my creative journal.

I related some of the shared understandings we developed together about embodied ways of knowing ourselves as women. I acknowledged that I was the author of my research, and that, as author I was a character in my research narrative. I called this writing a 'group narrative'.

Prior to, during and following each interview I made notes regarding my conversations with each research participant, my recollections of their solo dance, and specific points I wanted to hear more about from them. Following each interview I transcribed the interview material and made notes regarding our discussions. In some cases, I possessed published articles by the other women to refer to (Bolwell, 1998, 2000; East, 2001). I considered all of this material, along with any further communication from the participants, and any of my own creative journal writing I had that related to the interviews or participants or context, potentially relevant and available for use in creating my group narratives.

I drew on the same strategies and literary techniques as I did in writing about my own dance making experiences. But into my group narrative I wove strands of direct quotations from the women's words. I added my own strands of interpretation and commentary that allowed me to reflect as researcher as well as personally (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). I wove my understandings of dance making from reading and developing the work of feminist phenomenologists and dance researchers into my writing, and I wove in my own experiences in solo dance making as well. I selected from all of this material and placed the material in a narrative frame. Again, I aimed to develop a group narrative in which the reader had a sense of who the characters were, and how we constructed meaning together.

The first step in the process of writing my group narrative was to edit each of the five research transcripts following the responses of each of the participants, and then to edit to remove sections of the transcript that were unimportant.

I kept Brew's (1998) guideline to consider everything as relevant in mind, but there were sections of each transcript that were clearly unrelated to dance making. I focussed on sections of the transcript that related to my research questions and edited these sections into a separate file for use in my group narrative.

This process also included editing out some of my own comments, removing 'umms', and 'tidying' their comments into sentences, while still maintaining their own words and manner of expression. Sometimes I integrated my questions into their responses so that their responses made sense on their own. I also clumped together sections of their responses that related to the same topics, even when some of the responses were spread throughout the transcript.

Having completed this process, I re-read all the edited transcripts again, looking for the unique comments (which I thought of as being 'solos'), looking for comments that linked two or more women (which I thought of as 'duets', 'trios' and 'quartets') and comments that linked us all as group. As a result of this re-reading, or 'looking again' (Brew, 1998), I could see potential for creating a fictional 'discussion' between two or more of the six of us, (including myself), who participated in my research. I approached the process of putting together solos, duets, trios and group discussions rather like how I would put together a group choreography, considering expression, uniqueness and shared experiences.

I looked for a narrative frame in which to set the group's comments, and decided to situate all of our comments in the fictional frame of a day spent together at my home discussing solo dance making. I placed each section from each woman on the same topics together, imagining how one of their comments might function in response to one of mine, or to another research participant's comments. I selected and set quoted sections from each of the women in italics and indented from the margin, helping to distinguish my own writing from their comments.

As author of the group narrative, I set the scene myself, by describing the fictional narrative frame, describing each of the women based on my observations during interviews and my creative journal notes. For example, I wrote “Sitting casually in her chair, one ankle crossed over her knee and speaking in a deep resonant voice, Jan comments...” I focused our fictional context and linked it to the edited transcript material by saying “We are engaged in conversation about our dancing lives when I casually raise the question of what feminism means to each of us personally...” I added linking phrases as I imagined they might have made, such as “And related to what you said Susanne...” I offered some of my own interpretations about the other women’s experiences, making sure that they were derivative from the edited transcripts or other writing they had sent me. I wrote my own responses to my research questions into my creative journal, and I selected and edited my own responses to set in the group narrative. I referred to the comments I had made during each of the interviews and embellished them as I required. In this way, I wrote myself into the group narrative as a participant solo dance maker, as well as being present in the narrative as the author. Finally, as I was writing the group narrative, I kept records of my processes and the decisions I made.

On completion of the first draft of my findings group narrative, I sent the draft out to each research participant, and requested their comments and suggestions (Appendix Six). I was particularly concerned that each women consider how I had edited their comments and how I had represented them in my group narrative. On receiving comments and suggestions from each woman, I edited and developed the group narrative further again.

By drawing on feminist and phenomenological researchers such as those I reviewed earlier in this chapter, I avoided continuing the dominant Western practice of representing lived experiences as objective, ‘real’, ‘knowledge’ that was discovered by a neutral researcher.

Instead, I drew attention to the constructed nature of representation and to my role in representation, through my group narrative about embodied ways of knowing in women's solo contemporary dance making.

I addressed the crises of representation and legitimation, and the challenge of representing movement experience in words, finding a partial solution in my choice to represent my findings through CD-Rom, and through both personal experience narratives and a group narrative.

Summary

I undertook feminist phenomenological research into women's lived experience in dance making, in order to address my research questions on how I, and other women, understand dance making as an embodied way of knowing ourselves as women. My research was experiential: a feminist phenomenological investigation of women's lived experiences in solo contemporary dance making.

The methodology I used derived from my feminist and phenomenological perspective, and I chose specific methods that enabled me to explore my research questions through lived experience. I chose to use dance making, creative journaling, and in-depth interviews as research methods. I then outlined my reasons for choosing to represent my research through CD-Rom, personal experience narratives and a group narrative, and described how I developed my CD-Rom and narratives.

Chapter Five follows, presented as a personal experience narrative about my embodied ways of knowing and accompanied by a CD-Rom that demonstrates my embodied ways of knowing in my solo dance – *This is after all the edited life*. I recommend viewing the full movie of my solo dance on CD-Rom first.

CHAPTER FIVE

Findings and discussion: This is after all the edited life

Introduction

"...the glossed camellia leaves
stood still, poised as though to be
the more exquisitely excluded
along with the pale petals we did not
notice as intently we leaned and talked

each word brighter-bodied for
the shadow of the ones we did not say
- this is after all the edited life
to cut, to prune, select, is my profession
- I did not know such practice

could command a lazy room of polished leaves
and sun..." (Edmond, 1986, p.49).

About three years ago I had copied poems by Lauris Edmond (1986) into my creative journal. In particular, the lines "this is after all the edited life, to cut, to prune, select, is my profession" (Edmond, 1986, p.49) struck a chord in me. These lines immediately spoke to me of my writing practices in research, and my choreographic practices in dance making. Both seemed to be a constant and careful process of editing and selection, reshaping and rearranging aspects of my lived experience.

I liked the way the editing process in writing and in choreography, allowed for chosen words or experiences to be “brighter-bodied” (Edmond, 1986, p.49).

Lauris Edmond’s poem resonated with my feminist interests in the politics of the personal, as she made her personal writing experiences part of the content of her poem. I appreciated the way in which she valued her own individual experience in her work. I also loved Edmond’s awareness of her constructive act as a poet, and her reflexive interruption in her poem, as she considered her own writing practices.

Mulling this poem over, I began work on my solo dance with my lived experiences of searching for a home and reflecting on journeys, and exploring ways I could recreate femininity for myself. I intended to explore embodied ways of knowing through my solo dance making. In order to do this I deliberately brought together my feminist and dance knowledges, my lived experiences and intuitions (Belenky et al., 1986), and explored and interpreted them through moving. When I made my solo dance I used moving as a way to focus my understanding – thinking in movement (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999).

As I noted in Chapter Four, my solo dance became a 23 minute integrated performance work, incorporating choreographed and improvised sections of dance and movement, story, projected video, props, costumes and a commissioned sound score. I discuss and reflect on my dance making processes, and give examples of specific choreographic strategies and movement seen on the CD-Rom that accompanies this personal experience narrative. I interpret my embodied ways of knowing in solo dance making below, adding commentary and interpretation to the CD-Rom.

As in each of my chapters, my feminist researcher's voice and my personal voice weave together. My personal voice as a dancer is more dominant in this chapter in which I describe, reflect on and interpret my own solo dance making.

Dance making from lived experiences

I had recently returned home from adventurous journeys in the Pacific and North America, to begin my PhD research. Paradoxically, one of my strongest experiences in travelling across the world had been becoming more aware of what home meant to me. I became aware that my understandings and behaviours came from my identity as Pakeha and my relationship to Aotearoa, New Zealand (see Chapter One). I began to understand the connections I felt in my bones between my interests as a feminist and my understandings of both culture and environment (see Chapter Two). I was interested to explore and express these things in my dance making. The choreographic process of dance making allowed me to bring my personal experiences and research interests together to explore new relationships, juxtapositions and connections between them. As Elizabeth Dempster commented

The process allows me to bring together in a kind of laboratory, un-alike, incompatible ideas, activities, objects, so that they are held in temporary, sometimes strained relationship. And through this intensification connections which were at first only dimly sensed are revealed. These dances are... a process of discovery (cited in Gardner & Dempster, 1990, p.46).

The choreographic process provided me with the opportunity to explore my specific lived experiences, and allow me to experience embodied ways of

knowing in dance making. I reflect below on my journeys and search for a home, as I located myself as a Pakeha woman in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Journeys and searching for a home

Through the choreographic process, I brought together my feminist interests and readings in dance literature, with devices or symbols that indicated my lived experience themes of home and journey (CD-Rom/Text/Choreographic strategies). For example, I improvised in the dance studio using Compact Disk sound tracks of water and birds, costume items, toetoe grasses³⁸, a collection of stones from the beach, an old wooden signpost, and other bits I carried around in my kete.³⁹ The large, round, dense stones that I had collected from my favourite place in Whale Bay particularly interested me. They sat in a cluster in the dance studio, like an expectant audience to my choreographic process. I experimented with carrying them, cradling the smaller ones like taonga.⁴⁰ The heavier ones dragged on my arms, feeling like a burden I struggled to contend with.

Experimenting more with the stones, I discovered I could build a cairn (Photo 7, p.156), a traditional way of marking a point to assist with navigation (CD-Rom/Text/Choreographic strategies). Suddenly the stones became navigation stars too, and then stepping-stones in a path. Placing the stones in the Southern Cross star pattern (Photo 8, p.156; Photo 11, p.157) and standing in the middle, I had an experience of locating myself clearly in the South Pacific.⁴¹

³⁸ Toetoe are large native grasses (CD-Rom/Text/Choreographic strategies).

³⁹ A kete is a woven flax basket (CD-Rom/Text/Choreographic strategies).

⁴⁰ A taonga is a treasure, often referring to a carved precious stone or bone (CD-Rom/Text/Choreographic strategies).

⁴¹ The Southern Cross is a clear navigational star pattern in the night skies of the Southern Hemisphere and it features on the New Zealand flag (CD-Rom/Text/Choreographic strategies).

My lived experiences of home and journey began to weave together in my choreographic process, revealing new connections and possibilities (Gardner & Dempster, 1990). These initial improvisational experiences gave me insight into and experiences of how the process of dance making contributed to my embodied ways of knowing, by allowing me to discover new connections between my knowledges.



Photo 7: cairn 1

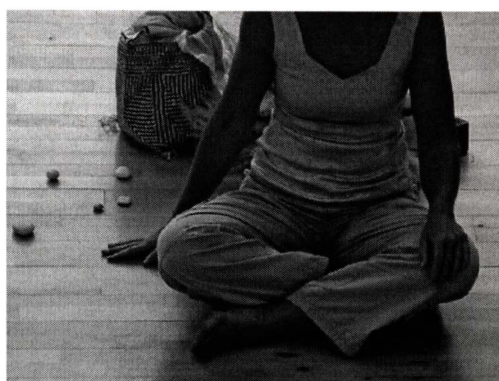


Photo 8: small Southern Cross

Reflecting on my lived experiences of searching for a home and journeying, I improvised movement material - pointing to indicate directions (Photo 9, p. 157), stretching to the points of the compass to locate myself (Photo 10, p. 157), a hitchhiking thumb extended in hope of a ride to somewhere else, a hand pointing to the sky and to the Southern Cross (Photo, 11, p. 157). As my movement material developed, I crafted movement sequences, playing with intention, and dynamic and choreographic techniques of repetition, retrograde and splicing. Much of this movement became the 'Moved dance' (CD-Rom/Interactive video/Moved dance). I wanted to construct an experience within my solo dance that might allow me understand my journeys and search for a home in an embodied way. I was able to revisit and reinterpret these experiences each time I danced my solo, and I hoped to share my experiences in performance.



Photo 9: pointing to directions



Photo 10: locating myself



Photo 11: pointing to Southern Cross

Wanting to offer an embodied expression of my research journey and needing to locate myself academically as well as geographically and culturally, I shared a story with the audience about undertaking feminist research in dance (Photo 30, p.171). In creating my story I was inspired by Rosi Braidotti's comment "I see feminism today as the activity aimed at articulating the questions of individual, embodied, gendered identity" (1994, p.30) (CD-Rom/Interactive video/Walk path). I reflected upon the central questions I had as a feminist dance researcher, including how I could undertake academic research in dance, why I valued a feminist perspective, and what my main interest or focus of my research was. In performance I improvised around the rough structure I had created for the story, allowing for changes to respond to my audience and adjusting my tone, speed and choice of words as I felt was appropriate in the moment⁴².

⁴² A transcript of my story is included on the CD-Rom (CD-Rom/Text/Transcript).

My purpose in telling my story was to reflect on my practices as a feminist researcher, and like Edmond (1986), to share my experiences. I intended that my story telling be an embodied expression of my lived experiences (CD-Rom/Interactive video/Story).

I was also very interested to bring into my solo dance making another lived experience that was particularly important to me - recreating femininity for myself. I reflect on my dance making processes that allowed me to explore femininity through embodied ways of knowing.

Stereotypical femininity and recreating femininity

While engaged in my solo dance making, I was aware of the delicate line I danced between standing as an exemplar of stereotypical femininity as a dancer and my desire to challenge this stereotype as a feminist (Brown, 1994, 1999). I used inspiring comments from feminist writers (Braidotti, 1994; Brown, 1999; Butler, 1990), considered choreographic strategies (Rainer, 1966, 1974), and Lauris Edmond's (1986) poem as starting points for improvisation and choreography. I explored how these writings might influence my dance making in the creation of dance movement material and in the choreographic process, engaging in embodied ways of knowing.

Being a feminist dancer in a predominantly Western culture I was aware that women's bodies were regularly displayed as objects for consumption, within advertising, pornography, fashion and entertainment (Bordo, 1989; Macdonald, 1995). The images of women offered for consumption presented stereotypical femininity as the ideal (Macdonald, 1995) (see Chapters Two and Three for further discussion). By simply standing up in a social context, I put myself in a

position where I was likely to be objectified, to be consumed by an expectant audience. Not only did I put myself in this situation by standing up in social contexts, but also as a dancer performing on stage, this situation was exaggerated. Obviously, a dance performance gave people permission to look at me at length and to measure me against stereotypical images of femininity. If I measured up or 'performed femininity' (Butler, 1990), then I served to reinforce stereotypical femininity. I might be epitomising the cultural stereotype of femininity, as Carol Brown (1999) put it. Consequently, I might be ignored and/or my feminist interest in resisting and recreating stereotypical femininity overlooked. Being both a feminist politically concerned with challenging stereotypical femininity, and being a dancer potentially 'on display' and 'objectified' for an audience, created a paradoxical situation for me.

I experienced this paradox as discomfort and as tension. When I thought about dance, I felt constricted by a limited set of movements and movement qualities (Young, 1980). Wanting to communicate my experience of paradox, tension and constriction, I developed movements that embodied these feelings for me. For example, in the 'Breakdown dance' I explored movements that restricted my breathing (Photo 12, p. 160), crossing my arms tightly, twisting sharply in my torso, twisting and rolling across the floor (Photo 13, p. 160). My movement was literally tense and constricted (CD-Rom/Interactive video/Breakdown dance).



Photo 12: Constrained torso



Photo 13: Tension twist

Reflecting, I realised I felt burdened by the expectations of being ‘feminine’ and having to move in feminine ways. One way I came to understand this experience for myself was to literally represent my experiences as a burden I struggled to manage on my back during the dance (Photo 14, p. 160). At the end of the ‘Breakdown dance’ I was able to lay my metaphorical burden down, experiencing physical release from loosening my arms and breathing freely into my lungs, and psychological release through letting go of expectations that I be ‘feminine’ in my dancing (Photo 15, p. 160).



Photo 14: burden



Photo 15: Laying down burden

I came to understand the effects of stereotypical femininity, and the paradox I had experienced, marking my understandings metaphorically by building a cairn during my solo dance (Photo 7, p.156).⁴³

⁴³ The cairn was also a device to enhance my theme of journey and, being a traditional Scottish navigational device, it enabled me to reference my Scottish genealogy (CD-Rom/Text/Choreographic strategies).

Developing movement for other sections of my solo, I wanted to resist stereotypically feminine movement and move beyond it to recreate myself as a woman (CD-Rom/Text/Choreographic strategies). I was reminded of the work of postmodern dancers like Yvonne Rainer (1966, 1974), who resisted the traditional objectification and heroism of the modern dancer by redefining the dancer as an ordinary pedestrian (CD-Rom/Text/Choreographic strategies). Reflecting on this postmodern choreographic strategy, I wondered if I could resist stereotypical femininity and reconstruct myself in this way. Perhaps performing as an ordinary person, and my use of gestural, pedestrian and everyday movement, would allow the audience to connect with my experience and empathise kinaesthetically (Stinson, 1995).

As an example of this strategy, I chose to begin my solo sleeping, redefining myself as 'ordinary' and aiming to enhance kinesthetic empathy with my experience (CD-Rom/Text/Choreographic strategies). As I slept on stage, a video was projected so that the audience could experience my lived experiences - the sounds and sights of my environment, my sense of cultural identification as Pakeha, and my offering of my own alternative recreated femininity as I dreamed myself anew (Photo 16 & 17, p. 161). My 'Dream' was an embodied expression of my lived experience (CD-Rom/Interactive video/Dream).



Photo 16: beach dream

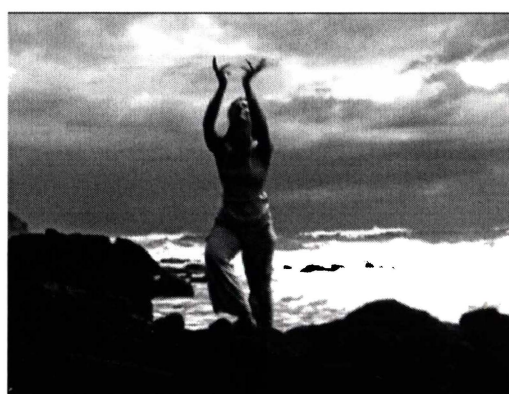


Photo 17: beach offering

My sleeping on stage became disturbed, as is often my experience when I dream. I could feel tension between how I wanted to recreate femininity for myself, and dominant stereotypical femininity. Rolling, tossing and turning in my sleep, and rubbing my eyes, I used everyday movements that I hoped were recognisable and likely to be common experiences for others who have had sleepless nights. I wanted to enhance kinesthetic empathy with my sleepiness, and invoke a sense of my struggle for clarity as I woke from dreaming. I also hoped that my sleeping would also resist or subvert expectations of me as a dancer as I was obviously not prepared and ready to dance for audience pleasure, but more involved in my own processes. I saw this as a resistant or subversive choreographic strategy that was useful to me as a feminist (CD-Rom/Text/Choreographic strategies).

As I commented earlier, it was important for me as a feminist not to reproduce stereotypical femininity and feminine dance in my solo work (Brown, 1999). My main focus in the 'Way out dance' was to explore how I could recreate femininity. Carol Brown's insightful comments informed my studio practice. She argued that "this dancing body is only a stereotype if it continues to reproduce the tired gestures of a classical inheritance... In practical terms, dancers need to be aware of how their bodies, often unwittingly, reinforce certain bodily ideals, and begin to undo some of the assumptions made about them, through what they hopefully do best: movement invention" (Brown, 1999, p.13-16). I inspected my own movement for stereotypical feminine gestures, movement qualities and actions. Some examples of stereotypical movements included a jete (split leap), and arabesque (balance with one leg high in the air), a coy pose with arms and legs crowded, and movement performed with a graceful and soft quality with eyes averted from the audience.

When I identified what I regarded as feminine movement, movement qualities or poses in my choreographic material, I made a decision whether to retain the movement. In some cases I chose to ‘perform femininity’ (Butler, 1990), and then to deconstruct it in the following movements using contrasting strength-based movements (handstand (Photo 19, p.163), knee leap (Photo 21, p. 163), or gestural, pedestrian and everyday movement (pointing (Photo 9 & 11, p.157), walking, building stones (Photo 7 & 8, p. 156). Recalling Iris Young’s work (1980) on the modalities of feminine movement, I developed movements that required an open torso (Photo 20, p.163) and lengthened limbs (Photo 18, p.163), confidence in use of space and integration in moving.



Photo 18: lengthened limbs



Photo 19: handstand/open out



Photo 20: open out

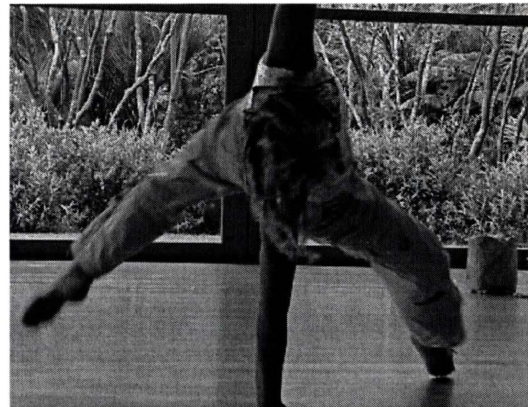


Photo 21: open out/knee leap

I considered my movement quality in performing this dance carefully, knowing that I had freedom to move within the flowing piano music, and I drew inspiration as I worked from Rainer again (1966, 1974).

In *Trio A* (Rainer, 1966), Rainer's choreography flowed continuously without climax through equally stressed movements (Benbow-Pfalzgraf, 1998). In using this choreographic strategy, Rainer (1966) was removing the dancer's virtuosity and drama, intending to focus attention on the dancer's experience in moving. This was also my intention – to share my lived experience in moving as I recreated femininity (CD-Rom/Text/Choreographic strategies). I used a meditative movement quality for the 'Way out dance' that allowed my own sense of embodied logic to suggest what movement should follow what, how far I should travel, my intention and where my focus should be. I did not set rhythm and dynamic changes, allowing the dynamic of the movement to be improvised as I felt appropriate in the moment, and hoping to avoid detracting from the focus on my experience of moving. I discuss examples of central movement motifs below.

I specifically developed two central motifs in which I intended to deliberately challenge and change stereotypically feminine movements. I was, as Brown (1994, 1995a, 1999) had also done, engaging with the codes, conventions, behaviours and gestures that condition women, creating stereotypical femininity. My feminist choreographic strategy was to engage with stereotypical femininity to explore how I could challenge and change such movement (Brown, 1994).

I considered the coy, upright pose of many women in social settings, with legs and arms crossed over the body, and reflected on the images of women in fashion and pornography, where they lie legs spread, appearing passively sexually available. I inverted this pose by literally turning myself on my head. I repeatedly used a movement I called 'the subvert roll', where I rolled across my shoulders with my legs apart (Photo 22 & 23, p.165). I chose to move in a way that I experienced as aggressive, and to symbolically expose myself to the

audience. I was intending to be confrontational in performing this movement repeatedly (CD-Rom/Interactive video/Way out dance).



Photo 22: subvert roll 1



Photo 23: subvert roll 2

I also reflected on the typical flight of the dancer in a stereotypically feminine jete (split leap), with a visible smile and arms raised in front. Inverting this movement, I moved with arms spread wide behind me, body lowered and bent over so that my face and chest were hidden (Photo 24 & 25, p.165). Performing this movement, particularly immediately following a restricting movement, allowed me an experience of freedom and a sense of flight. In committing to using my arms as a counter balance as I risked falling, I was able to experience 'flight' without having to leap into the air as a dancer typically would (CD-Rom/Interactive video/ Breakdown dance, Way out dance).



Photo 24: flight 1



Photo 25: flight 2

These two movement motifs were examples of ways in which I worked to challenge and change stereotypically feminine movement, to resist and subvert

expectations of the dancer, and recreate myself as a woman through my movement. Integrating these choreographic strategies with my feminist knowledges, intuitions and lived experiences allowed me to come to new understandings through thinking in movement (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). I was able to use and explore embodied ways of knowing in my solo dance making.

Alternative modalities of feminine movement

In looking again at my solo dance (Brew, 1998), I recalled Iris Young's theorising about the modalities of feminine movement (1980, 1998). Young had analysed the modalities of feminine movement and described it as intentionally inhibited, ambiguously transcendent, and as having discontinuous unity (1980). Ann Albright (1997) applied Young's work to the dancing of Louise Lecavalier and Jennifer Monson (as I discussed in Chapter Three), arguing that Monson was able to expand the feminine norm, demonstrating instead, clear directed energy, clarity of weight, spatial intention and movement flow. According to Albright (1997), Monson's dancing was responsive, enduring, able to accommodate change and could offer a more profound experience for an audience.

As I reflect on my movement in *This is after all the edited life*, I can see that I had deliberately created movement in the 'Breakdown dance' that was exaggerated in its constraint and restriction (CD-Rom/Interactive movie/Breakdown dance). I felt this was appropriate, given that my aim had been to reflect the experience I had of being limited by the constraining modalities of stereotypical feminine movement. In this sense, the 'Breakdown dance' embodied and deliberately exaggerated my experiences of being inhibited in my

use of space, limited in my ability to intentionally affect the world around me, and disconnected with my body in moving (Young 1980, 1998).

By contrast, I developed other sections of my solo dance with the aims of being intentionally clear and directed, deliberate and confident in my use of the space and in manipulation of props, involving a continuous flow, and performing an integrated embodied moving experience. For example, I developed my movement in the 'Moved dance' hoping to be deliberate and directional, have clear intention, and use integration and focus. In the 'Way out dance' I hoped to show confident use of space, continuous flow in my movement quality, and to demonstrate integration and continuity rather than disintegration (CD-Rom/Interactive movies/Moved dance, Way out dance).

However, I noted in Chapter Three that Young herself had criticised her earlier work (1980, 1998), and suggested that it would be valuable to consider feminine movement beginning with acknowledgement that often multiple things happen at once for many women. In my own solo dance, this suggestion seemed particularly relevant as I reflected again about my moving. Having considered my choreographic strategies in depth, I knew that I had many intentions in creating and performing my movement (CD-Rom/Text/Choreographic strategies). My improvisational practices and choreographic strategies had allowed me to develop movement that had multiple intentions; to express my lived experience themes of home and journey, to develop kinesthetic empathy with my experiences through the use of everyday, pedestrian and gestural movement, to subvert and resist expectations of the dancer, to challenge or change stereotypical feminine movement and movement qualities, and to be an embodied expression of my lived

experience (CD-Rom/Text/Choreographic strategies). Thus, multiplicity was a feature of my movement.

I valued multiplicity in my movement as I also valued the way in which my dance making processes and performances allowed me to be both receptive and responsive to my lived experiences. I aimed to receive and integrate information from multiple sources, including moment-to-moment changes and understandings developed during performing, audience responses, events in my life, and choreographed and rehearsed movement (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). I then aimed to respond to these multiple influences in whatever manner I felt appropriate in the given moment. I had the opportunity to improvise, adapt and respond, both thinking *in* and *about* movement as I danced (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). Rather than creating a fixed singular plan, finding control and singular intention, I experienced multiplicity in intention, and receptivity and responsiveness in dancing my solo. As I was thinking in movement, I experienced alternative modalities of feminine movement in my solo dance.

Dance making as an embodied way of knowing

In Chapter Two I theorised a sixth epistemological strategy of embodied ways of knowing, arguing that an embodied knower would view all knowledge as contextual and embodied. She would experience herself as creator of, and as embodying knowledge, valuing her own experiential ways of knowing and reconciling these with other strategies for knowing, as she lived her life. I wished to explore and experience this epistemological strategy through solo dance making. I give further examples of my lived experiences in solo dance making below, to illustrate my embodied ways of knowing.

Reflecting on my dance making as a researcher, I acknowledged my commitment to political action as a feminist. In recognising that ‘the personal is the political’ (Mills, 1997; Warren, 1996), I accepted that there was a need for me not only to challenge stereotypical femininity, but also to change it and to recreate femininity for myself. In this sense, my solo dance is an embodied expression of my knowledge and my commitment to feminist change. I came to understand these things through my embodied ways of knowing and I wanted to express my understandings in my solo dance making. One way I did this was to symbolise my commitment to feminist action – to ‘walking the talk’ - through carefully laying a path of stones to literally ‘shape my own path’ during my performance (Photo 26, p.170). While I created my path to walk down, words from the poem I had written and recorded with composer Charlotte 90^o,⁴⁴ played on the sound score.

Here I sweat a truth

a conscious skin, bone, muscle map

it could be enough to heal.

Here I sing an emotion

a melody of light, honey, tissue, blood

it could be enough to dream.

Here I shadow a truth

like blur in a look

it could be enough to feel.

Here I stream an emotion

just bridge between you and I

⁴⁴ ‘Charlotte 90^o’ is Charlotte Corner’s composer’s name.

it could be enough to linger

at the threshold

but I'll shape my own path thank you.

(Barbour, 2001a, 2001d, 2001g; Barbour & Corner, 2001).

Recognising the need to live out my choices as a feminist, I walked slowly down the path of stones that I had shaped for myself. A deep sense of peace infused my walking, and I felt calm resolution and a sense of locating myself in my decision to 'shape my own path'. Walking my own path was an embodied expression of my lived experience as a feminist dance researcher.



Photo 26: path



Photo 27: looking out/ locating myself

Pausing on the last stone, still in the moment of the performing present, I considered my past journeys and imagined future journeys ahead. While my solo dance ended, my embodied ways of knowing continued in the next moment.

In my solo dance making I was able to bring together and embody feminist and dance 'knowledges', lived experiences and intuitions, and to focus them through moving and choreographing. I was able to think in movement (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999), and to utilise what I have theorised as embodied ways of knowing (see Chapter Two).

Summary - This is after all the edited life

My solo dance making process was after all, my edited life, as Lauris Edmond's poem (1986) suggested to me. Over three years I had been developing my solo, cutting, pruning and selecting my lived experiences in order to make some experiences 'brighter-bodied' for myself and for my audience (Edmond, 1986). Searching for a home, reflecting on journeys and investigating ways that I could recreate femininity for myself, were all lived experiences that became my solo dance (Photo 28, 29 & 30, p.171).



Photo 28: story March/April 2000



Photo 29: story March 2001

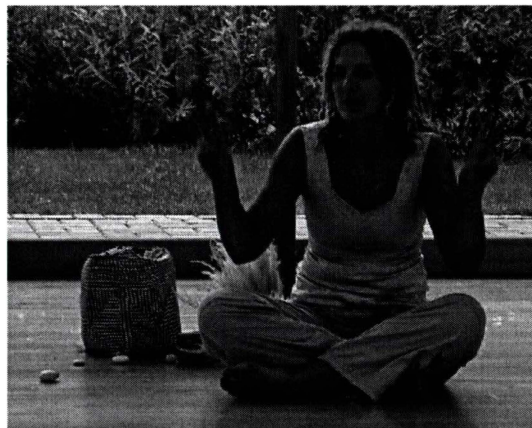


Photo 30: story October 2001

I can see how my choreographic strategies have been influenced by, and have developed in response to women choreographers working before me (Friedler, 1997). I continue to be particularly inspired by postmodern choreographer

Yvonne Rainer (1966, 1974), and contemporary choreographer Carol Brown (1994, 1995a, 1999). Comments by feminist theorists Judith Butler (1990), Rosi Braidotti (1994) and other feminist dancer writers, including Susan Stinson (1995) and Ann Albright (1997), also suggested possibilities for feminist choreographic strategies. I developed and used four basic choreographic strategies; use of gestural, pedestrian or everyday movement designed to enhance kinesthetic empathy with the dancer; subverting or resisting expectations of the dancer; challenging and changing stereotypical feminine movement or movement qualities, and; embodied expressions of lived experiences (CD-Rom/Text/Choreographic strategies). Combined with theatrical devices to enhance my lived experience themes of 'home' and 'journey', my choreographic strategies and my feminism allowed me to find new ways to communicate and to recreate femininity for myself.

Reflecting on Young's (1980, 1998) modalities of feminine movement, I see that I was able to explore and develop alternative modalities of feminine movement in my own solo dance making. I was able to think in movement (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999) as I recreated femininity. My dance making was an embodied way of knowing, an epistemological strategy I used to develop new knowledges. I understood that the knowledge I gained through dancing is contextual, specific to me, and embodied. I was able to embody feminist knowledges in dancing, using my own creative choreographic strategies and improvisational practices to reconcile my knowledges and express them in the moment of dancing. I was able to recreate femininity for myself and to think in movement as I danced.

My solo dance making is an embodied way of knowing for me, and my performance of my solo a demonstration of my knowing.

In order to share my embodied ways of knowing with others, I included both this personal experience narrative, and my CD-Rom of my solo dance on video and with interactive and interpretive text. My understandings and lived experiences of embodied ways of knowing, theorised in Chapter Two and represented in this chapter, provide me with a basis for developing a more sophisticated understanding of embodied ways of knowing, through discussion with other women.

In Chapter Six I present and discuss my findings from interviewing other women solo contemporary dance makers. I represent our co-constructed understandings of embodied ways of knowing through a group narrative. In this narrative (Chapter Six), I consider the influence of feminism and stereotypical femininity on the dance making of other women. I also explore their choreographic strategies and alternative modalities of feminine movement.

CHAPTER SIX

Findings and discussion: Embodied ways of knowing

Introduction

Sitting here now in my office, looking back at my transcripts from interviewing Jan, Raewyn, Ali, Susanne and Bronwyn, I can almost see each of these dancing women around me. Jan - a confident leader and educator in dance, strong and resilient despite living with cancer; Raewyn – a soft-spoken, empathetic teacher, always ready to engage in a sophisticated discussion about patriarchy or femininity or anything else; Ali - opinionated but quick to laugh at herself and at life, and keen to debate education, art and politics; Susanne - thoughtful and quiet as she considers her opinions about dance and choreography, and at times infectiously bubbly; and Bronwyn - alert, engaged and intensely committed to her own investigations in dance and history. I can almost hear their words and laughter filling the room. And myself, well, I'm prone to ask many questions as a researcher and to listen with admiration to others, sometimes being flippant and at other times voicing my dance experiences in earnest. It feels as though each of these dancing women is here in the room with me. Perhaps they are helping to construct this story, listening and commenting and interrupting each other. I imagine that we have a day together to talk, lounging in a warm, comfortable room. Perhaps we sit in the morning sun in my home overlooking the river, sipping herbal tea and talking about feminism, about how we each relate to and recreate femininity, and how our solo dance making is an embodied way of knowing.

Of course I am indulging in fantasy by imagining this context to set comments from their interview transcripts in, but what wonderful discussions we could have together. As I write in my office today, I can just imagine our words...

* * *

On feminism⁴⁵

We are engaged in conversation about our dancing lives when I casually raise the question of what feminism means to each of us personally. I wonder whether they consider themselves as feminist, as I do. Sitting comfortably in her chair, one ankle crossed over her knee and speaking in a deep resonant voice, Jan comments first

Oh, unquestionably I see myself as a feminist. I think of all my background, the way I lead my life, the influence of the women in my family... I don't see myself as an active political person, but in my living and in the way I conduct myself and the role model I hope I am for younger dancers and students that I work with, I hope that my feminist concerns and philosophies are imbued in everything that I do. I don't wear it on my sleeve. But I hope that it is just part and parcel of who and what I am. My generation of women - we are the generation that did the second wave of feminism if you like. And I'm using 'we' in the collective sense here, not that I was a great agitator. But I was in the wave if you like, and I was certainly there in sympathy.

⁴⁵ I weave discussion about multiple feminist perspectives and 'the personal as the political' together throughout this section on feminism, in the interests of creating a conversational flow in the narrative.

I know of Jan's work in the dance community in Aotearoa, New Zealand as an educator, policy advisor and performer, and her comments ring true for me.

As a key motivator for dance, Jan is highly respected for her commitment to dance education, and for her innovative bicultural choreographic work. Jan directs a mature women's dance collective - Crow's Feet – and her solo dance is highly regarded. I have always seen Jan as a role model, although I do not know her well, and I can see that she does integrate her feminist perspectives into her life. Feminism seems to be a 'practice' for her.

Ali leans forward to pour tea, flicking her long silver hair back. I was a young girl when Ali returned to her childhood home in the small remote farming community that was also my home. Wide-eyed, I followed her every movement in the dance workshops she taught in the local hall. As an adult, I moved to the 'big' city of Auckland to study full time in the dance program Ali directed. We have since become friends and colleagues, and my admiration for Ali's work has continued to grow from that first experience of her workshops as a child. Settling back on the couch, and perhaps remembering the days of the woman's movement, Ali thoughtfully responds to my question

I was in the middle of it too, of women's liberation. I could probably be... I am happy to be labelled feminist, as opposed to something else. But I don't necessarily know exactly what that means. I haven't read a lot of feminist literature. I just think feminism is a means or a way of explaining things. Feminist theory has grown out of women's liberation and the suffrage movement and the fight for an equal status, employment, domesticity and

respect in the world. But feminist literature, and feminist theory is actually another thing again, and doesn't totally relate to women's liberation, or women's equality in my mind. But you know I'd be the first person to fight for all those things.

I nod in agreement with Ali, understanding her commitment to some of the basic ideas of feminism (Middleton, 1988; Stanley, 1990). Recalling a photo in Ali's home when I stayed with her recently, I imagine her marching in protests, flowers tucked into her long loose hair and skirts flying around her, a free woman of the 1960's I think... Noises and agreeing comments from everyone in response to Ali's words draw me back to the discussion going on. I look at Bronwyn curled up on the couch, as she seems to be mulling Ali's comments over to herself, and my friend Susanne, sitting cross-legged on the floor beside me, deep in thought. Raewyn is nodding too, elegantly composed for the moment and clearly engaged in listening. Jan responds to Ali's comments

I think some of this feminism is so embedded now in people's consciousness and in their living. We had to pull it out and examine it and rip it up and do all this stuff in a very obvious way. And it may well be that we are maligning younger generations of women, who may have simply absorbed a lot of those things that were laid out there, but now are taken for granted.

"Yes perhaps", I comment, putting my cup of tea beside me on the floor and leaning forward to contribute to the discussion.

I think there are a lot of women younger than me and of my age that do have a negative reaction to the word "feminism", and sometimes little recognition of 'patriarchy'. Perhaps they haven't had the opportunity as you say Jan, to examine feminist issues. But they expect all of the things that earlier generations of women like you fought for. My feminism grew out of my early recognition that, despite women's liberation, I could not walk safely alone at night, that men seemed to think it was appropriate to decide for me, that I was judged as a person on how much I fitted the image of the 'ideal' woman stereotype, that somehow women and land, from whom we all come, were dominated and treated disrespectfully, and that what I know as a dancer in my body wasn't considered knowledge like the writings of Plato were. And I'm feminist because I care about changing these things. So I am happy to call myself feminist. I think we need younger women who will speak as feminists, to provide role models and to remind each other that feminism is still relevant, even if we differ in our particular interests and actions.

I realize as I say this that I tend to be critical of woman my age who do not seem interested in feminism. I am reminded of Carmen Luke's comment that new generations of young women are resisting the second wave feminist analyses of patriarchy and oppression (1998). Instead, young women are more interested in specific projects in which they can theorise about gender in more empowering and affirming ways. I have been interested in and committed to feminism because of the way in which my theoretical interpretations and understandings have grown out of my life experience.

I have been drawn to phenomenological understandings that compliment feminism, and to beginning research from individual women's lived experiences. However, I can see that both Jan and Ali, and most likely each of these other women, have different relationships to and perspectives on feminism (Luke, 1998; Middleton, 1993; Reinhartz, 1992).

I'm about to comment on our multiple understandings of feminism, but I see Susanne, a couple of years younger than me, thinking about our discussion. Susanne and I trained in dance together in Auckland, and performed together in Curve, a women's contemporary dance company that I founded. Prior to dance training, Susanne studied languages at university, and it was our love of language and learning that first connected us as dancers. I'm not surprised when Susanne quietly comments about her relationship to feminism, choosing her words carefully

I don't like putting labels on things, especially myself. Feminist just has all these connotations. Feminist is quite a harsh or quite a strong word, and I don't know if I am that harsh or strong about it. But I do believe in the power, if you like, of women, and my worth as a woman being equal to that of a man. So equality - I would say equality rather than feminism, because feminism only really came about because there wasn't equality. I don't see myself as a feminist. I just see myself as a person who would like to be treated equally to another human being.

I agree with Susanne, though I think to myself that Susanne has just stated what I believe is at the heart of what it is to be feminist. Susanne seems to accept feminist issues, but does not situate herself within a particular feminist framework.

I guess that Susanne is resistant to broad feminist analyses of patriarchy and oppression (Luke, 1998), although she seems to understand the need for equality between men and women. While I have considered feminist analyses of patriarchy and oppression seriously myself, and I acknowledge the relevance of such feminist critiques, I am interested in developing empowering feminist recreations of 'knowledge'. Perhaps Susanne's feminist interests are more creative than critical, I think to myself. Raewyn responds to what Susanne was saying, commenting gently

Some people want to be an activist feminist. And other people are just not wanting to be activists. So, there is difference in people in what they are prepared to do. But it would be nice wouldn't it, if people were aware that they were making those choices. It's like some of us want to hit things head on and other people sort of skirt round sideways, or take a longer route and work with it in different ways. I think that the actual label 'feminist' has got a nasty taste or connotation. I agree with you Susanne. Which brings up this question about whether feminist is the right term for me too. I wonder if feminine or the feminine principle is more accurate for me, rather than feminist. And it almost reminds me of the sort of 'activist' versus 'living it' difference. Certainly feminist has more of an activist connotation in my mind. I feel quite passionately involved in rights for myself and for women. So in that way I would say yes, I am still involved in feminist stuff.

Raewyn's comments remind me to accept multiple feminist perspectives (Reinharz, 1992). However, I still feel that being feminist has a political dimension in aiming to change the situation for women, so feminism must require activism in some sense.

Considering Raewyn's distinction between being activist or not activist as a feminist, I offer more tea around to the others and pour myself some. Some discussion arises as we refill our teacups, and comments are made to Raewyn, enquiring about what she means by the feminine principle. Thoughtfully expanding her comments, Raewyn explains to us how she has come to think about feminism and the feminine.

For a number of years, I didn't realize I was yearning for the feminine I was so busy being angry at patriarchy. Finally, I've realized that I was in deep grief - I have been for most of my life, about the denial of the feminine. I personally believe you have to register how much it has cost you. Like an archaeological dig, we can unearth information that helps understand where the hurt comes from or how these omissions and denials of the feminine have impacted on our expression. It helps me to live more fully without the dominance of patriarchy. In my personal experience, it would be inadequate for me to just skip across the surface of these feelings and issues. It has felt good to go into the depths of where and what has created disturbance or disempowerment for me. Once I started this work, I realized the depth of patriarchy in my own belief systems. I was living an embodiment of the suppressed feminine.

I'm upset by Raewyn's last comment about living an embodiment of the suppressed feminine. My reaction must show clearly on my face because Raewyn says to me "yeah - oh its disgusting stuff." As I listen to her comments I recall being a student of Raewyn's.

Raewyn is respected for her teaching and her unorthodox work in counselling, therapy and movement. I understand that for Raewyn, dance and movement can be contexts for personal self-development and growth, and for dealing with trauma, as well as for artistic expression. It seems to me that Raewyn's personal experiences and recognition of oppression influence her feminism and her teaching. She was always committed to holistically nurturing each of her students through her Skinner Releasing Technique classes, and to acknowledging our personal issues and growth. As I reflect on my experiences in her classes, Raewyn is smiling and looking around the room, wondering whether the other women can relate to what she is saying.

Jan speaks, and makes links to Raewyn's comments from her experience. Jan connects her recent experiences of her trauma with breast cancer and mastectomy to the broader experience of the trauma and oppression of patriarchy that Raewyn had commented on. She links her personal experience to the wider socio-cultural and political context of women and trauma. Jan's comments remind me of the feminist slogan 'the personal is the political' (Mills, 1997; Warren, 1996). I ask the women how they relate to that slogan. Jan describes to us how she feels.

I think now I understand what that statement 'the personal is the political' means. I've never really understood in a really personal way. I am not a political animal: I've never been involved in politics in any sense, either in lesbian politics or in any other sort of politics. And some of that feminist ideology - I've read it and I've intellectually understood it, but I haven't embedded it in my own being somehow. But I guess that notion of 'the personal is the political' has started to happen for me. I am dealing with

personal things with breast cancer and yet it feels like I am a conduit for something else bigger. My work is not driven by ego in any way at all. I actually feel that I am just a messenger, and that's quite freeing, because the issue of breast cancer is bigger than me. So I guess I don't think about myself as a political being, but when I talk about the sort of things that I have been doing, I guess you could see it in that way. It's not just been the personal thing, and it could never be just that actually.

I can see the other women listening intently to Jan's comments. I know that most of us have seen Jan's solo *Off My Chest* (Bolwell, 1999, 2000a), and recognize her achievement in educating women about breast cancer through her performance. I first saw Jan perform this work concurrently for Auckland members of the Cancer Society and for those of us attending a dance research forum. I was very moved by Jan's courage and her maturity as a performer, evident in the way in which she was clearly both dancing from her experience, and able to reflect on and share her experiences in a positive way. I remember now how she first appeared on stage, posed on a chaise, adopting positions like the reclining female nude in the paintings of history. She wore a hospital green cape, gloves in latex and a matching dress, and behind her stood a small white screen on metal legs. Jan sat up slowly from her pose to face me in the audience, dignified, poised, confident, though perhaps resigned too I thought. But suddenly she rushed forward, hands pressed against her breasts and agonizingly walked her fingers across her chest, searching... and then seeming to panic, she ran upstage and stopped to stare at the screen on which images had been projected.

I realized in horror that the projected images were slides of cancerous cells.

Stabbing, slashing, sawing movements of her arms alternated with movements where Jan seemed to be protecting her chest and in the violence of her movements I saw Jan's depiction of mastectomy. Collapsing, Jan curled up protectively, reflecting her grief and pain. Coming eventually to standing, Jan slowly removed her green hospital cape. To my surprise, under her cape Jan was wearing a large set of false breasts that sat over her dress.

As I watched with amusement, Jan manipulated her false breasts, squeezing them, dropping and catching their weight. She tried unsuccessfully to tuck them away and I could see Jan enjoyed this new acquaintance with breasts, finding humour in the painful reality of her experience. She then removed her false breasts, and with athletic commitment, turned and dropped to pose in the manner of an ancient Greek statue. In powerful, athletic movements, Jan travelled across the stage, striding, reaching, extending, leaping and arching.



Photo 31: Jan (J) Reaching

Later I watched intrigued, as Jan rescued one of the false prosthetic breasts and cradled and suckled it, held it and wound it around her head, nestled it into her shoulder to rock it, and placed it on her sternum.



Photo 32: (J) holding prosthesis



Photo 33: (J) nestling prosthesis

I could see how Jan demonstrated her resolution with mastectomy through returning the prosthesis to her chest, though not to its appropriate position. In the final moments, Jan deliberately placed the prosthesis on the head of the chaise, and seated herself a distance away from it, indicting to me her sense of resolution. The lights went down...

Immediately following the end of her dance, Jan presented a personal and informative story about her experiences with breast cancer, aiming to reach her audience on an educational and an emotional level.

Jan spoke about how she was only just coming to ‘embed in her being’ feminist understandings such as ‘the personal is the political’, and about using her dance making to communicate her own and the wider issues of breast cancer to other women. As I recall her solo dance I think that Jan did seem to experience herself as embodying knowledge, and as able to explore and express her knowledge in dance making.

Jan valued her personal experiences and recognized that she could educate other women by sharing her experiences, as well as coming to reconcile her own traumatic experiences with other knowledges (Belenky , 1986), through the dance making process.

* * *

Realizing that I had been miles off remembering Jan's performance, I turn my attention back to our conversations about feminism and solo dance. Sitting opposite me, Bronwyn uncurls and stretches on the couch. I am interested to hear her thoughts about feminism because of all of us here in the room, Bronwyn is the person I know least of all. I have always been so curious to meet her and to hear about her dance making, and this is my first opportunity. At dance school I had studied her video dance work with interest, and wished that I could meet this reclusive women who lived in a small community in the South Island. Perhaps sensing my curiosity, Bronwyn leans forward to comment to us about her relationship with feminism, offering again a different perspective.

At times I have felt the drawbacks of being a female in our society, but to me they are analogous to those of being too young or old or poor. Maybe there's a lack of recognition of the positive aspects of being female in society that either most men don't see or as women we don't see for ourselves.

To be blunt I enjoy living my own life whilst my husband earns a living for all of us. I spend most of my time dancing but I don't view that as a drain on his

resources or unimportant. I do appreciate living the stereotypical wife at home with the freedom to spend my day as I please. The price for this freedom is living in Herbert because that is where my husband works.

Would I be happier as a dancer in New York struggling to earn my living or struggling to find time to dance while I earned my living as an arts educator?

I think not.

There are nods of understanding as Bronwyn speaks. I certainly can appreciate her decision to avoid the struggle of life as a dancer, having experienced stress and uncertainties around work in the dance community myself. Bronwyn's comments reflect a commitment to dancing that we all share, although her choices to work outside the dance community have been different. I admit to myself at being surprised that Bronwyn does not identify as feminist, as I had interpreted her video dance work as feminist. Bronwyn seems to acknowledge feminism, but, like Susanne, reacts against accepting it wholeheartedly. I speculate privately that perhaps taking an overtly feminist perspective would be too contradictory alongside Bronwyn's choice to be a financially dependent mother and wife. But I also recall Pirkko Markula's (1993, 1995) comments about the women she spoke to regarding body image and aerobics. Those women were aware of feminist critiques of the ideal body image, but nevertheless strove through aerobics to gain slim, fit and shapely bodies. They lived with contradictory perspectives, and perhaps Bronwyn also does.

In typical paradoxical style, Ali then tells us

I don't think that for me femininity or feminist politics has been of consequence in my work. But having said that, I have felt the weight of being a woman within academia, within some of the sort of male dominated areas of the world at different times. And I have found ways to deal with that. I haven't suffered from it I don't think, and I haven't made an issue of it. I have found a way of working with men where I have not felt my own femaleness, or my own power - which I'm much more interested in - being jeopardized or not respected.

Ali's strength and characteristic independence are apparent in her comments. I know how hard it can be working in some academic environments.

Susanne speaks again, making links from our conversation to her own solo dance *Someone else's weirdo* (Bentley, 2000).

I don't feel like I relate to 'the personal is the political' - though I guess I probably do. My solo could be seen in that light - the concept of being someone else's weirdo (the title of my piece)... We are all individuals and we judge each other all the time, and my solo is about my personal experience of this.

Bronwyn asks Susanne about her solo dance and as they talk, Ali and Jan begin to debate whether dance is political in itself. I listen in to their conversation. I know, having been both a student of Ali's and a friend over many years, that Ali has debated the relationship of dance and politics before. Ali easily says

I think all dance is a political act. I always did think that when anyone stands up and reveals themselves through movement they are making a very powerful statement. So solo dance is a political act, as any dance is. It's a political act, but you don't need to go out there and say that I'm making a dance about feminism, because you are anyway. I'm certainly not trying to make a point about being a woman. I don't think anyone needs to do that. But you stand up on stage as a woman dancing, and it reads woman's power, women's energy, and women's self-assertion. Maybe just being a woman dancing is a feminist statement? But being female is an expression of nature, if you allow that to move through you. One of the things we are doing is revealing, in a visible way, the unification of body, mind and spirit. And, maybe what is more important is this embodiment of the human animal in its most whole and beautiful. Dancers are demonstrating this and in itself, this is a powerful political statement. I think the most powerful thing one can do and the most political one can be on a personal level, is to try to honour one's whole being. In other words, know oneself and like oneself as much as possible, and honour all ones differences and particular qualities and skills.

Plenty of nods of agreement and comments of interest in Ali's thoughts flow and I notice that Bronwyn and Susanne have tuned back in to the discussion. I hear Susanne say to Bronwyn that they must talk more later. Personally, I agree with Ali's comments. However, I know from engaging in feminist theory that simply being a woman dancer on stage is not always enough to make the political and feminist statement we might like to think we are making.

Simply being strong and confident, as a woman standing alone on stage does not mean that an audience will understand me as feminist. While I recall Jeanne Forte's comment that "All women's performances are derived from the relationship of women to the dominant system of representation, situating them within a feminist critique" (1998, p.236), I have seen women perform solo and seem to simply reinforce stereotypical femininity. I imagine that solo women striptease artists, even if being strong and confident on stage, reinforce stereotypical femininity in their dancing. A feminist interpretation of women's solo striptease dance might be quite difficult to make.

I also recall Ann Albright's (1997) comments about Louise Lecavalier and how, despite her muscular embodiment and physicality as a dancer, Lecavalier ends up portraying stereotypically feminine characteristics. I am a bit sceptical about how successful we are as solo women contemporary dance makers, in being understood as feminist simply by virtue of standing up alone.

Shifting the focus of our discussion slightly, Raewyn returns to her notion of 'the feminine principle', explaining that

I realize that often in my work I move away from putting movement to the forefront and go into what I would call psychological or social and feminist issues. Before beginning making that solo Sensory Life, I set some criteria. You remember Ali - neither of us had performed in a while when we came to make our solos for Four Women Dance? When I went back to make this dance I said - I wasn't going to injure myself, I wasn't going to get stressed, it wasn't going to take over my life, and I wasn't going to go into debt.

All of these things, to me, were feminist statements. They were very much addressing the psychological process of rehearsals and performance, in changing the angst, tortuousness and stress. I was really interested in a self-nourishing process instead. I wanted to actually operate within myself, psychologically and physically in a harmless way, and hopefully for the audience to perceive that and benefit from it in some way. To me the feminine principle certainly involves great clarity, focus, goodwill, and generosity of spirit. That's to do with valuing life. I believe people are more sensitive than they realize, or than our patriarchal society has permitted us to admit - both men and women. And this sensitivity can very easily be equated with vulnerable and weak, and I mean something completely different! I mean highly tuned processes in terms of sensitivity – that we are multi-layered and multi-dimensional beings that have feelings and responses and ideas and intuitions about what's good for us and what's not good for us, and what we want and what we don't want. So that has a bearing on the way that I try to be with people. I am looking for that congruence with myself as an authentic individual and congruence with my movement material and with the audience. However, I have had quite aggressive responses to me being feminine and authentic. It makes some people feel exposed and challenges them to face their own vulnerability. But it's about being brave and whole enough to be intimate and have a sense of community.

I sense that Ali understands the distinction Raewyn seems to be making between taking a deliberately feminist approach to making dance work, and implying feminism simply by being a woman. I think that there is a further distinction here though. A dancer might undertake dance making with feminist criteria and processes, as Raewyn described herself doing, and still make dance work that reinforced stereotypical femininity. It is not only by standing strong and confident as a solo woman, or by using 'feminist' dance making processes that a woman must be clear about her feminist agendas, but also the final choreography and performance of the dance. So for me, I think that feminist activism would need to be clear throughout the dance making processes and dance performances in order to enhance the possibility of a dancer and her dancing being understood as feminist.

As I reflect on Raewyn's words, I make connections to the work of Belenky et al. (1986) on the constructed knowing strategy. The authors describe a constructive knower as self-reflective and aware, having a tolerance for ambiguity and attempting to deal with life as a whole. Raewyn seems very self-reflective, sensitive and aware of her own processes and she is certainly attempting to deal with her life as a whole. However, as Raewyn is dancing to explore and express her 'feminist processes' in an embodied way, I speculate that she is using an embodied knowing strategy. She talks about attempting to reconcile her ways of working in dance with her 'feminine principle' of harmlessness. She discarded knowledge and processes that were not useful, and set herself new criteria for dance making. I turn my thoughts back to the conversations in my living room, and listen as Jan speaks.

Jan's next comments in relation to her own dance making processes and criteria, bring our discussion back to the notion of the personal as political.

One of my fears in doing Off My Chest was that I was going to wallow around in this little personal emotional world, and do this little cathartic dance you know, about my experience. And I thought, I can't do that. I can do it in the studio for myself, but to do something in the public arena, you know, you diminish the power of what you are doing in dance if you keep it personal. It has got to be made relevant. If you can't find your creative way to go beyond that personal, then I think you diminish the potential power of a dance.

"But, personal experiences do seem to me to be a relevant starting point for making solo dance. Do you agree?" I ask the women. As it seems that we are all in agreement about this, I continue

I think we do need to start from our own experience in our dance making, and I feel that I try to embody this notion of the personal being the political myself. I think I do have something to share, and though it is personal, I hope that through my performance others will find ways to empathize or connect with my experience. I began making my solo This is after all the edited life after travelling overseas and wanting to re-establish where I stood in relation to being Pakeha, a feminist researcher and dancer, and in terms of femininity. So reflecting on and recreating femininity in relation to these things was personal, but it was also part of the wider search for identity that many young people find in the big 'overseas experience'. I hoped that others might relate

to my experiences. I wanted to explore and share my recreated self through my dance making. So I guess that this is one way I connect with the idea of the personal as the political.

At this point, Bronwyn who has continued to listen and be engaged in the discussion contributes some thoughts about her solo dance making. She seems to connect more directly with the notion of the personal as the political, than with our conversations about feminism.

I suppose that some of the ideas behind my solo video dance Housework, were to do with a dancer working in her home. So that is personal, but I realize that Housework is really a political work too. I decided with Colleen (filmmaker) that we should use my house and environment for my solo, because this is where I live and work. I wanted to make the statement that dance is my life and my family is my life as well and it all has to integrate.

I wanted to show how dance is really woven into my life. I look at life in a holistic way rather than separating things out.

I hear in Bronwyn's comments her desire to work differently in dance making, in ways that allow her to bring her life and dancing together, and to make this statement to others. Raewyn comments to Bronwyn, saying that she can relate to her desire to bring dance and life together. She remarks

My second solo, Sensual Ensemble, was an exploration into how to live my life as a dancer in a total, rather than segmented off into so-called ordinary life and dance life – to actually merge the two.

At this point in our discussions it occurs to me that perhaps we should break for lunch soon, and take some time to share our experiences with each other in smaller groups.

Not wanting to control our discussions too much, I suggest this possibility.

Enthusiastic responses greet my suggestion, and we all agree to break for lunch.

Raewyn then offers another thought as we are chatting informally. She says

The other thing that I was wondering was that although people are becoming more emancipated, there is still a thing of women's work or women's experience being viewed as not as important. Or not interesting, or trivial perhaps. You see, being a woman in my 50's, quite a lot of my life and the messages I've grown up with, were really patriarchal. So I have to work hard to overcome it. There was a dilemma for me about doing something ordinary from my life - about whether it would be seen or have value, because it wasn't 'ta-daa'!! People might think, so what? Now as I am sitting talking to you all about it, I'm not paranoid about that. It feels, well, just the way things are.

Bronwyn is nodding enthusiastically as Raewyn speaks and I see the other women smiling and agreeing too. For Susanne and I, being the two younger women in the group, we may not have had the same exposure to dominant patriarchal thinking in our lives, but I know I often feel as though my work and experience is not valued outside artistic communities. I suspect Susanne can relate to Raewyn's comments in a personal way too. Like Raewyn, I have been exploring ways in which my personal experiences inform my solo dance making, and I can see how I can better understand my own experiences in relation to my wider social and political context (Mills, 1997).

An understanding of feminist theories and activism has helped me appreciate the value of understanding what Raewyn's describes as 'ordinary everyday life', in relation to my patriarchal context. Solo dance making thus gives me a voice for these experiences and the opportunity to reflect, interpret and value my experiences.

From discussion with Jan, Raewyn, Ali, Susanne and Bronwyn, I can see that they have some understandings of different feminist perspectives, and 'the personal as political'. Sometimes their comments, and their dance making, seem to express implicit rather than explicit feminist perspectives. From my readings in feminist theories, I appreciate that there are multiple perspectives that women have that are feminist (Luke, 1998: Reinharz, 1992). For each of these women, feminism has had some influence. I am interested in hearing how feminist understandings and 'the personal as the political' have affected influenced their creation of specific solo dances.

Dance making from lived experience

Mulling over our conversations this morning, I potter about in the kitchen preparing a fresh salad, and arranging bread, cheeses, fruit and more tea. Ali and Jan are deep in conversation about dance education and University politics, taking their chairs onto the veranda overlooking the river. I can hear Susanne and Raewyn and Bronwyn talking about their solo works in the living room. I realize that I am one of the few people to have seen Bronwyn's video dance *Housework* (Judge, 1998), and that she may not have seen any of our solos at all. I recollect Bronwyn's solo video dance work *Housework*, as I continue making lunch.

The video *Housework* opened with scenes from a flower garden and a beautiful building. I wondered at first whether this building was a museum, but I realized that it is a home of delicate and exotic furniture and ornaments. Within this setting, Bronwyn appeared, dressed in an ensemble costume of harem pants, a leotard and an embroidered Chinese jacket (Photo 34, p.197).



Photo 34: Bronwyn – arms raised

She danced respectfully within her environment, as though perhaps the furniture was not her own and the objects she handled precious to her, I thought. She did not appear to be doing any ‘house work’ of the domestic kind, and I remember laughing as I realized how the title of her solo *Housework* reflected instead Bronwyn’s work as a dancer in her own home. Bronwyn moved in an expressive and intentional manner, her deliberate hand movements, raised arms (Photo 34, p.197), turning and stamping reminding me of flamenco and folk dance. I had a sense of travel and different cultural heritages from her dancing and from the setting. I guessed that Bronwyn was drawing on her family links to Europe, her own travels around the world and her study of ethnic dances. Bronwyn was alone in her solo dance, and yet I understood that she was remembering other people and times (Photo 35, p.199) as she leafed

through old photos of family and dancing, and as a rag doll flew limply through the air to slump on an antique chair. What was the significance of the rag doll I wondered... a toy from her own or her children's past perhaps? I remember being more curious about this woman when the video finished, feeling like a detective as I pieced together a meaning for myself from Bronwyn's solo. I listen intently now as Bronwyn outlines her solo.

Bronwyn speaks quietly but clearly to Raewyn and Susanne, as they remain sitting in my living room. I listen in, slicing tomatoes and shredding lettuce in the kitchen. There is a pleasure evident in her voice in being able to speak about her dance making. Bronwyn says

Some of the ideas behind Housework were to do with a dancer working in her home, as I said before. Video dance is a great opportunity to record this, because it is not likely that people are going to come to see my house and see where I work in isolated Herbert... The experience that is behind Housework was an incident that happened when my first child was born and I was working on a duet dance in Wales. We were quite anxious to include my young son Toby in our work because we felt that he was part of my life. We wanted to have our dance really woven into our lives. We were to perform for the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and we had a dance worked out on children's rhymes and poetry. In the dance we took Toby and turned him round and tossed him from one to the other, just like you do with children. But these people came and saw our performance and decided that they thought that tossing Toby wasn't appropriate. They rang up the Society for the Prevention

of Cruelty to Children who came along and told us that they had complaints and they didn't think we should be doing that. We had a rag doll in case Toby was sick, so we thought well, we'll use the rag doll. But then the other dancer was furious because she loathes any sort of injustice. And she decided that we were not going to be browbeaten. We were doing this for the very highest ethical reasons! We were trying to incorporate the family into our work. But sadly, that really ended Toby's incorporation in any of our dances after that because it was so stressful. And because the next step would have been to issue a court injunction and Toby would have been taken out of my care and I would have lost him. It was exhausting and that is what was behind Housework.



Photo 35: (B) remembering

I can hear Raewyn and Susanne murmuring and sympathizing with Bronwyn as she told this story, and I too can hear the frustration and pain in her voice over this incident. Bronwyn explains that her dance just grew from thinking about her experience. In the video dance work, she explained that she had tried to use images that, when put together would leave the viewer with a feeling of remembering the

past, and of something lost (Photo 35, p.199). Her video dance also features the rag doll and photographs from that time in her life (Judge, 1998). Bronwyn explains how she thinks making her solo helped her understand this experience.

Referring to Housework, dance is a coming to terms with something. I was learning a new perspective about myself and the world. And it's not so much gaining knowledge, but finding out about my roots and going back to emotions, passions and expression. It is an on-going process. It reflects your life, especially if you are doing your own work and you are doing what really interests you.

I am interested to hear Bronwyn's description of dance as a way or process for coming to terms with something. I hear her acknowledge that she is active in finding out, learning about herself and the world and valuing her own experiences. Knowing of Bronwyn's interest in research and history I speculate that she may be using embodied ways of knowing, despite her comment that dancing was not so much about 'gaining knowledge'. Susanne comments that she understands Bronwyn's explanation of how her dance making assisted her understanding of her life experiences.

While they continue to talk, I remember watching Susanne's solo *Someone else's weirdo* in Wellington at the Fringe Arts Festival (Bentley, 2000). I had travelled down to see a number of dance performances and Susanne's new solo was one of the highlights for me. Integrating improvisation, choreography, singing, speech, children's and popular music and games, Susanne had delighted me.

Knowing her personally too, I could see how much she had challenged herself to step outside of her earlier ways of working, and to understand her dancing differently.

One of my lasting memories of her performance was the beginning of her dance – Susanne perfectly balanced in a yoga headstand for over a minute (Photo 36, p.201). She was in the upstage right corner with her back to us, dress fallen over her head and only her bottom (in purple underpants) and her legs visible (Photo 36, p.201). Clearly this dance was not going to be an ordinary one!

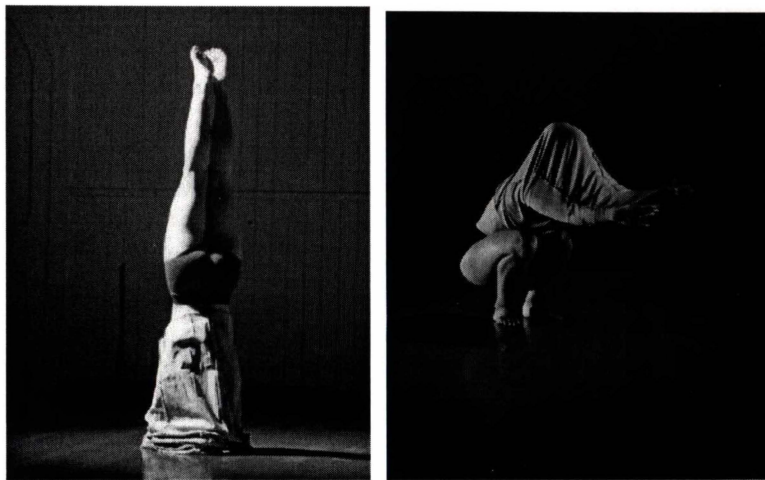


Photo 36: Susanne (S) headstand Photo 37: (S) restricting dress I

I also remember watching as Susanne switched from a movement quality that accentuated the restrictions of her futuristic grey dress (Photo 37, p.201), to a playful improvisational state where she turned her hands into puppets and somewhat cheekily demanded I witness her not dancing but being a ‘weirdo’. I remember her brushing her hands down her body, in seeming frustration, and then extending this movement into an energetic high jump into the air (Photo 38, p.203). Susanne’s singing and words throughout the dance helped me to understand that she was allowing herself to play and to have the freedom to move as she wished, embracing being ‘weird’ or different. So I felt satisfied as I understood how everyone was ‘someone else’s

weirdo' and excited with the way in which Susanne had theatrically integrated all these elements to communicate with us.

I listened in to Susanne's explanations about her solo dance, as she explained her dance making to Raewyn and Bronwyn. Finding herself in a situation that was quite new, and having to live day to day, Susanne turned to dance making to help her make sense of her experience. Like many dancers, she had been working in film as a character in *Lord of the Rings*⁴⁶. Being away from home for a few months living in Wellington and having a light but unpredictable working schedule, Susanne describes how she had time to reflect.

I was thinking and writing about the way I was feeling lonely and frustrated and sort of trapped in how I had to live at that time. I was trying to be comfortable with myself and calm in the face of uncertainty and chaos. One day when I was coming home on the bus I saw an advert on top of the Embassy Theatre. I looked up and saw "everyone is someone else's weirdo" and I started thinking about this concept. I thought about what I found weird, - things like talking on cell phones, people talking to themselves, talking puppet hands and childish things. I watched some children in the park and I experimented with childlike behaviour or movements. I made movements like I was wiping off or saying no to people's expectations of me, or restrictions that they tried to put on me.

⁴⁶ During the time I was doing my PhD research, Peter Jackson's three films that make up JRR Tolkien's epic novel *The Lord of the Rings* were being filmed around New Zealand. Many members of the New Zealand artistic community were involved in the films.

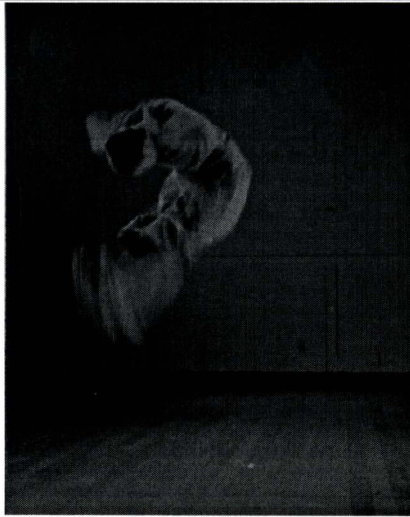


Photo 38: (S) brush/wipe off

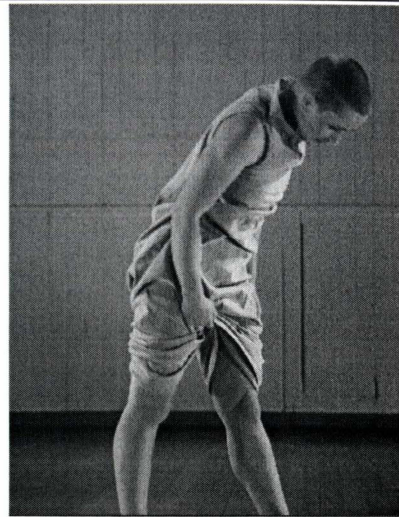


Photo 39: (S) look at feet

It goes with my text "Dancers have ugly feet. Some one said that to me once - that they're weird. But I like my feet. I am someone else's weirdo". It is a wiping off, a way of saying that I don't care, to that statement. That I don't care that people think dancers have ugly feet, and rejecting that notion. And I just stand there with my hands on my hips and go 'so there', like a little kid. It's that freedom that children have to express themselves however they want without the feeling of being judged. They seem to have more freedom and the mind set that it doesn't matter what you do. So I was brushing off social conformity, or social responsibility, and having to act in a certain way. The piece is really about the concept of being some one else's weirdo. So what am I going to do that people may find weird? I was trying to do the opposite of what they wouldn't find weird, which would be feminine, flowery, floaty, that kind of thing.

Bronwyn asks Susanne whether making her solo also helped her understand as well as express her experiences. Susanne agrees that it had, and goes on to explain why she had chosen that content for her dance.

My solo had that content because it is what I was interested in. Because that is what is going through my head at the time and maybe people might want to hear what I have to say. That is what I know, and you generally write or make stuff from your own experience. It is definitely a subject that people often delve into in their own solo projects.

Raewyn commented that she agreed with Susanne that dance was a way to understand lived experiences, and recalls that she remembers Susanne making a solo work while she was a dance student that helped her to understand her relationship experiences. I remember that dance Susanne made, having been a student and friend of Susanne's at the time. I hear in Susanne's words her understanding of dance making as an opportunity to explore and express her own experiences, and to resist other people's expectations of her.

Knowing Raewyn as a teacher when I first saw her solo work *Sensory Ensemble* (Thorburn, 1997), I remembered how much more insight into her life her solo dance had given me. I was able to see Raewyn's philosophical and feminist perspectives in action in her dance, and to connect them with my learning as her student. Presented in an evening of solo performances by women at a local Auckland gallery, and then later in our dance studios, I watched Raewyn warming up in the performance space in front of the audience (Photo 40, p.205), rather like we would warm up in class. I realized that she had not begun her dance with the usual separation that performers make between 'dancing' and 'living', but instead she had just continued seamlessly from one into the other. In this way Raewyn was resisting many of the expectations of the dancer (Rainer, 1966). As Raewyn warmed up, she

described simply to us her feelings and sensations (Photo 41, p.205). She spoke confidently as she moved, dressed in simple loose black pants and a top, and she was clearly both engaged in moving and responsive to her audience.

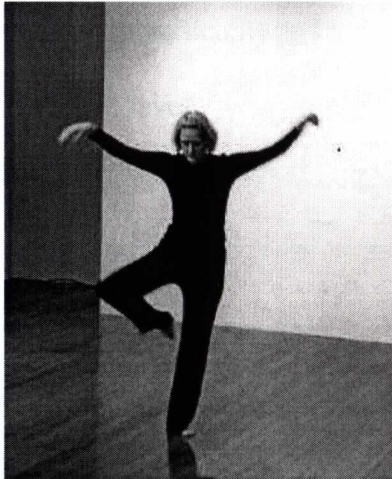


Photo 40: Raewyn (R) warming up

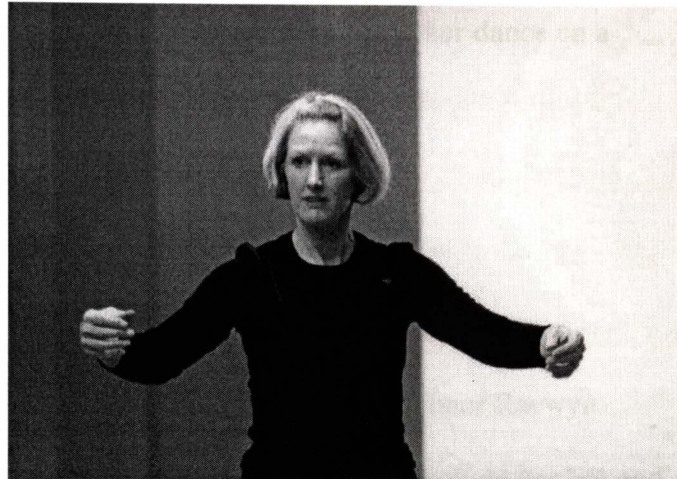


Photo 41: (R) describing sensations

I was fascinated as I saw her in her performance a depth of experience and maturity in her knowledge of movement. I did not see her struggle to achieve ‘technical dance’ movements. I realized that her dancing was at times improvisational and responsive to her moment by moment interests, and at other times deliberately chosen to allow her enjoyment in her own choices. At one point during the performance, I was quite surprised as Raewyn donned an apron and began peeling potatoes. I was moved to giggles as I watched her experiment with peeling potatoes while lying on the floor, and I understood her attempt to think about household tasks as a dance. Sitting in front of her computer, Raewyn parodied the typical uncomfortable hunching and straightening postures as she attempted to type, and eventually typed for us to see, the words ‘perhaps all my movement is dancing’ on the screen. Raewyn was using everyday, pedestrian and gestural movement in her dancing, and I experienced an enhanced sense of kinesthetic empathy as an audience member,

recognizing her experiences and relating to them personally. As Raewyn moved into 'dancing' again, I saw her own teaching in action as she moved with release and ease and obvious pleasure in the sensations of her body. I could feel myself relaxing and breathing more deeply as I watched, empathetically experiencing her dance on a kinesthetic level.

* * *

Still listening in while I begin to lay food on the table for lunch, I hear Raewyn expand on her earlier comments about how she had deliberately brought her life and dance making experiences together so that they could influence each other.

I also use an autobiographical way of sourcing my solo dance material. The basis of Sensual Ensemble was that when I'm dancing my sensations of my body are extremely enjoyable and pleasurable. To be specific, I feel light, fluid, whole, unencumbered, and that things are effortless. Versus doing things like household chores or administration as part of being a dance artist. The hours spent at the computer mean that I hold my breath, I concentrate too hard to the detriment of getting tense in the shoulders or the back of the neck, I get stiff and my circulation goes down. As I said, I wanted to explore how to have the same body sensations as I do in dance, in my life, and to merge the two. So I thought I would do my dance so it's directly about life situations, and pick those very ordinary situations of being in a kitchen and being on a computer to actually present these contrasting things. I wanted to explore

commonplace real experiences that are likely for the audience to have done, to offer the likely hood of a visceral response in the audience, and engage them in the process. I primarily stayed with the theme of talking about body sensation or body experience and how to have something that is more pleasurable. I peeled potatoes in my dance and I talked about the kinds of inquiries I had – why do I get tense when I’m doing this? I went into the absurdity of lying on my back peeling potatoes, and that was subverting the order of domestic life and also deconstructing the movement patterns usually used to peel potatoes. From the kitchen I went on the computer and did some gestural movements that progressively became abstracted, relating to the process of sitting at a computer and how over time your body can’t sit upright anymore and you get tired. This section of my dance concluded with me actually typing a statement into the computer - “perhaps all my movement is dancing”.



Photo 42: (R) computer work

Then I moved away from the computer and returned to fluid pleasurable dance, to the pleasurable experience of improvising so that there was that

instantaneous life-giving process in moving... I know at that time I actually put into practice running my life differently, when I was doing household chores for example. I looked at ways not to be tense, to see my life as a whole and not compartmentalized into the things that I do that I like and don't like. I thought that our lives could be free of negative perceptions and unhealthy body attitude. We have a choice - our daily tasks can be a meditation. It was extraordinarily liberating. It enabled me to be much more effective in my self-sustainable physical processes in my life...

I'm listening intently to Raewyn's descriptions and explanations of her dance making processes. Raewyn was very deliberately exploring her lived experiences, bringing dance and everyday life together as she considered how all her movement might be 'dancing' (Photo 42, p. 207). She was then applying what she learned from her explorations back into both dancing and everyday life in a way she found liberating.

It seems to me that Raewyn was using embodied ways of knowing as she valued her own experiential ways of knowing as a dancer and attempted to reconcile these with other knowledge and experiences as she lived her life. She continues

Related to what you said Susanne, I find that conventions of our culture limit us to a very restricted set of norms. If you do anything outside of that you are classed as a weirdo. But for me, when I have moved away from the norm I feel an incredible expanding of the way I can respond to people and the environment and a sense of freedom and personal well-being.

"Yes, yes", I hear Susanne agree. She explains how the improvised section in her dance was a freeing experience for her too.

I had a lot of fun playing as a solo performer, and in my improvisation I could do whatever the hell I liked. With my improvisation I gave myself permission to do whatever I wanted, which was quite liberating and quite powerful. And sometimes I would just walk up to the audience and stare, or go off into a corner and play shadow puppets with my hands and it didn't matter!

There is lots of laughter at Susanne's story from the three women. Ali and Jan come in to inquire about the joking. We join together to have lunch, and as I am eating, Raewyn remarks to me that there seem to be so few opportunities for her, and perhaps for all of us, to have in-depth discussions about our work. Such discussion creates ripples outwards that help to strengthen the dance community on many levels, she continues. I remember how I felt bereft of the detailed discussion I was used to having in an academic community, when I joined the dance community. Now we are bringing the two communities together and this encourages me.

I reflect as I eat, on the conversations of our morning together. I was very interested to hear Bronwyn and Raewyn and Susanne talk specifically about how they wove their lived experience in dance and everyday life together. Bronwyn seemed to me to be using her dance making to revisit, understand and reinterpret an experience from her past. Through creating *Housework*, many years after her experiences in Wales, she seemed to have reached some sense of resolution to the frustration she had experienced (Judge, 1998). Susanne was exploring and reconstructing her current experiences to make sense of the uncertainty around her (Bentley, 2000). She was aware of the judgment of others and the perception that she had to conform and not be 'weird' in order to be accepted.

However, rather than conform, Susanne chose to delve into what being weird was, and reconstructing herself as weird had been empowering for her. And Raewyn obviously connected with what both women had been saying. She had been directly applying her dancer's knowledge in her everyday life, wanting to find more fulfilling and nourishing ways of being (Thorburn, 1997). For Raewyn and Susanne, sections of improvisation performance within their solo work allowed for a sense of freedom and empowerment. Of course I knew that what they each spoke of was only a small part of what their solo dance making processes meant to them, but I enjoyed hearing how they began from their personal experiences and were able to create and perform in such a way that they connected their own situation to the wider social and political context. To me, these women were beginning to use embodied ways of knowing, as they each experienced themselves as active in creating and expressing the understandings they developed from their lived experiences. Dance making provided a particular focus for them to explore, or to think in movement (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999) and apply their understandings in their lives.

Reflecting on my own dance making, I recall that I tried to bring together my dancing life, my personal search for identity and my research work in feminist theory (Barbour, 2001g). My personal engagement with feminist theory and application into choreographic practice was very much part of a feminist attitude of integrating the personal and the political. And my search for identity was also part of a common cultural experience of young New Zealanders. Each of us was using solo dance making as an embodied way of knowing.

As we are all chatting amicably about dance issues after lunch, Ali announces that she is going to take a short walk by the river. She invites us to join her, but Raewyn, Jan and Bronwyn decide to remain in my home and continue talking, and Susanne needs to do some errands in town. My small apartment overlooks the Waikato River and riverside walking paths. I open the sliding doors fully so the women can enjoy the view, sun and fresh spring air. I spent a long time looking for this riverside home and I take pride in sharing my home with others.

I wander down to the river with Ali. Ali walks slowly, as though she wants to connect with things around her and doesn't want to miss anything in the environment. From my earliest memories of dance workshops with Ali, right through my training with her at dance school and into our collegial discussions as we work together, we have discussed the influence of our environment and landscape on our lives and work as artists. As Ali once described it to me, she has a constant love affair with nature, along with a real interest in ecology. These interests have always influenced her dance making. I remind myself, content for now to simply walk in silence, to discuss these things with Ali. We pass native ponga tree ferns, and weeping willows, wild lilies growing the shade and, at regular intervals, wooden piers over the water. We pause often as we walk to watch the Waikato River flow by. The water of this large river is a somewhat muddy green colour, slightly swollen from the recent rain and moving with a steady and sometimes unnerving swiftness. I know the river well, being a regular paddler on it, but I am always saddened when I remember the clearer blue water much further upstream where it flows out of New Zealand's largest lake, Lake Taupo. In its passage from the mountains to the lake, and through much of the

central North Island, the river suffers from regular hydro dams, farmland runoff and some remaining mismanaged wastewater disposal. Sometimes the river seems to slow almost to stillness, as though it cannot bear to go on. But it moves steadily through Hamilton, and much recreational activity centres here.

Ali breaks our companionable silence to comment that she enjoys the meditation of just watching the water, something I also enjoy despite my concerns for the health of the Waikato River. I ask Ali about her solo dance called *How being still is still moving* as we continue to walk, and how it relates to her interest in ecology and the environment (East, 1996). She reminds me of her background in dance and environmental politics, saying that

The kaupapa⁴⁷ of Origins Dance Theatre that I directed in the 1980's and 1990's, was to make works that would raise people's consciousness about their relationship to the land. And draw their attention to the fact that the environment existed and the specific things that were happening to it. I guess that kaupapa has stayed with me in my solo dancing.

Ali describes how, when she came to make her solo for the season of *Four Women Dance*, she had to resolve some interesting issues for herself.



Photo 1: Ali (A) beach rehearsals

⁴⁷ Kaupapa is a Maori word meaning philosophy, topic or matter of interest/discussion (Biggs, 1990).

I realized that I did more dance on the beach for instance, than on stage, and I wondered how was I going to be true to this notion. My way of bringing the environment to the stage was to make the work on the beach with a video camera and then bring it onto the stage through the screen. And to present it, simultaneously on stage, with my live dancing. The interesting thing that I was able to do with video was bring in the stillness's that I created in the water in response to rock and ideas of the body as a kind of driftwood. I found it interesting playing with the notion of bringing the environment into the theatre, but also, it enabled me to make some choreographic material. I have a way of turning myself into something other than human in my dance. Its something that's always been in the dance I've done. It seems that in order to really find the essence of the movement of things like birds, insects, rocks and drift wood, I have to sort of enter the psyche or quality of those creatures and those objects. I do see a rock as a living thing. I just see its movement through time as a much slower dance, where things kind of reshape themselves through time according to the elements and the wind and the water. But it is still a kind of a movement, a dance thing. I used to think that human beings didn't really belong in this land - that every step we took was some how damaging the landscape and that was a place where birds belonged. Most of my dances reflected the energy of bird life. I move through space in my dance, taking in the things around me, and the distances between things, and I change my focus points a lot. That is more of a bird-like way of moving.



Photo 43: (A) bird



Photo 44: (A) splashing water

Having been in the audience for Ali's performance of *How being still is still moving*, I can remember the quality of her movement and how uncharacteristic it was for dance (East, 1996). I remember the liveliness of her improvisational sections within her solo, and the beautiful projected video of Ali and driftwood and water at the beach (Photo 1, p.212 and p.127).

Created in three main sections, Ali's solo begins with still meditative poses, gestural movements suggesting splashing water over her face and movement inspired by birds (Photos 43 & 44, p.214). From this, Ali moves into a lively, improvised dance incorporating movement from the hula dance of Rarotonga (Photo 45, p.215). Ali worked with two Rarotongan musicians who play a rousing ukulele duet for this second section of dance (Photo 46, p.215). The hula dance reflects traditional Pacific life based around the sea.

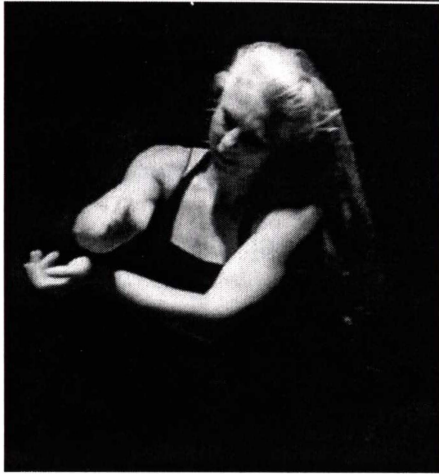


Photo 45: (A) hula



Photo 46: (A) ukulele musicians

The final section of Ali's dance brings together these themes as a video projection of her dancing at the beach shows her movements alongside the driftwood, sand, water, birds and rock that clearly inspired her choreography. The video, like Ali's choreography, has long still moments focusing on textures of water, wood and sand. Ali continues to dance on stage as the video plays, incorporating quick changes in gaze, moments of stillness, an internal focus, and moments of travelling through the space with deliberate intention and commitment (Photo 47, p.216). The final lasting image is of Ali running down the beach into the distance, as though she continues to dance beyond my ability to see her.

As one of my earliest, and later most significant, teachers of dance and improvisation, Ali has always had a profound impact on my dancing. She taught me about understanding my relationship to the world around me in improvisation classes. For example, we explored taking the perspective of a weta⁴⁸ insect to see what the environment looked like from ground level and how that might influence our movement. I came to understand about my relationship to my environment from

⁴⁸ Weta is the Maori word for a large native insect

working with Ali. I too aim to bring things I encounter in the environment to my performance, through video (Photo 16 & 17, p.161) and also by including trees and stones in my stage set (Photo 26, p.170). And sometimes, like Ali, I abandon the whole theatrical tradition embedded in Western dance, and take my dancing outside into the river, or in the mountains or by the sea. I comment on this to Ali, and ask her about how her understanding of environment and environmental politics specifically influenced her in dance making. Considering, Ali says

I think that what I exhibit on stage is who I am, or it's perhaps something beneath who I am. It's much deeper than who I am as a civilized human being. I think what I exhibit on stage is a very primal. I'm certainly not an intellectual choreographer, I don't believe, though I am interested in intellectual problems. I believe that art comes from a much more basic place - its a primitive urge. And because I am a dancer, the primitive urge transforms itself into a vocabulary of movement. Sometimes it feels like I am reaching down into some quite deep dark, recesses of the psyche that relate to the karma of this land - the devastation and loss of all those big Kauri trees.

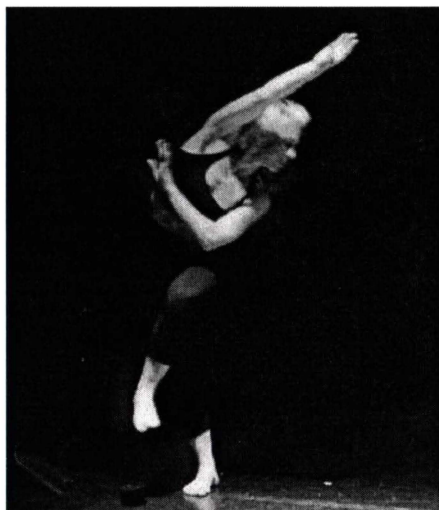


Photo 47: (A) travelling

And one of my other philosophies is that we live on a volcanic fault line and there is this seething fiery undercurrent of volcanic activity going on and that in some way that is affecting our psyche as well. So what I, and other artists were subconsciously reflecting was this dark karma that was being worked through, en mass, by the whole population. And in some communities, it was manifesting itself as domestic warfare. I think a lot of New Zealand art and dance is very dark, very black and of a gothic nature, in a way that other country's art isn't. I think that what affects my psyche is what affects the psyche of most people in this country, its just that it manifests itself through my dance.

Ali's comments reflect how she is both influenced by her environment and using her dance making to draw attention to the interconnectedness she experiences with her environment. Ali's descriptions reflect her embodied ways of knowing as she attempts to integrate her ecological understandings, her theories about people and culture in Aotearoa, New Zealand, her personal experiences and her choreographic inspirations as she dances. Her dancing is thinking in movement (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999), as her understandings of herself and her relationship to the world, transforms into and is expressed in movement.

* * *

I'm mulling over Ali's comments about the dark karma of our islands as we walk back to my house. New Zealand is made up of three main islands situated remotely in the South Pacific, over the intersection of two of the earth's tectonic plates. The islands were thrown up out of the sea at some point in fairly recent geological history and are prone to regular volcanic activity and earthquakes, as Ali mentioned. Along the fault lines within the islands, mud, steam and ash bubble and billow from the depths, and mountain ranges thrust skyward from the sea. The islands of New Zealand are fertile and changeable, and all the people, even the indigenous Maori and Moriori people, are fairly 'recent' settlers by global standards. Once, New Zealand was simply a home to birds and trees. There were no mammals or predatory creatures, so large flightless birds wandered free, foraging in the trees. Now extinct, the flightless Moa, rather like an Emu, shared the bush with its smaller cousins the Kiwi, and a wealth of Tui (native song birds), Kea and Kaka (parrots), Pukeko (swamp hens), Piopio (thrush), Tirairaka (fantails), Ruru (Morepork owls), and countless others. In the days when birds were the main inhabitants, huge Kauri trees grew proud and strong and most of the islands were covered in dense subtropical forest. Clear mountain snow and fresh springs fed lakes, and rivers ran their course to the sea unpolluted. I agree with Ali's sense that the coming of people, especially wood-hungry European settlers, must have changed the nature and 'psyche' of the islands of New Zealand.

I also remember the work of New Zealand artists Colin McCahon and Ralph Hotere, contemporary musicians Salmonella Dub, the writing of Janet Frame and Keri Hulme, and the films of Jane Campion⁴⁹. I certainly can relate to a sense that the land influences our work as artists, just as it influences the culture, lifestyles and politics of people in New Zealand. I can also see that we can use dance making to draw attention to what is happening in the environment. But I like to think that art can be a life-giving process too, remembering Raewyn's comments this morning. So surely some of the fertility, rapid adaptation and change of the land is also influencing our artwork in positive, life-giving ways.

Ali has been committed to and involved in the environmental movement through her dance, teaching and politics for many years. I wonder too, having grown up in the same small rural community as Ali, whether the power and karma, as she put it, of the land we lived in has 'embedded itself into our psyches' and is somehow speaking through us. And perhaps she and I, and others, are letting nature and an environmental consciousness move through us and be expressed in our dance (East, 2001). The words of eco-feminists flick into my consciousness (Davion, 1994; Warren, 1994, 1996). Ecofeminism provides a feminist environmental perspective for me, just as environmental politics provides a perspective for Ali. I share my thoughts about eco-feminism with Ali (Feminists for the environment, 1981).

I remember Ali, reading an ecofeminist statement from a pamphlet put out in 1981. It said something like "The environment is a feminist issue because man's [sic] exploitation of the environment and man's oppression of women

⁴⁹ Peter Simpson (<http://www.creativenz.govt.nz/artsnz/stars.html>) gives an outline of arts in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

are closely interconnected. We cannot separate the violence done to nature from the violence done to ourselves". It reminds me of the connections you make between the karmic influences of the land and how it has manifested for some in domestic violence, and for others in 'dark' environmental art. Somewhere in those dark recesses that you spoke of Ali, I feel the connections between the subordination and oppression of women, and the subordination and oppression of the land as a living entity. I feel in my bones the connections between my desires to let nature speak, and to let women's concerns both flow through my dance. I'm always inspired by Karen Warren's writing, and she argues that ecofeminism grows out of both felt and theorized connections between women's and nature's oppression. I have tried to weave my ecofeminism into my dance making.

Again, I feel links from my personal experiences to the wider political issues for feminists and environmentalists. I sense that Ali has made links for herself between the personal and the political, and her ecological perspectives in her embodied ways of knowing. She says simply again *"a woman, a human being is just an expression of nature."*

* * *

Walking the path back to my house, I review some of the morning's conversations about feminism. Each of us had different perspectives on feminism, and I felt tension between a shared commitment to feminist ideas, and reluctance to being labelled as feminist. I suspect that some of this tension may come from the generational differences between us (Luke, 1998), and changing concerns for us as individual women (Middleton, 1993; Warren, 1996). Perhaps only for Jan and I was 'feminist' a label we might give ourselves comfortably. Jan stated that "*unquestionably I see myself as a feminist... I hope that my feminist concerns and philosophies are imbued in everything that I do*". While Ali commented that she was "*happy to be labelled feminist, as opposed to something else*", she hadn't read feminist theory and felt it was something quite different to the women's liberation movement she had been part of. Raewyn stated that "*I feel quite passionately involved in rights for myself and for women... I am still involved in feminist stuff*". Like Jan and I, Raewyn was comfortable using feminist notions such as 'feminist', 'patriarchy', 'domination' and 'oppression'. However, Raewyn also speculated about whether 'feminist' was the appropriate label for herself. Alternatively, she described herself as committed to "*the feminine principle*" having personally recognized the impact of denying femininity, and of trying to live without the dominance of patriarchy. Perhaps Raewyn has difficulty labelling her feminist perspective and is instead trying to express an alternative feminist perspective. To me, Raewyn's feminism seemed to be most clearly expressed in her commitment to valuing her personal experiences as a woman and to embodied ways of knowing.

Susanne was more adamant about not being labelled feminist than the other women, and commented that *I don't see myself as a feminist. I just see myself as a person who would like to be treated equally to another human being*". As Raewyn commented, Susanne had chosen not to be actively feminist through her dance making, although Susanne's comments revealed to me that she nevertheless accepts feminist arguments. As Carmen Luke argued (1998), younger women like Susanne may well accept feminist understandings, but focus their energies on specific creative projects rather than continue to theorise about widespread patriarchy and oppression.

Bronwyn commented that she had *"felt the drawbacks of being a female in our society*". However, Bronwyn seemed reluctant to engage specifically in the 'rhetoric' of feminism, or in feminist theory in our discussions. It is unclear to me whether Bronwyn had much interest in feminism, and, as I speculated, it might create too much tension with her life choices to be a wife and mother. However, Bronwyn clearly worked to integrate her home life and dancer's work, seeking to make her 'housework' public, and perhaps political too. I can see that Bronwyn is thinking in movement in her dance making, though perhaps her embodied ways of knowing are less related to feminist agendas.

* * *

As Ali and I arrive back at my house, Susanne is also returning. Jan and Bronwyn are sitting in the sun quietly catching up and I find Raewyn in the kitchen doing dishes, which we both giggle at, thinking about ways to subvert domestic order

together. We end up laughing hysterically at how unable we are to be 'women' in the stereotypical sense. Still laughing, we rejoin the other women and settle in for further discussion. Talk of what it is to be a woman and our understandings of stereotypical femininity arises naturally.

Stereotypical femininity and recreating femininity in solo dance making

With concerns about stereotypical femininity fresh in my mind, I want to ask the women about what they see as characteristics of femininity. I do not consider femininity itself to be problematic, but the way in which the stereotype of femininity reduces the wide range of characteristics and qualities we women embody, to a one-dimensional ideal (MacDonald, 1995) concerns me greatly. I personally have experienced the stereotype of femininity as productive in conditioning me, and as oppressive. I am interested in exploring our understandings of this stereotype, including the ideal personality characteristics, movement and body ideals, and considering how this impacts on our dance making. Developing this understanding helps me in thinking about recreating femininity, and I am interested to hear whether the other women also recreate themselves through dance making.

Raewyn responds quickly when I put a question to the group about what they think the characteristics of stereotypical femininity are. Raewyn speaks about how she sees "*that the predominant view of the feminine is weak, unfocused, doesn't know what she wants, needs to be rescued, is helpless, over emotional, irrational.*" She immediately comments to us that she is just thrilled about this view. Her sarcasm prompts quite a bit of knowing laughter from the other women.

Raewyn then goes on to describe with much relish, how she recreated femininity for herself. (Barbour & Thorburn, 2001). Raewyn says

I rewrite 'weak' as inner strength and intrinsic knowing, which to me is a high state of mental awareness or facility; 'unfocused' as multi-layered, multi dimensional focus - take the multi-tasking, or the ability for a woman to have an over-view and to see the larger picture or the consequences of things. So this focus has breadth as well as specifics. 'Needs rescuing' as able to self manage. Women are working and earning money, as well as doing the majority of the housework, as well as maintaining emotional well being of the family unit. So they don't need rescuing. 'Doesn't know what she wants' as being based on a non-feminine criteria. A male criteria is not necessary suitable for a woman. She may be disempowered because she is not permitted a voice. She may appear over 'emotional' according to male criteria, but again perhaps her emotional response is a result of not being acknowledged within patriarchal contexts. She feels like she is not being heard and often will resort to tears. And of course that is the classic way, for women to cry and men to get angry. These are sort of basic psychological and culturally prescribed processes. So that when she is disempowered or not getting what she wants, or is not able to exercise her rights or her voice, then she will get emotional. And if she could have her voice then she wouldn't need to do that.

As Raewyn speaks I realize the alternative perspective she has on femininity. Rather than denying those characteristics that are considered to be stereotypically feminine,

she is embracing and valuing them. Recalling Raewyn's comments before lunch, I can see how her feminist 'archaeological dig' into her grief over the denial of femininity has allowed her detailed analysis of stereotypical femininity. By understanding her grief Raewyn has been able to move on, and to allow feminism to empower her personally. Raewyn's comments prompt a lot of thought and our discussion flows on. Ali offers a different perspective about ideal feminine personality characteristics when she comments that

When I think about femininity I think also about the difference between femininity and masculinity. And I think I have mostly been particularly androgynous in almost everything I have created. I'm not being rebellious against femininity because I love it. I'm pleased that I am a woman and don't have the problems that men have in expressing those things that you were talking about Raewyn. I don't mind showing my weaknesses, I don't mind crapping out in front of people, and I don't mind not knowing something. I think that we women don't mind admitting that we don't know something, that we are still always happy to learn and wanting to learn. We are much more willing to be equal with other women and other people. We strive for equality. I think these are things that may almost be able to be generalizations about women, but I might be wrong about that. It seems to me that they are particularly womanly kinds of aspects.

There are nods of agreement from around the room to Ali's comments. I'm thinking about the ideal body image and movement associated with stereotypical femininity in dance (see Chapter Five for more discussion). I comment to the women

You know, when I perform, I am aware of the delicate line I dance between standing as an example of stereotypical femininity and acting as a responsible feminist. It creates something of a paradoxical situation for me, if you know what I mean. I've been inspired by a comment by Carol Brown, that dancers need to be aware of how, unwittingly, they may reinforce feminine bodily ideals, and instead try to undo these ideals through movement. When I first began making my solo I inspected my own movement for stereotypically feminine gestures, movement qualities and actions. I kept some movement that seemed feminine, allowing myself to perform 'woman' and then deconstruct my performance by contrasting feminine movements with strength-based, gestural, pedestrian and everyday movements. I hoped this was an experience that I could share with my audience. So I think of these choreographic strategies as ways I was able to be deliberately resistant to stereotypical femininity. One of the things I felt was most successful was using movement that was familiar to audience members and that they might have a kinesthetic responses to personally - like rubbing my eyes to see things more clearly, rolling over as though having a disturbed sleep, and lugging large burdens (my stones) around. As I developed my work I began to have more and more confidence in working with kinesthetic strategies so that my audience could empathize with my experiences, rather than working in a deliberately resistant manner. I felt like I was managing to recreate femininity for myself and to express this through my dance making.

I ask the group for responses to this idea that dance making can be a way to recreate femininity and to recreate ourselves as women. Susanne responds, describing how she worked to avoid 'feminine' movement in her solo dance.

I don't personally like dresses and I don't like being feminine. I don't particularly like flowery movement, or 'feminine movement'. I prefer quite strong or harsh movement or to change or corrupt or adapt that which may be perceived as 'beautiful'. I don't want to say that every time that I make a dance, I change or corrupt or adapt. But at this particular time it was relevant to the way I felt in the dress (my costume was a restricting grey dress) and how I wanted to be seen. A dress is not what I would normally wear, and because it restricts my movement it provided lots of interesting ways of moving. I thought about being a mannequin, and I had lots of pretty movements, like the ideal women in 1950's advertising poses, which I wanted to try and corrupt a bit.

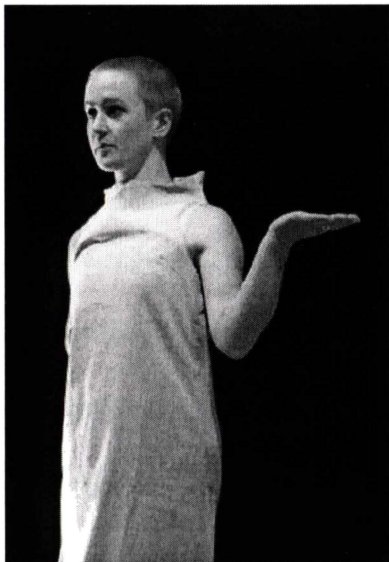


Photo 48: (S) pose

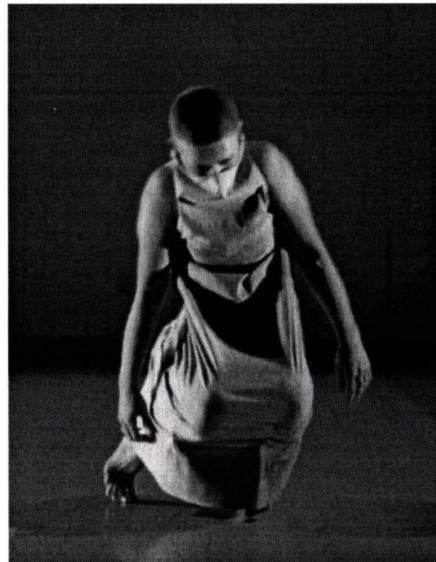


Photo 49: (S) restricting dress 2

People have perceptions of who you are based on what you wear and what you look like. Because of my height I'm aware that I can be perceived as kind of weak or young. I feel that I can wear a dress and feel okay about it with no hair, whereas if I had hair I couldn't wear a dress because I'd be too pretty and because of my height especially, I'd be too girly. I guess shaving my head gave me a bit of confidence to be staunch, to feel stronger in myself, and kind of stand up to people. I made movements that were wiping off or saying no to people's expectations of me and brushing off social conformity.

Susanne speaks about how she had deliberately tried to challenge and change, corrupt and adapt those movements that she considered feminine, particularly poses of the ideal woman (Photo 48 & 49, p.227). Again, she was using some resistant choreographic strategies, and I sense her resistance is based on an underlying feminism. Susanne had also chosen to alter her appearance by shaving her head, so that she would not fit the ideal image of femininity. Discussion about height, weight and the idealized body image of women dancers follows Susanne's comments, and I'm reminded of Carol Brown's (1999) statements about the dancer standing as a cultural stereotype of femininity. I share her statement with the other women "The dancing body as a regulatory type is upright (straight), lean, compact, youthful, able-bodied, and feminine" (Brown, 1999, p.13). We discuss more specifically the issue of the ideal dancer and feminine body image. Jan comments on the relationship between the young, slim, toned, petite stereotypically feminine body image and the dancer.

There is a big issue with body image for dancers. Why shouldn't large-hipped and large breasted women be out there and look absolutely amazing, as they do in many cultures? You know it's regarded as something as a real attribute in other contexts. We don't regard women with good-sized hips and breasts in Western dance as having attributes do we?

Adding to Jan's comments, Bronwyn talks about ideal body image and movement.

Last week I went to a belly dance club, and the woman teacher, who is my age, had this enormous belly! And it was just big and out there and naked, and she rolled it around and it looked wonderful... wow! I thought, that's not our stereotype. That is ageist too, because dancers are supposed to be young. The really overriding thing about being a dancer is your figure and legs. But it depends what dance form you do, like you say Jan. That is why I have always gone into ethnic dance forms I think. There is that whole perception when you are dancing of what you should look like and how your body naturally moves does affect the type of dance you perform. You have to find something that really suits and I think in modern dance, that is what people do. They choose the form and movement. That is why we have such diversity in modern and contemporary dance, because once you have your style and your movement, you have dance that suits your body.

I speculate to myself that, perhaps, we women became involved in modern and contemporary dance, and ethnic dance in Bronwyn's case, because both 'success', and the range of movement desirable was not tied so much to ideal body image.

Bronwyn's comments inspire a debate about the value of dance technique training for each of us as women. Raewyn describes dance technique training, particularly ballet training, as 'colonizing' the dancer's body. I think about how techniques impose a set of strict and often dysfunctional rules and behaviours on movement, such as over-rotation of the legs at the hip and hyperextension in the back. Technique training can also limit or curtail our possibilities for expression and creativity in movement, as certain types of feminine movement are valued over other movement. It seems to me that this is especially an issue for women already limited by patriarchal social contexts. Raewyn's view of technique training as colonizing is one I think we all can sympathize with to some extent, from our experiences.

Raewyn says

I've probably talked to you all before about the colonialization of the body by technique, and by choreographers. When I began training in modern dance, jazz and ballet, my dance voice was reshuffled and at times torturously categorized to the norms of those codified techniques. My natural sense of weight and momentum in space was pruned, coerced or restricted into patriarchal criteria of how the body worked. Also, the presence of self-expression or one's own creativity was ignored and even denied. It's a different viewpoint not using technique and virtuoso dance now in my own dancing. I am allowing myself to take full ownership of my movement again. Now dance comes from all the things that influence me. I'm allowing a natural process or impulse - the impulse to allow movement to be alive, active, to let it "speak", to listen nerve and bone to it. That's the place that

the work comes from. It's an integrated place. It's very alive and fertile and there's an immediacy of action. It's like you commit yourself to your own aesthetic and to your own body: it's that simple and that demanding. It's not that you are negating what you've learnt, but it's your own concepts and mental and physical processes that are the focus. What you've learnt is absorbed into your mind/ body impulses. My choice of movement material and body process is not orientated towards a technique, but is more oriented towards embodiment of ideas, embodiment of the concept of this work and the feminine concepts that are there.

As I listen to Raewyn I am reminded of Germaine Greer's (1999) comments about the effect of oppression on women's experiences of their bodies. Greer argued that "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" (Greer, 1999, p. 424). Our awareness as dancers of the oppressive effects of stereotypical femininity goes beyond thinking about our bodies. As Raewyn commented, we can also see the oppressive effects of dance technique training on our movement experiences and choices as choreographers. I see Raewyn's commitment to choosing movement based on embodiment and expression of her feminine principles as her attempt to resist and subvert oppression in dance through stereotypical feminine movement.

Wanting to hear more from Raewyn about movement, I ask her about choreographic strategies and whether she thinks her choices of movement in choreography is subversive.

There are definitely times when I consciously subvert, that's for sure, such as directly interacting with the audience thereby breaking the usual separation of performer and audience. Talking to the audience is a way to subvert the separation conventionally that exists. Also, the norm is being 'together', ready to be seen when you step onto the stage. I'm rather working with coming on and taking my warming up process into the first few minutes of the dance. So I'm subverting or deconstructing that norm of how the performer presents herself.

Listening to Raewyn I think about my own attempts to resist or subvert the expectations of the dancer (see Chapter Five), based on my understandings of postmodern choreographic strategies (Rainer, 1974). Susanne and I both interact with our audiences by talking too. My experience has been that the traditional audience performer relationship does break down, and a more personal and intimate connection can develop.

I notice that Jan seems to be relating closely to what Raewyn was saying about taking ownership of her movement, nodding and listening intently. Jan describes to us how her loss of interest in traditional dance classes as a mature dancer led her to take up yoga, through which she discovered a whole new path. Jan tells us how

Through the practice of yoga, I started to look at myself physically in a different way. When I was younger I was in my body in a sort of unconscious way. I remember the physical challenge, the sheer joy of conquering something physically, rather than the thought of movement exemplifying some

feeling or thought. Dance was so presentational, so external. You know, all those things of "Have I got my leg in the right place"? But I think there comes a point if you are going to sustain an artistic life, where you have to go beyond the physical. The process of yoga made me become more introspective about my moving, in a way that dance had never done. So I started to have much more of an internal investigation that has definitely informed my choreographic processes. I don't think so much of the outward form. I'm more concerned about how I am expressing from the inside. I am finding new ways of expressing myself that are richer. The intellectual, emotional, philosophical processes that underpin my movement are the more important things - dance imbued with meaning.

For me, although yoga might also be regarded as a colonizing technique, it does encourage self-reflection and personal growth, as Jan describes above. The ways that Jan described herself as having internal investigations, expressing from the inside, and discovering 'dance imbued with meaning' resonate for me with understandings of dance as thinking in movement (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). She described how dance has moved from being an external and presentational activity, to personal movement and investigation of her lived experiences – an embodied way of knowing, I think.

Bronwyn joins in the discussion too, commenting about how she has come to find her own movement material for her solo work, often inspired by ethnic dance forms. Bronwyn says

I've always been interested in ethnic dance and I've studied quite a few. And because I was training my body in these different ways, suddenly these movements would come out. I was not consciously taking things from ethnic dance forms, but it did inform my dancing.

Ali makes links to our discussion about movement, and then brings our discussion back to the issue of the stereotypical dancer and body image. Ali comments that

I've been much more interested in the essence of the movement and the image of and shape of it, than whether it was a man or women dancing it.

I love the female body, I love the way it moves, I love its sexuality, and I love its gracefulness. My women dancers have always been required to be particularly strong and gymnastic and lift men. It has never bothered me to try to make women all feminine or men all masculine, in anything I've done. I haven't got a tiny female body, you know. I have very strong, muscular legs, strong muscular arms, potentially, a flat belly, a woman's arse and small breasts. I've been raised on a King Country farm as you have Karen, and my legs were built for running up and down hills and chasing sheep and whatever.

Our conversation develops further and Raewyn picks up on Bronwyn's comments about ageism and the ideal of the dancer as young. She suggests that the youthful ideal also dictates what movement is appropriately feminine. She says

When you look at the kind of stereotypes of how a 50 year-old woman is supposed to behave – oh my god! Yes, she doesn't skip, she's very sedate, and she does not wiggle her hips, in the white middle class. She does not speak

loudly. And yet when I think of my post-menopausal women friends we are stropky - continual paradoxes of opposites... There are assumptions about type of body, type of movement, context, aesthetic content. Because of these assumptions about body and what's worth watching, people think that older woman wouldn't have anything worthwhile to say. But there is something else that is valuable in terms of depth of personality and depth of embodiment that can imbue a performance with something stunning and people are not used to looking for that in a dance performance. There is an assumed age limitation in the dance world. My generation is starting to challenge that assumption. I'm not wanting to be coerced by these external norms, but allow myself to live and express myself fully, freely and openly. Bringing all of these things about being a woman of my age and being feminine back to my solo, basically I have said no. I am a woman, I am going to live as a woman, I'm not going to live the male criteria. I realized that most of my life my body has been the most reliable source of information for me as a person. So that in the embodiment of my experience, or my body's response to me and what has happened in my life, my body has been the most affirming and accurate source of knowing who I am, and what my life contains. So that is what has led me to say yes to my processes on stage and my choices around physicality that I have been making in the last years. But you know, I was having to deconstruct various assumptions about the performing person, as well as put myself out as a statement, so it felt like I was doing a double job and it was very exhausting. Psychologically and psychically, it was a hard job.

Raewyn describes her body as a dancer has being the most reliable, affirming and accurate source of knowing for her. Her confidence in embodiment as a site of knowledge, and as a way of knowing, has allowed Raewyn to explore her own processes and validate her personal experiences in dance making. This validation seems to have become even more important to Raewyn as she has faced the stereotypes of femininity and the image of the ideal dancer.

I see that the other women are also contemplating Raewyn's comments about femininity and aging and the 'virtuosic' body. Jan speaks now about femininity and body image, in relation to her recent solo dance work (Bolwell, 2000a).

I was sort of catapulted into considering femininity really, as a result of loosing a part of my body - my breasts - that is so clearly identified with being female. So it forced me to deal with that at a very personal level. But it also then led me to reflect on it in a sort of societal way. Off My Chest attempts to look at the female body, particularly breasts and how that is a sexual symbol and how we regard that. And so I was trying to make sense of that myself I suppose, in coming to terms with the fact that I am breast-less, and how I feel about that. Having thought about that on a personal level, I guess in terms of the dance it made me then reflect on it in a wider way. Its very liberating being breast-less because I feel freed from the constraints of femininity. I have made a political decision about how I deal with this issue. And I think having done that, the path is just there. Part of this is always me saying, if I can do this in a public way I am learning to live with the reality of what's happened to my body.



Photo 50: (J) freed from the constraints

So I am reconstructing myself for myself you know, but I think also, in the process, hopefully, I might also be doing something for other women in regard to that.

Jan's comments remind me again that the personal really is so bound up in the political for feminists. And while I am concerned about recreating myself and dealing with femininity for political reasons, I've certainly not been prompted by the same traumatic experiences as Jan. I appreciate the courage Jan has to reveal and share her experiences. It seems clear again to me that Jan values her personal experiences and through dance making can explore them in embodied ways of knowing. The conversation moves into a casual discussion about our dancing experiences and our changing relationship to body image. My attention wanders from the discussion as I try to draw together some of the comments made in relation to reconstructing femininity.

* * *

Choreographic strategies

With Angela Brew's (1998) research guideline to 'look again and again' echoing in my thoughts, I consider my own experiences in dance making and the comments each of the women have made. Reflecting, I outline some basic choreographic strategies that I had developed as a feminist to express my embodied ways of knowing (see Chapter Five and CD-Rom for examples in my own work)⁵⁰. My choreographic strategies were: to use gestural, pedestrian or everyday movement designed to enhance kinesthetic empathy with the dancer; to subvert or resist expectations of the dancer; to challenge and change stereotypical feminine movement or movement qualities, and; to make embodied expressions of my lived experiences. I combined these choreographic strategies with theatrical devices to enhance my lived experience themes of 'home' and 'journey' in *This is after all the edited life* (Barbour, 2001g). It seemed to me that I was able to be both resistant to stereotypical femininity, and to create my own alternative femininity using my choreographic strategies. When I reflect on the other women's comments, I can see that we share some strategies, and that there are also other strategies that the women developed in their dance making.

Susanne's comments that she wanted to 'change, corrupt or adapt' pretty movements and poses that she interpreted as feminine, and to include 'strong or harsh movement' is a similar strategy to my strategy to challenge and change stereotypical feminine movement or movement qualities. Jan chose to emulate and contrast images of femininity from art, reclining on her chaise lounge and then subverting her own seductive image with her direct gaze and gestural movement.

⁵⁰ My theorizing of choreographic strategies is derived from our own solo contemporary dance work. As such, it should not be considered an exhaustive or prescriptive list of choreographic strategies.

Both women used costume, a restricting grey dress for Susanne and a hospital green nurse's cape and dress for Jan, to contrast and highlight their movement and enhance their lived experience themes of being a 'weirdo' and dealing with trauma. Raewyn's discussion of stereotypical movement for mature women provided much amusement as I imagined her trying to be sedate instead of the playful, mindful and intelligent performer I saw in *Sensual Ensemble* (Thorburn, 1997). What interested me especially in Raewyn's comments was the way in which she valued and reclaimed stereotypically feminine characteristics, such as having a sensory, intuitive, body focus rather than a rational, abstract focus in her dancing. Raewyn was valuing rather than challenging and changing these stereotypical characteristics and movements. For those of us who used improvisation in our solos, particularly in Susanne's dance where she gave herself permission to do whatever interested her at the time, I can see acceptance of the stereotypically feminine characteristic of irrationality, and a focus on our private lived experiences, rather than again having to create ourselves and our dance as a 'product' to be consumed. I can see links in our choreographic strategies to the work of postmodern choreographers. But both Susanne and I worked with specific movements that challenged and changed the stereotypically feminine movements of the dancer.

I enjoyed Susanne and Raewyn's attempts to express openly and freely through improvisation and child-like movement, allowing them to challenge and change stereotypical feminine movement as well as to integrate gestural, pedestrian and everyday movement with the intention of enhancing kinesthetic empathy in with them as dancers. Both were thinking in movement (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999).

Watching Susanne emphatically ‘brushing off’ expectations in *Some one else’s weirdo* (Bentley, 2000), and Raewyn peeling potatoes and hunching up typing at her computer in *Sensual Ensemble* (Thorburn, 1997), I responded kinesthetically, feeling empathy with their experiences. In privileging the kinesthetic experience of dancing, each of us was able to shift the focus from ourselves as female bodies dancing, to experiencing people, just as our post modern predecessors had done (Rainer, 1966, 1974). Raewyn’s comment that she wanted “*to explore common place real experiences that are likely for the audience to have done, to offer the likelihood of a visceral response in the audience, and engage them in the process*” reflected her commitment to enhancing kinesthetic empathy.

Being a dancer myself, and so having expectations about what a dancer should do, I was amused to recall how my own expectations were subverted and resisted in Susanne and Raewyn’s dancing when both spoke to me in the audience.⁵¹ Their direct speech interrupted my expectation that I could sit back unnoticed by them and observe, and I could not simply consume their performance. In both Susanne and Raewyn’s solos, and in Ali’s performance of *How being still is still moving* (East, 1996), moments of improvisation allowed them to resist expectations that the dancer should be in control, prepared and rehearsed when she dances, and ready to perform when she steps on stage. I was curious about what these women would do next as they did not simply fulfil my expectations and provide me with a choreographic ‘product’.

⁵¹ I write from the perspective of dancer/choreographer in theorizing choreographic strategies. It is beyond the scope of my work to comment as to the success of these strategies from an audience perspective.

Instead I realized that I was witness to and part of their processes as dancers. Again they were thinking in movement, thinking in action within improvisation, and thinking about action in choreographed sections of their solo dances. I felt that I could connect with them more personally because of this and I was aware they were responding to me in the audience.

In creating *This is after all the edited life*, I had also wanted to offer and share my alternative recreated femininity. I experienced a sense of empowerment as I offered embodied expressions of my lived experience, and as I included movement designed to enhance kinesthetic empathy with my experiences. To me, Jan's work (Bolwell, 1999, 2000a) is a superb example of an embodied expression of her lived experiences with breast cancer, and of course, of her commitment to the politics of the personal (Mills, 1997; Warren, 1996). Jan's comment that she was dealing with personal issues and also being a conduit for bigger political issues shows how the notion of the personal as the political had become embodied for her.

Also dealing with political issues, of an environmental kind, Ali was able to express her lived experience in an embodied way in *How being still is still moving*. Rather than considering her movement as feminine movement, Ali described how she 'enters the psyche' and emulates the movement of rocks, sea, birds, driftwood and insects. While obviously she was still a woman performing, Ali shifted the focus of attention away from her woman's body moving and onto her experience of relationship with her environment. Ali's performance draws attention to her quality of movement, and through use of clear gestures such as bird-like movements with her arms, Ali seems to 'transform' herself from woman into creature or inanimate object.

While she is challenging and changing stereotypically feminine movement and movement qualities, Ali is also offering her alternative femininity and sharing her lived experiences. As an audience member, I was able to experience something of Ali's alternative understandings and her lived experiences in environmental politics. Bronwyn's comments indicated that her solo work was also focused on sharing her lived experiences (Judge, 1998), as all of us were. In our own ways, we were all 'walking the talk' and embodying the political and the personal in our dance making. Each of our dances were embodied expressions of our lived experiences as women.

I realize that the ways in which we each attempted to recreate femininity are very different from those strategies I read about in feminist literature. I recall the interest feminist writers had in the female body and body image as the site of recreations of femininity, remembering the self-controlling practices of women to change their bodies through exercise regimes, dieting, eating disorders, and surgery (Bordo, 1988; Greer, 1999; Macdonald, 1995; Markula, 1995; Wolf, 1990). Even though we were acutely aware of the influences of the stereotype of femininity on dance, understanding that the dancer might even be seen as the epitome of stereotypical femininity (Brown, 1999), we were remarkably accepting of the uniqueness of our own bodies. Rather than attempting radical changes to our bodies, we sought personal recreations of femininity through developing alternative choreographic processes and movement, through valuing our experiences and ways of knowing, in changing attitudes about ourselves, and in creating contrasts between our individual bodies and our attitudes as performers.

Our recreations of femininity might be seen as alternative ‘performances of femininity’ (Butler, 1990), at times utilizing parody and resistance. But our recreations of femininity were, perhaps more importantly, part of our embodied ways of knowing ourselves as women, rather than simply ‘performances’ that begin and end in a specific dance. Our dances were a focus for exploring and recreating femininity throughout our lives. They were embodied ways of knowing.

I excuse myself to use the bathroom, noticing that everyone has been engrossed in conversations while I have been musing privately.

* * *

When I return to the room, I sit next to Raewyn and comment to her briefly about my attempts to understand our dancing experiences, feminist perspectives and choreographic strategies. Raewyn's response reflects her own intentions to reconstruct herself in her solo dance making, and her understanding of feminism.

It's a feminist statement, just being myself, rather than some other sort of extraordinary person, or having an altered persona. But being this 50-year old woman just standing up there doing stuff, is definitely a change compared with the norm.

Our conversation naturally comes to a pause, and I suggest that it might be time for another break. Lots of stretching and yawning and enthusiasm for coffee follow my suggestion. Susanne and I find biscuits and coffee mugs and catch up on news from friends overseas, while the others enjoy the fresh air on the veranda.

My cat provides a welcome distraction from the intensity of the conversation, as do the rowing crews training on the river below my house.

Alternative modalities of feminine movement

As I reflect on our discussion, and recall seeing each of our solo dances, I consider piecing together an alternative analysis of the modalities of feminine movement to that which Iris Young (1998) offered. I am inspired because I noticed how little our intentional movement reflected the instrumentalist (and masculinist) model of action that privileged movement with identifiable plans, singular intention and control (Young, 1998). Instead, our dancing reflected our individual ways of recreating femininity. It seems to me that having discussed our dance making, I can consider Young's question "What might a phenomenology of action look like which started from the mundane fact that many of us, especially women, often do several things at once?" (1998, p.289). Our dance making was thinking in movement (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999), and included unplanned, improvised movement and movement with multiple intentions and without obvious control. These characteristics suggest to me that an alternative analysis of the modalities of feminine movement is needed in understanding our dance making.

Raewyn, Susanne, Ali and I included improvised movement for specific feminist choreographic purposes, and this unplanned movement allowed us to be responsive to information and feedback from the audience, and to develop a different relationship with the audience. We were able to think in action and had the freedom to create dance on the spot without mediation (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999).

Improvised movement encouraged freedom for us to play and respond to personal interests moment to moment. This was an empowering, life-giving, and self-sustaining process for us. It also allowed us to move outside the constraints and expectations of feminine movement, to be child-like and to value intuition and sensation. Hence, rather than only valuing movement with identifiable plans and structure, we privileged improvisation and play in dance.

In many cases there was more than one intention to the movement we performed in our solos. Movements performed had multiple intentions, such as to communicate, to satisfy us personally in an embodied manner, to be life-giving, to establish alternative relationships with our audiences, and to resist and construct differently our experiences of being women. For example, my sleeping at the beginning of my solo was intended to allow me to subvert the typical audience/performer relationship and resist expectations of the dancer, to allow me to relax, breathe and prepare myself for performance, to expand the possibilities of what might constitute 'dance' movement with gestural, pedestrian and everyday movement, to enhance an experience of kinesthetic empathy, to invite the audience to watch me and to refuse to acknowledge the audience in the same moment, and to integrate and embody some of my everyday lived experiences as a woman in my dance.

Performing movement without 'control' was also a feature of our movement. Any moment of improvisation within the dance performance fostered and brought to the fore a loss of control of performing movement, as no movement was planned from moment to moment. As Sheets-Johnstone (1999) put it, there was no level of premeditative decision-making in our dancing in the improvised sections, and we

could respond immediately to the specific information in the moment. Some movement deliberately explored losing control in movement, such as Susanne's falling off balance games, and Raewyn's haphazard potato peeling (Thorburn, 1997).

Derived from looking again at the 'feminine' movement in our solo dances, I can offer an alternative understanding of the modalities of feminine movement. My alternative understanding acknowledges the attempts we made to recreate and offer an alternative femininity, or to 'dance an expanded feminized norm', as Ann Albright (1997) described it. Qualities such as improvisation and play, responsiveness to the moment-to-moment performing context, and receptivity to and integration of multiple sources of information, might be more relevant to understanding feminine movement. Rather than plan, singular intention and control in movement, women's dance movement might be understood in relation to the qualities of receptivity, integration and responsiveness.

In my experience, solo dance requires that I be receptive to multiple influences, rather than limited to specific rehearsed movement and intentions over a period of time. This receptivity means that I can be both thinking *about* action and thinking *in* action, and demonstrate being a mindful body, (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999) or phenomenal dancer (Preston-Dunlop, 1998). Influences within my own and within other women's solo dances included feminist and other political (ecological, educational, communicative) choreographic intentions, rehearsed movement, personal intuitions, sensory experience, personal emotional responses, environmental cues and information, and moment to moment audience feedback and information.

Including improvisation in solo dance required me and other dancer/choreographers to be receptive and to integrate and understand through embodiment, all of these multiple influences in the moment of performance. Improvisation in performance also necessitated moment-to-moment embodied responsiveness as these multiple influences were integrated, understood and subsequently fed into the next moment in the on-going lived experience of dancing. As Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1999) expressed it, dance improvisation is a clear example of thinking in movement.

Thinking in movement is also clearly apparent in our ability to integrate multiple sources of information, both in thinking *about* movement through choreography, and thinking *in* movement in improvisation (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). Such integrated thinking in movement happened through embodiment of multiple sources of information, and was then expressed through embodiment in dancing. Also demonstrating thinking in movement, responsiveness in dancing means that we solo contemporary dancers were able to understand and make meaningful for ourselves whatever movement we danced, whether it was improvised or choreographed and rehearsed. Our movement might change in terms of its meanings for us, depending on the specific context, as we allow and value responsiveness to context. Multiplicity in our movement allowed for the possibility that many intentions and agendas may be realized within one moment of dancing. Within a moment of dancing multiple influences may be integrated, and we have the possibility of responding on multiple levels with the moment of performing.

Based on our lived experiences, I think that 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. This understanding of alternative feminine movement relates to our individual choreographic strategies and ways of recreating femininity. The recreated understandings of femininity and feminine movement that we have developed in our solo dance making reflect our embodied ways of knowing.

* * *

Embodied ways of knowing

Coming back to our discussion invigorated after a coffee break and fresh air, I settle myself down to talk more about solo dance making with Ali, Raewyn, Bronwyn, Jan and Susanne. As I listened to the women talk about feminism, stereotypical femininity and their own dances, I had heard many comments that suggested to me they were using embodied ways of knowing. I wanted to ask each of the women to consider my idea that we understand our world and ourselves as dancers through these embodied ways of knowing. I begin by commenting to them that

The knowledge that we all have as dancers seems to be something quite different from what is normally recognized as knowledge. I think that we know ourselves and understand our relationship to others and to the world in unique ways, integrating understandings of culture and politics with personal

experiences, emotions and spirituality. We have gained knowledge from our lived experiences in solo dance making. We have each, in our own ways, attempted to connect this experiential and personal knowledge we have developed, to our wider understandings of dominant thinking about stereotypical femininity and feminism. Each of us is attempting to understand the world and ourselves as women, through what I like to call 'embodied ways of knowing'.

I invite the women to respond in whatever way they like to my comments. A relaxed and contemplative silence follows as the other women consider their responses. I reflect on my understandings of embodied ways of knowing in the companionable silence, recalling how I developed the work of Belenky et al. (1986), Goldberger (1996), Debold et al. (1996), and Sheets-Johnstone (1999), as I felt and theorized this way of knowing (in Chapter Two and Five). My strategy of embodied knowing acknowledges my alternative understandings of 'knowledge/experience' and body/mind', as well as explicitly acknowledging the importance and influence of individuality. Rather than denying gender, embodiment, context and experience in the pursuit of knowledge and the quest for self, individual differences are central to embodied ways of knowing. In considering my own experiences, I attempted to integrate the knowledges that I felt intuitively were important, with 'knowledge' that I had learned from others, and I consciously embodied these knowledges in my dance making. I found some resolutions to the tensions inherent in living with my different understandings of femininity and 'knowledge' through embodying and living out the options, 'walking the talk' or dancing the personal as the political (see Chapter Five).

I discarded knowledge that was not liveable for me, and I came to understand knowing as an on-going process of living and embodying with sensitivity and scepticism, my options in how I behave, how I move, how I relate to other people and to the environment, what I believe in, my artistic practices and employment pursuits. Passion, a creative and artistic sensibility, personal sensitivity and a compassionate approach to understanding relationships with people and the environment, all contributed to my embodied ways of knowing. Through solo dance making I experienced myself as a creator of knowledge, and I was able to recreate my femininity and express myself as women. Wondering what the other women think about dance making as an embodied way of knowing, I listen excitedly as they speak.

Solo dance making as an embodied way of knowing

Our discussion about ‘embodied ways of knowing’ begins with comments and clarification about what embodied and embodiment might mean. Ali says

I'm not sure what people mean by embodiment. We are getting good at using new kinds of vocabulary and sometimes not knowing what they mean. I mean, one can embody an idea, and things like pain and trauma can be embodied. I talk about integration, and what I mean is a holistic concept of the whole mental, body, mind, spiritual, emotional physical being. For me it is an integrated, whole person in action, or at play, integrating, utilizing, organizing and working with the energies of the universe. And that might be called the spirit of dance, if you want to translate energy into spirituality, which I tend to do.

As a process, integration resonates for me with the process of embodied knowing.

Ali is indicating a holistic process, rather than a simple dualism that would entail mind thinking and body acting in response, or at some 'point of overlap'. I respond to Ali, drawing on her earlier comments

I am thinking about what you said earlier in the day Ali, when you spoke to us of how you felt dancers were able to reveal the human animal in it's most whole and beautiful. You spoke of the unification of the body, mind and spirit as embodiment, and thinking about embodiment as unification resonates for me personally. I think that describing a dancer as a whole person in action is a way to articulate this sense of embodiment. I recall you also describing dancing as a primitive urge transformed into a vocabulary of movement. So perhaps dancing is the whole embodied person, responding in action to the urge to play with the unified energies of the universe? What do you think?

Ali is pondering my interpretation, and I'm hoping she will add to it further.

Raewyn, obviously contemplating our comments, adds to Ali's comments on energy

The body is an energy system, resonating the information being received from the environment outside and responding from the inside. So embodied movement is fluid, unblocked with the mind awareness deeply embedded into the tissue and nerves. So it is more than "dancing", it is a mind/body state of alertness and receptivity. I think for me, embodiment is about where the mind is placed in the physical activity and or how the body and mind interact and how they are placed alongside each other. It is a different relationship, interaction of mind and body. The mind is not dominant telling the body to

achieve a task. The mind is listening and in tune with the body, as both cooperate to achieve a task.

I sympathize as Raewyn seems to struggle to articulate embodiment in non-dualistic terms. I continue to struggle with the English language and with the dominance of Western dualistic knowledge myself (Code, 1991; Warren, 1996). Often I resort to using inadequate words in frustration. Raewyn's words 'cooperation' and 'interaction' suggest a relationship that presupposes separateness between mind and body, and knowledge and experience, though I know Raewyn experiences embodiment. I recall some of the feminist writers I explored facing the same difficulty and expressing embodiment as the point of overlap, thereby implying separate things overlapping (Braidotti, 1994). Raewyn spoke earlier of being a multi-layered and multi-dimensional being, and of looking for a sense of congruence with herself as an authentic individual. Her expressions of awareness embedded in tissue and nerve, and states of alertness, receptivity and listening, seem to come closer as descriptions of the experiential processes of embodied individuals.

Discussion flows around the room as we comment on the difficulty of expressing the notion of 'embodiment' in words, and yet we agree that we share an understanding, or perhaps more accurately, an experience, of embodiment from our dancing. Raewyn continues thoughtfully, picking up on her previous comments and trying to clarify further for us her understanding of embodiment.

As Raewyn speaks I think about the understandings of epistemology, ontology and knowledge I have encountered in feminist writings (Code, 1991; Du Plessis & Alice, 1998; Grosz, 1994; Stanley & Wise, 1990; Warren, 1996), and how her comments relate clearly to feminist critiques.

I maintain that as we move about in our lives there is a mental duality, as we split off from our body and are mentally intent on achieving an outcome. In this duality, the 'everyday' awareness of the mind is 'driving' the body, or is dominant. I'm interested in how the body and mind can work together, in embodiment. The domination of mind over body is to me, an internalised patriarchal behaviour. In this way my work is feminist I think. I thought, before when we were talking about embodiment, that the sense of generosity and harmlessness that I value, has come out of my body experience. That when I got so in touch and involved with my concepts and embodiment that it actually led to this state of goodwill and openness.

As I said earlier, I realized that my body has been the most affirming and accurate source of knowing who I am. In the embodiment in my work, there has been a much greater sense of the meaning of life for me. A sense of physical pleasure, personal satisfaction, of being more fulfilled and happy in my life, and of being more fully myself. So my body is totally involved in with my knowing. So that the knowledge gained... well, as an example, it enabled me to be much more effective in self-sustainable physical processes in my life. I feel I do actually come to a clearer state without the denial of body, without the denial of emotions, without the denial or absence of a sense of spirit.

I think Raewyn has again related her dancing experiences to her knowledge of feminism, and brought her understandings into her day-to-day living. I agree with Raewyn that her work is feminist, as I reflect on my readings in feminism. I am particularly interested in the way she describes her life as becoming more meaningful and self-sustaining through her embodied knowing. Raewyn's solo work, *Sensual Ensemble*, her reflection about her wider socio-cultural and political context, and the understandings she derives from bringing her knowledges together, is a demonstration of her embodied ways of knowing through dance making (Thorburn, 1997).

Ali, still contemplating embodiment in her dancing experiences, expresses her sense of how dance teaches us about embodiment. She is speaking slowly, aiming to use non-dualistic terms I think, and becoming clearer as she talks.

I think maybe, in performance improvisation, we might understand a little more when we actually sense everything working together suddenly in the moment. Maybe this notion of wholeness, of embodiment, is more about being in relationship with ourselves and others and the environment, all at once. It's a total kind of awareness, where all your 'antennae' are working in those directions. Maybe you understand something that might not even yet have words for you. You understand what integration means, or what that whole idea of mind/body/spirit means. And you can exhibit as a dancer, this fabulous organization in the moment, of intricate movement patterns, emotive expression, spiritual states of being, and qualities of energy. Basically revealing the kind of fantastic brilliance of the human animal at its best.

You can articulate that extraordinary intelligence of humans in dancing.

"Yes, yes," agrees Jan, "dancing is intelligence in action, kinesthetic intelligence!" I feel like cheering, listening to Ali speaking. I hear her trying to articulate and explain the embodied ways of knowing that are so relevant to my dancing and my research! Everyone is smiling at Ali, who immediately starts laughing and we all join in. As our laughter subsides, Bronwyn asks me if I can clarify further what I mean by dance as an embodied way of knowing. I reply that I feel Ali has just managed to articulate this experience of embodied ways of knowing, but I describe what I think to her in more detail.

I guess I am still trying to articulate what an embodied way of knowing is Bronwyn. But I do mean knowing and understanding yourself and your world through the process of personally integrating and experiencing different knowledges. This way of knowing and understanding does not leave out your individual embodiment, and the sense of wholeness and integration that comes through moving, but instead focuses knowing through moving, or thinking in movement. I think about embodied ways of knowing in terms of the 'dancerly' ways of knowing - the things we have been discussing, and other processes that we each individually have been exploring in making dance. Earlier, you described how your solo Housework gave you a focus that allowed you to interpret, understand and know something new – hence an embodied way of knowing. And you have expressed your embodied knowledge in your solo.

Considering my comments, Bronwyn responds

I think it is like all art really. It wouldn't really matter what you do in the way of art, just that it is something that lets you interpret what you see and hear and feel. Anything that helps you interpret is giving you more knowledge isn't it? In dance making, I find out what is really moving me, what is motivating me. It's teaching me something about myself. Again, referring to Housework, I look upon that as a progression, a coming to terms with something, and learning a new perspective about myself and the world. And sometimes it's about finding my roots. It is an on-going process that reflects my life, when I am doing my own work and what really interests me. I think this idea of dance as a way of knowing is very valid.

There are murmurs of agreement with Bronwyn's comments. I agree that dance making is like most art in allowing interpretation. But I'm unsure whether Bronwyn sees anything different about the way in which dancers, as opposed to painters, understand and communicate in an embodied way. I think that it is through this discussion that I am becoming more able to articulate the integrated, embodied type of understandings that can come in the moment of moving. We women together are creating an understanding of embodied ways of knowing in dance making, as we ask for clarification and challenge ourselves to express our lived experiences.

Susanne draws on comments she made earlier in the day about bringing her lived experience into her solo *Someone else's weirdo*. Susanne considers the idea of dance as an embodied way of knowing in relation to understanding and resolving her personal experiences. She explains

I've made good works when I have been going through a tough time. In the past, making solos has been a way of dealing with whatever is the big issue in my life at the time. And if there is a big issue in my life at the time, dance is a good way of expressing it. It's cathartic, getting it all out, a way of expression. It was another way of expressing my relationship with the world, or how I felt about relationships in the world. Someone else's weirdo looked at me and my uniqueness. It affirmed my 'right' to be weird or silly in public, and stated that being me was okay, if not fantastic!

Susanne continues, telling us about how her solos have been a way of dealing with and expressing whatever is going on in her life at the time. But she had also been able to delve into her own experiences and understand something new, rather as Bronwyn described it to us. So dance making enabled Susanne to look at herself, her relationship to the world, and to both understand it, and to express her knowledge. This process might simply have been a cathartic outpouring for Susanne. However, creating her solo work had not only been a release and expression of emotion, but it had also become liberating and powerful and a source of knowledge. As she performed she also came to new understandings of herself and her world.

Aiming to make their experiences relevant to others, rather than simply being cathartic, was something Jan and Susanne both worked towards. As Jan had said succinctly before lunch, the power of dance was likely to be diminished if it remained purely personal. I recall how Jan mentioned earlier that she had become more introspective about her movement, finding richer ways to express herself more meaningfully in her dance.

Perhaps recalling these comments too, Jan details her experiences in making *Off My Chest*, offering further understanding of dance as an embodied way of knowing (Bolwell, 1999, 2000a).

I really do have a strong sense of connecting threads of my life. And some of those threads are physical threads, as well as emotional and intellectual ones. My work has to be concept-rich for me to sustain it. I have learned through study about the process of finding and distilling ideas, and I bring some of that to the way I work in dance. I'm interested in internal movement coherence and phrasing of movement – actively playing and finding new nuances. Concepts inform my creation of movement. And movement feeds back to me in a constant search for clarity and subtlety. It is a cyclical thing. Dancing is intelligence in action, or kinesthetic intelligence. So I can relate to dance making as an embodied way of knowing.

To me it seems quite clear that Jan has come to understand, to know more about herself and her experiences with breast cancer and to deal with her experiences through her dance making. I know too, from having read Jan's writing, that she is able to express and share her experiences with others. But again, I hear Jan trying to speak of embodiment in non-dualistic terms. I suggest that dance offers us opportunities to reflect on, understand and express our experiences, like Jan has. Ali comments that

I can see that dance is a way of thinking about life generally. The working processes of dance making help me to understand something about where my movement is coming from and what is going on deep down in the silent place

where I live, in my subconscious, if you like. So it is a way of understanding and knowing that. I see life in a particular way, through the eyes of a dancer, and I have acute sensitivity to things and particular knowledge because I am a dancer. And you know, knowledge in itself is of no consequence unless it finds a means of expression, and dance is one means of expressing knowledge, isn't it? And you have to express yourself.

I see the other women nodding at Ali's words. I'm trying to weave together the many insights I've had over the course of the day talking with Raewyn, Jan, Ali, Bronwyn and Susanne. There is richness in our individual manners of expression and the depth of knowledge that we each have from our embodied dancing experiences. I realize that for me, it is the individual understanding that matters in what we have discussed, that knowledge that is connected to our personal experiences and embodiment.

I comment

You know, I have this sense that I am my body of knowledge and I am the site of my research, as a solo dance maker embodying feminist theory. My interest is in having my dance be me - I recognize that I am an embodied knower and in dancing I am sharing my knowledge... does that make any sense?

I get nods and smiles in reply. While I have struggled myself to articulate my experiences of embodied ways of knowing, I feel that the other women understand what I mean in some way, and we are becoming clearer and creating more sophisticated understandings together. We each have individual embodied understandings and experiences, yet we all share some interests in making wider

social, political and feminist commentary through our dance making. We also come to understand ourselves, and our relationships in the world, in new and rich ways through our embodied ways of knowing.

As I'm pondering this further, Ali muses out loud, touching on something that I feel in my bones is at the heart of embodied ways of knowing.

I'm thinking about myself as a place to store knowledge, a kind of diary or running journal. A place to store knowledge, a place to extract knowledge from, and a place to exhibit knowledge. And that exhibition is revealing the organized integrated mind/body/spirit. Ultimately, that is what a great dancer can reveal, not just for their own sake, but as a kind of 'calling'. I think that the most we can do for humans, as a contribution toward life and peace on earth, is to reveal ourselves fully in our wholeness.

And to try to realize our potential in whatever way we can. Maybe what is most important is this embodiment and wholeness - the exhibition of a person at their most whole and beautiful.

With Ali's last comments, I can't stop myself cheering this time! The room fills with smiles and as we bring our discussions to an end, it seems that we are all inspired and encouraged from this process of sharing and constructing knowledge together.

* * *

Embodied ways of knowing as an epistemological strategy

Alone with my notes and memories and experiences following our day of discussion, I'm reflecting again on embodied ways of knowing. I'm trying to listen 'nerve and bone' as I write about this alternative epistemological strategy. What I keep coming back to is my desire to draw out of our discussion, more and more detail about the processes involved in embodied ways of knowing. I keep asking myself, reflecting on my own and each of the women's comments, what is it exactly that we are doing? I experience in our verbal expressions, and in my own and each women's dancing, great passion and commitment to understanding and recreating femininity individually as women. Exploring our attempts to recreate femininity has allowed me to understand embodied ways of knowing.

I have heard Raewyn describe how she attempts to integrate her feminist understandings of patriarchy, her analysis of the colonization of her body through dance training, her desire to work with harmless, self-sustaining processes in dance making, and then reapply her dancing knowledge back into her everyday life. In doing so, Raewyn demonstrates her integration of the knowledges that she feels are intuitively important, with knowledge that she has learned from others (Belenky et al., 1986), and with a conscious awareness of how she embodies these knowledges. She resolves the literal and metaphorical tensions inherent in understanding the world differently from others, within her dance (Thorburn, 1997). Not distinguishing between 'life' and 'dance', Raewyn then applies her new embodied knowledge to her life as a whole through creating life-sustaining processes.

Likewise, Ali integrates her ecological understandings of her environment and her place as a human within it, her improvisational and choreographic practices that focus on the spirit and psyche of creatures, and her feminist politics, in her dance (East, 1996). Not distinguishing politics from personal concerns, Ali dances to express her interconnectedness and relationship with the environment, thinking in movement. Ali lives her environmental and ecological commitments, embodying them through dance making.

I've heard Bronwyn and Susanne describe how they investigated their life experiences through dance making, coming to understand themselves and their experiences and relationships with others differently. They were able to, in their own ways, recreate themselves to reflect new understandings of past and present circumstances. Bronwyn was finally able to integrate her home life into her dancing, and to share her life through the medium of video dance, where her attempts with live performance had nearly ended in tragedy in Wales (Judge, 1998). Susanne was empowered and liberated through giving herself permission to be 'weird' and deliberately exploring and expressing her relationship to the world (Bentley, 2000).

Jan spoke about how she was able to honour her feminist and educational agendas, while also finding resolution to her traumatic personal experiences with mastectomy. By integrating her feminist politics, her understanding of women's breasts as symbols of femininity, her experiences with breast cancer, and her skills as an educator, Jan was able to use the power of dance to communicate meaningfully and educate her audience (Bolwell, 1999, 2000a).

For myself, I brought my feminist and phenomenological understandings, my concern to connect to my environment, my desire to recreate femininity in an empowering way, and my research experiences in undertaking PhD research together in my dance making (Barbour, 2001g). I had an intuitive sense that my ways of knowing as a dancer were valid, and could be theorized and articulated, as well as danced. I used my dance making to develop new relationships between my research experiences, femininity, and eco-feminism and to integrate and express these knowledges in a meaningful embodied way. In creating my solo dance, I was able to explore and communicate my research, literally able to understand and communicate my embodied ways of knowing through dancing.

In feeling and theorizing my way through our discussions about embodied ways of knowing in solo dance making, I can see that we have been able to utilize resistant and constructive feminist choreographic strategies in dance making. These strategies have allowed us to both challenge and change stereotypical femininity, and to offer alternative recreations of femininity. In researching and understanding our dancing, I can understand some alternative modalities of feminine movement (Young, 1980, 1998) related to our embodied ways of knowing. Our movement can be understood as intentional movement that privileges receptivity, integration through embodiment, and responsiveness, as opposed to a masculinist understanding of feminine movement that privileges plan, singular intention and control. Together, the understanding of feminist choreographic strategies and alternative modalities of feminine movement, as derived from our solo dance making, provide me with insight into how dance making can be an embodied way of knowing.

Embodied ways of knowing can be an alternative epistemological strategy to those suggested by Belenky et al., (1986). My development of this epistemological strategy began by understanding women who view all knowledge as contextual and embodied as using embodied ways of knowing. An embodied knower experiences herself as creator of, and as embodying knowledge, valuing her own experiential ways of knowing and reconciling these with other strategies for knowing, as she lives her life (see Chapter Two). I also indicated that I thought a creative and artistic sensibility, such as that of some contemporary dancer/choreographers would be invaluable for coming to embodied knowledge.

As I have experienced my own embodied ways of knowing (Chapter Five) and discussed understandings of embodied ways of knowing with other women, I have come to further understandings of this epistemological strategy. It seems to me that solo dance making provides a specific context in which dancer/choreographers can know through moving, and think in movement (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). Particularly for feminist contemporary dancer makers, alternative recreations of femininity and valuing of experience and body, combine in and can be expressed in our dancing as we come to know through embodied ways of knowing.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusions

Conclusions and reflections

Hot sun once again streams through my window, and the piles of books and papers littered on my desk seem to have reproduced and migrated around my room in ever increasing numbers. I pause in my writing to reflect on the last three years. I have been able to synthesise and theorise in the flesh, as Kristine Kellor described it (1999, p.25). I have managed to reconcile my embodied ways of knowing with academic 'knowledge' and the requirements of knowledge production set out for doctoral research. Continuing to dance and to theorise my lived experiences as a dance maker throughout my doctoral research process has allowed me this empowering experience of bringing together my knowledges in embodied ways of knowing. I have found ways to dance, to write of my alternative embodied understandings, and to recreate femininity for myself.

Recognizing my experiences and finding inspiration in feminist writing, I was able to clarify my feminist and phenomenological perspective for my research. In accordance with my perspective, I drew on Belenky et al. (1986), Young (1980, 1998), and Sheets-Johnstone (1999), to suggest and develop an alternative epistemological strategy – embodied ways of knowing. Investigating embodied ways of knowing in women's solo contemporary dance making became the focus of my research.

Reviewing and critiquing the feminist dance literature provided me with an understanding of how my research might develop the literature on dance making. Based on my consideration of the feminist dance literature, and my

phenomenological perspective, I was able to develop a methodology to investigate embodied ways of knowing in women's solo dance making. Specifically, I investigated my own embodied ways of knowing through making my solo dance – *This is after all the edited life* - and reflected on my experiences by writing in a creative journal. Creating my solo provided a base for understanding choreographic strategies and experiencing embodied ways of knowing that was crucial in constructing shared understandings with other women dance makers. In order to demonstrate my embodied ways of knowing, I presented my solo on CD-Rom as interactive video and text. I wrote a personal experience narrative in order to represent my embodied ways of knowing in written form.

Conducting interviews with Jan, Ali, Raewyn, Susanne and Bronwyn, I was able to share and construct further understandings of embodied ways of knowing in solo dance making with these women. We discussed our multiple understandings of and responses to feminism, whether feminism influenced our dance making. Each of us was aware of the influence of stereotypical femininity, particularly on dancers, and to differing extents each of us attempted to recreate femininity. For all of us, knowing more about ourselves as women, about our relationships to others and to the world, was possible through dance making. I was able to develop a further understanding of solo dance making as an embodied way of knowing through discussion with these women. Drawing the interview material together, I chose to represent our interview discussions and shared understandings in a group narrative, set in a fictional context as though we had all met together.

So, I now look again at my four research questions and the understandings I developed with Jan, Ali, Raewyn, Susanne and Bronwyn.

Feminism and dance making

I began my research interested in exploring how I, and how other women, related to feminism in the process of dance making. Their varied comments reflected different responses to and individual perspectives on feminism (Luke, 1998; Reinharz, 1992). Most of the women felt that they did not need to 'wear feminism on their sleeves' as Jan expressed it, or 'to make a dance about feminism' as Ali said, because simply being a women dancing solo was a feminist statement. Ali and Raewyn both commented that the solo dancer, in her vulnerability and courage, is able to demonstrate the embodiment of the human animal in its whole and most beautiful. I agree with Raewyn's comment that this is a very powerful statement to make for the dance maker. I am however, not convinced that this statement is necessarily clearly understood as a feminist statement by others.

It seemed to me that there was a tension between the women's reluctance to being called 'feminist', and their views that revealed a commitment to basic feminist ideas. I suspect that this tension reflected generational differences between the interests of these women (Luke, 1998), and as Ali commented, little knowledge of feminist theory. Younger women, according to Carmen Luke (1998), are more interested in specific feminist projects undertaken with recognition of difference and avoiding universal feminist analyses. To some extent, the women I interviewed continued to understand feminism as based on the agendas of the women's liberation movement and liberal feminism (Middleton, 1988), despite the development of multiple feminist perspectives. Because many of the basic rights that women's liberation fought for have been achieved in Western cultures, some women feel that feminist analyses of

patriarchy and oppression are not relevant, as Carmen Luke noted (1998). In Aotearoa, New Zealand, women hold positions as Prime Minister, Governor General and political party leaders, and together with the influence of the backlash against feminism, this may have led to a perception that feminism is no longer relevant.

However, further consideration of the on-going control of resources and power by men reveals that the patriarchal oppression of women does still exist (Greer, 1999). It may be that the backlash against feminism (Gamble, 1999; Wolf, 1990), and the appearance of women politicians in Aotearoa, New Zealand obscures recognition of oppression for some women. To me it is still clear that women and minority groups continue to be oppressed. More specifically, as Germaine Greer (1999) argued, oppression continues in women's most intimate relationships, particularly with their bodies. Ironically, each of the women I spoke with was very aware of the influence and oppression of stereotypical femininity on dance and their dancing bodies. This awareness seemed to be the motivation for their attempts to recreate femininity for themselves through solo dance making.

So it seems to me that some of the women I interviewed held tense positions, at once committed to equality and to challenging stereotypical femininity, and also reluctant to label themselves as feminist. This tension may be what leads them to focus on recreating femininity in empowering ways on an individual level (Luke, 1998). Some of the women did not see their individual dance making practices as embodying feminist perspectives. But it seems to me that their dance making practices and solo performances do incorporate an implicit feminism. While some of the women did not make explicit feminist

statements, both Jan and I were interested in feminist activism in our dance making.

Considering the feminist notion of ‘the personal as the political’, each of the women acknowledged their personal experiences as relevant, and used their experiences as starting points in creating solo dance. They began with personal experiences, and at times they engaged in reflection and consideration of their experiences in relation to the wider socio-cultural and political context. But for some of the women their solo dance simply reflected their personal experiences. However, as Jan argued, dance needs to go beyond personal experience to connect into the world. To keep dance simply in the realm of personal experience diminishes the potential political power of dance.

From our discussions I conclude that, like many modern and post modern dancer/choreographers, feminist perspectives may underlie these women’s dance making, but they did not intend that their solo dance make explicit feminist statements. Their implicit feminism indicates to me that patriarchy is still oppressing practices in dance, to the extent that feminist perspectives are once again regarded as unimportant, even by women, and that the political potential of dance remains unrealised. I suspect these women are content to imply a feminist perspective through focusing their solo dance on the specifics of their own experiences as women, perhaps fearing what Raewyn described as aggressive responses to feminism. For these women, tension remained between underlying feminism, and their reluctance to be labelled feminist or to make explicit feminist statements in their solo contemporary dance.

However, as a result my personal experiences and reading of feminist theory, it seems to me that feminist perspectives are still very relevant. While I

agree that some of the feminist analyses of widespread oppression and patriarchy may seem outdated (Luke, 1998), and I favour evolving feminist perspectives, I believe there is still a need for active political feminism. The reasons I became a feminist are still valid reasons for explicit and active feminism for me.

Stereotypical femininity and recreating femininity

My research was guided by two questions related to femininity - How do I, and other women, understand the effects of stereotypical femininity in the process of dance making? How do I, and other women, recreate stereotypical femininity through the process of dance making? As I noted above, the women I spoke with were aware of and concerned about the influence of stereotypical femininity on dance making. In our discussion of stereotypical femininity, we considered feminine personality characteristics, as well as body ideals and feminine movement (Macdonald, 1995; Young, 1980, 1998). Raewyn was particularly concerned about stereotypically feminine personality characteristics, and she described how she recreated femininity by refusing to accept masculine understandings and deliberately revaluing femininity in her dance making. Raewyn and Susanne both exaggerated and parodied emotional and irrational behaviour in their improvisational sections of dance, drawing attention to these stereotypical feminine characteristics.

Discussion around the ideal feminine body image in dance revealed our frustration with the way in which the 'dancer' seemed to epitomise the stereotypical feminine ideal (Brown, 1999). We acknowledged that this was an ideal, rather than a reality for most women, thus recognising how oppression affected us (Greer, 1999). We recognised the influence of stereotypical femininity

but we did not undertake the body-controlling practices evident in women, such as excessive exercise, dieting and surgery (Bordo, 1988; Greer, 1999; Macdonald, 1995; Markula, 1995; Wolf, 1990), even though our mature, or muscular, or breast-less bodies did not conform to the stereotype. We were also aware of expectations that the ideal feminine and virtuosic dancer was the only dancer worth watching. Our responses to these expectations were continue to dance and to focus on developing and recreating femininity through movement (Brown, 1999). Attempting to recreate femininity through movement allowed us to offer an alternative femininity through our dance making.

As Bronwyn pointed out, appropriately feminine movement looked good on the ideal feminine dancer, and this movement was virtuosic in terms of flexibility and grace (Brown, 1999). Such movement was also presentational, as Jan described it, rather than expressive and internally motivated. Feminine movement was usually controlled, restrained, and limited in range (Young, 1980), influenced by the colonizing effects of codified dance technique training and oppressive stereotypes. In creating her solo dance, Raewyn took ownership of her movement again, aiming towards embodying ideas in movement rather than performing oppressive techniques. Bronwyn found movement that suited her purposes through learning and adapting ethnic dance movement in which, arguably, movement performance was less limited by the specific dancer's body. Jan felt liberated from the constraints of femininity, and undertook introspective movement investigations through dance.

Personalized, creative and self-expressive movement was not necessarily within the range of typical feminine movement (Young, 1980, 1998). However, each of us challenged ourselves to move beyond the constraints of stereotypically

feminine and codified movement to think in movement (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999).

In creating her solo, Ali developed dance that came from ‘a primitive urge transformed into a vocabulary of movement’. Jan investigated more expressive and introspective movement that was imbued with meaning. Raewyn and I explored ways of creating movement that might enhance kinesthetic empathy and visceral response to our experiences. Individually, we were able to develop dance in which we could think and communicate, and to address the issues of feminine virtuosity through increasing our range of movement in our solo dance. Dancing solo provided each of us with the opportunity to use improvisational strategies to think *in* action, and choreographic strategies to think *about* action, in order to develop embodied ways of knowing in our solo dance making.

In attempting to recreate femininity, we developed choreographic strategies aimed at focusing attention on our lived experiences rather than on our dancing bodies as sexual objects. We developed choreographic strategies that aimed to challenge and change stereotypically feminine movement and movement qualities, to resist or subvert expectations of the dancer, to use everyday, gestural or pedestrian movement to enhance kinesthetic empathy, to create embodied expressions of our lived experiences, and to use theatrical devices to enhance our lived experience themes. These choreographic strategies enabled us to create movement that had multiple intentions and could be an embodied expression of our lived experiences. Such movement allowed for receptivity and responsiveness to multiple sources of information in the moment of performing (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999).

Multiplicity, receptivity and responsiveness were alternative modalities of feminine movement that I derived from our solo dance making (Young, 1980,

1998). These modalities of feminine movement were very different from those Young (1980) used, following Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1962, 1964) instrumentalist and masculine model of movement that privileged plan, singular intention and control. My alternative modalities were based on consideration of our dance making in relation to the question Iris Young later posed – “What might a phenomenology of action look like which started from the mundane fact that many of us, especially women, often do several things at once?” (1998, p.289). Understanding our dance making as multiple, receptive and responsive demonstrated our thinking in and thinking about movement (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999), and our ability to recreate femininity outside the dualistic feminine and masculine stereotypes. In this sense, our dance making was an embodied way of knowing ourselves as women.

Embodied ways of knowing

The overall research question that guided my research was - How do I, and other women solo contemporary dancers in Aotearoa, New Zealand, understand dance making as an embodied way of knowing ourselves as women? While my questions related to feminism, stereotypical femininity and recreating femininity provided a specific focus for my investigation, my overall focus was to suggest and develop an understanding of embodied ways of knowing in dance making.

An embodied way of knowing is an alternative epistemological strategy I have developed from those theorised by feminist researchers Belenky et al. (1986), and involves thinking in movement (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999).

Understanding embodied ways of knowing requires an understanding of knowing and knowledge as multiple, embodied and experiential, rather than as a purely

rational mental process. Considering solo dance making as thinking in movement reflected our individual experiences of multiplicity, receptivity and responsiveness in the moment of performing (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999; Young, 1998). Such thinking in movement was based on alternative understandings of mind/body as embodiment, and knowledge/experience as integrated. While each of us struggled to speak coherently about embodiment in non-dualistic language, we had holistic integrated experiences of embodiment. Ali described how, in the moment of performing, a dancer can simultaneously (Farnell, 1999) understand and exhibit the fabulous organization and brilliance of the human animal at its best. In this moment, the dancer is receptive to multiple sources of information, can integrate this information and can respond in multiple ways (Young, 1998) – she can think in movement and express her knowledge in dancing (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). Jan described her experiences of thinking in movement as connecting threads of her life, and as kinesthetic intelligence or intelligence in action. For Susanne, dancing was about expressing her relationship with the world, and for Bronwyn, dancing was an on-going process that allowed her to reflect on and interpret her life. Raewyn experienced a much greater sense of meaning, pleasure and fulfilment in her life through acknowledging her embodied knowing. I personally found that I could focus my knowing through moving in making my solo dance.

As an epistemological strategy, embodied ways of knowing involve integrating intuitive understandings, lived experiences and learned ‘knowledges’ (Belenky et al., 1986), resolving tensions that arise, embodying and living out the options. Ali integrated her ecological knowledge with her intuitive understandings and movement based on primitive urges, to express her evolving

relationship with her environment. Understanding her personal experiences in the light of cancer research and literature allowed Jan to create movement that could express her own lived experiences and educate other women about breast cancer and mastectomy. Raewyn, Susanne and Bronwyn each investigated personal experiences, reflecting on their lives and exploring ways of recreating femininity differently. Dance making could be an embodied way of knowing for each of us, and dancing could potentially be an exhibition of a person at her most whole and beautiful, as Ali commented. The only direct access I could have to understanding embodied ways of knowing was through experiencing them myself in my own dance making processes. So, in creating my solo *This is after all the edited life*, and writing about my processes as I recreated femininity for myself, I was able to explore and reflect on embodied ways of knowing.

According to feminist critique, Western knowledge and epistemology was based on a dualistic ontology that aligned mind and knowledge with men/masculinity, and body and experience with female/femininity. 'Knowledge' was thus constructed and understood by men using rational mental processes. However, feminists have criticised this gendered Western epistemology and the resulting masculine bias in 'knowledge'. Instead they have recreated knowledge, arguing that there are multiple 'knowledges' that can be experiential and are always embodied. My study contributes to on-going feminist critique, specifically of the masculine/feminine, mind/body and knowledge/experience dualisms, and I offer and theorise alternative embodied ways of knowing.

Situated within a feminist critique, I have suggested and developed an alternative epistemological strategy, seeking to critique what counts as knowledge, what knowledge counts, and who can know (Du Plessis & Alice,

1998). My feminist understandings were derived from my experiences of and discussions about solo contemporary dance making. My experiences of embodied ways of knowing demonstrate that knowledge can be multiple, experiential and embodied, and this serves to cast doubt on the dominant dualistic ontology and epistemology on which Western knowledge seems to be based. Thus my feminist investigation into embodied ways of knowing in women's solo contemporary dance in Aotearoa, New Zealand offers an alternative understanding of knowledge, knowing and knowers.

Developments and limitations

As I commented above, my research on embodied ways of knowing in women's solo dance making suggests an alternative understanding of knowledge, knowing and knowers. In specific ways that I outline below, my research develops existing feminist, phenomenological and dance literature. I also comment below on the limitations of my research.

Feminist dance research in Aotearoa, New Zealand

Prior to beginning my research in 1999 there was relatively little published research on dance in Aotearoa, New Zealand, and much of this research was not feminist research. I have made use of relevant published feminist dance research (Bolwell, 1998, 2000b; East, 2001; Jordan, 1997, 1998, 1999; Markula, 1998; Markula & Denison, 2000). A result of my research has been the contribution of specifically feminist dance research on choreographic practices and dance makers

in Aotearoa.⁵² As my work focuses on the lived experiences of six women making solo dance in Aotearoa, New Zealand, it is in no way intended to provide a definitive account or to be used as a prescriptive list of women's solo dance making practices.

My research contributes to the growth of dance research that explores dancer's lived experiences and choreographic strategies in dance making. However, in representing my interviews with each woman, and in representing my own experiences, I deliberately chose to focus on specific aspects of dance making related to feminism, stereotypical femininity and embodied ways of knowing. As a result I left out many rich experiences and choreographic strategies that were part of dance making.

I was able to contribute detailed representations of the experiences of six women solo dance makers. However, all of the women were Pakeha, and contemporary dancers. I did not explore the experiences of Maori women, or women of other cultures, and I did not consider the experiences of women who made Maori, ballet, jazz or other cultural solo dances. My research should not be assumed to apply to women of different cultures or dance genres.

Feminist and phenomenological dance research

My research contributes to feminist literature on dance, but offers a feminist and phenomenological perspective, in contrast to more popular feminist approaches, including poststructural approaches to dance (Albright, 1997; Brown, 1994, 1999), or existential phenomenological approaches (Fraleigh, 1987, 1999).

⁵² I exclude Carol Brown's work (1994, 1999) because although she is a New Zealander, she does not specifically work or write about her dance in relation to the context of Aotearoa, New Zealand.

As a feminist researcher, I have focussed on detailed investigations of our lived experiences in solo dance making, and have been able to offer understandings of the choreographic strategies and practices we utilised. I have not explored audience responses or critics' reviews of our solo performances, offering only my own and the dance maker's personal interpretations. It would not be possible or relevant to judge the aesthetic value of the particular solo dances I investigated from my research.

In choosing a feminist and phenomenological perspective and methodology, I have concentrated my investigation on women's lived experiences. I have not extended my investigation to include reflections on the dance industry, arts policy and economics of the wider socio-cultural, historical and political context of Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Feminist methods for researching dance

Using a feminist and phenomenological perspective I have been able to develop new methods for researching dance and for representing my findings, including using dance making as a research method, and representing findings through CD-Rom and through narratives.

Some dance researchers have created dance works as choreographic research in the past (Brown, 1994), and the dance performance itself has been evaluated as the product of the research. By contrast, I used dance making as a method to experience, theorise and demonstrate embodied ways of knowing. Dance making was an effective method that added significantly to my overall investigation by allowing me to actually experience and participate in embodied ways of knowing.

I recognise and value lived experiences and dance as a legitimate academic and research endeavour. I suggest that dance making can have profound epistemological significance, as well as potential political and feminist relevance.

I approached dance making as broader than simply the craft of choreography, recognising the plurality of practices and experiences that influence dance makers as individual artists, and respecting that dance can provide understanding beyond the specific concerns of a dance piece; dance making can be an embodied way of knowing. However, in the process of making choices about the relevance of certain information about dance making I may well have overlooked important details. My research may be limited in scope by its exploratory method and my need to select material to focus on my research questions.

While many choreographers have used creative journals in dance making (Janesick, 1999) and researchers have used journals to record research experiences (Holly, 1984), I used a creative journal specifically as a research method to record, to look again, and to reflect on my dance making and research experiences. I was able to record a wide range of information that might be relevant to my research and to utilise this information in representing my research findings.

Representing research findings

I was able to demonstrate my embodied ways of knowing through inclusion of an interactive CD-Rom, on which viewers could see my choreographic strategies, alternative movement and embodied ways of knowing in context, and with interpretive text. Dance research has been presented on video before (Brown,

1994), but use of interactive CD-Rom is another way of representing dance research that I have developed. CD-Rom, like video, allows a wider range of viewers to experience dance, and can also enhance understandings as the viewer can interact with video and text. However, video and CD-Rom representations remain representations and watching video can never replace the experience of seeing a dance in the flesh.

Other dance researchers have indicated the need and have begun developing alternative writing practices for representing written dance research (Brown, 1999; Albright, 1997; Fraleigh, 2000; Stinson, 1995). I combined my interview transcripts, creative journal writing and relevant literature, in narrative form. I was able to develop both a group narrative, and personal experience narratives, drawing on literary techniques. Use of narrative allowed me to remain committed to my feminist and phenomenological research agendas to include and respect women's words, to avoid labelling their experiences and to acknowledge my role as creator of the research. Writing in narrative form also allowed me to write so that my research might be more accessible to a wider community of readers, including members of my dance community, rather than only feminist academics.

However, using a narrative approach also challenges the reader to add interpretations themselves, rather than only relying on my interpretations as the researcher. For some readers more accustomed to typical representations of qualitative research, my use of narrative may distance them.

Embodied ways of knowing

Focussing on ways of knowing in dance develops some initial work by dance researchers (Foster, 1976; Fraleigh, 2000). While bodily knowing has been recognised as a valid area for further research (Goldberger, 1996), and there have been attempts to articulate embodiment and thinking in movement (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999; Young, 1980, 1998), I contribute an understanding of embodied ways of knowing as an epistemological strategy. This is the major contribution of my research. My understanding of and investigation into embodied ways of knowing has been derived from experiences of six women solo contemporary dance makers. A broader understanding of embodied ways of knowing might be developed through investigation of the lived experiences of other women, and of athletes.

Further research

There are two main areas of further research I suggest following my research into embodied ways of knowing in women's solo dance making in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Firstly, I suggest that further feminist and phenomenological research is undertaken into the lived experiences of dance makers. Undertaking research to investigate the lived experiences of women of other cultural backgrounds, and consideration of the similarities and differences between these women's responses to feminism, stereotypical femininity might prove fruitful in understanding embodied ways of knowing. Interviewing research methods might require adaptation in order to respect cultural differences. I suggest that such research focus on the practices of dance makers in Aotearoa, New Zealand, to contribute to

the growing need for understandings specific to our context, although useful understandings within totally different cultural and geographic contexts might be developed through adapting my research methods to those new contexts.

Secondly, investigation and research into community ways of knowing (Goldberger, 1996) in collaborative dance making would be a relevant feminist contribution to understanding alternative epistemological strategies. Investigation into dance making practices in duet and group dance making to consider collaborative choreographic strategies and processes would also be valuable (Way, 2000). Such a research project might reveal another epistemological strategy, or add to understandings of embodied ways of knowing.

Summary

My research has developed an alternative epistemological strategy - embodied ways of knowing – through feminist and phenomenological investigation of the lived experiences of women solo contemporary dance makers in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

* * *

When beginning my doctoral research, I remember imagining that in order to complete my research I would have to insert brackets around a certain part of my life as a feminist dancer. Although these brackets might contain my doctoral research, my on-going research as a feminist dancer would continue throughout my life. So I close these brackets here, but my process of recreating myself as a woman, and my embodied ways of knowing continue as I research and dance.

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APPENDICES

Appendix One: Timeline

1999

January	Began work on PhD proposal
May	Proposal submitted and approved
July	First draft of literature review chapter completed
August	Ethics proposal submitted and approved
May-December	First drafts of research philosophy and methodology chapters completed

2000

March	Research participants contacted
May-October	Interviews undertaken with five participants
June-December	Interviews transcribed and returned to participants

2001

January-June	Further drafts of research philosophy, literature review and methodology chapters completed On-going correspondence with participants
August-September	First draft of findings/discussion group narrative completed
September	Findings/discussion draft sent out to participants
October-November	Findings/discussion draft CD-Rom and personal experience narrative completed
December	First full draft of thesis completed

2002

January-February	Final draft of thesis completed
March	Thesis submitted for examination

Appendix Two: Letter of invitation to research participants

6thth March 2000

Kia ora

Hi! It was great to see your new solo work and to catch up. Thank you for your interest in my research project. I'd love to hear more about your solo. This letter is a follow-up to our informal conversations.

As you know, I am undertaking dance research towards my PhD at the University of Waikato. I would like to formally invite you to become a participant in my research project - *The Process of Becoming: Women's solo contemporary dance in Aotearoa, New Zealand*. In my research I am interested to hear what was/is happening in your life that may have been/is a starting point for your solo dance making. Specifically, I am interested in how you interpret and understand experiences in your life through making and performing solo dance.

To begin our discussion, I suggest that we meet for an informal interview to talk your recent or upcoming solo work. I would like to record our interview conversation on audiotape. Following the interview I will send you a copy of the interview transcript and invite you to respond with further comments and clarification.

I would also like to invite you to participate in a personal writing exercise, as an opportunity for you to explore your thoughts about dance making in your own time. Perhaps you might also like to contribute some other materials about your dance making for use in the research, such as photographs, videotapes, notes and other writing.

I would like to acknowledge and identify you by name within my writing. In order to do so, I need to gain your consent. I suggest we negotiate a *Letter of Agreement* for this purpose. I have attached a sample letter and I invite you to consider it and contact me directly. I have included my contact details at the end and a pre-paid envelope.

I am very excited about the possibility that you might participate in my research. Regards and happy dancing

Karen Barbour.

Email: karenb@waikato.ac.nz (best way to contact me!)

Work: 07-838-4500 ext 7738, or 4629 (Leisure Studies Dept). At home, weekend: 09-376-0500.

Please make comments / suggestions where relevant!

Letter of Agreement

I _____ consent to be a participant in Karen Barbour's PhD research project - *The Process of Becoming: Women's solo contemporary dance in Aotearoa, New Zealand*.

I understand that I can discuss concerns related to the research with Karen throughout the research project and that I can negotiate the terms of my involvement. I understand that Karen may quote directly from or refer to comments I make or writing I produce, in the construction of her research document, and that Karen will acknowledge my contribution to the research. I also understand that I will be given a draft copy of Karen's writing that refers to my work, and me, and that I will have the opportunity to respond to this writing. Any changes I suggest may be discussed with Karen. I understand that I may withdraw from this research project, withdraw particular comments, or decline to participate in particular aspects of the research, up until the writing of the second draft of the research document.

As a participant in the research project I would like to be involved as follows:

- **I would like to participate in an interview/s – yes / no**
- **I would like to participate in a personal writing exercise – yes / no**
- **I would like to contribute other materials (such as video tapes, personal writing, photographs etc) for use in the research – yes / no**
- **I consent to being identified by name in the research document – yes / no**

Comments/suggestions:

Please include the following information:

- **Suggested interview time:** (indicate dates where possible, or at least your preferred month, and city/place).
- **Contact information:** (include postal/ e-mail/ phone/ fax and indicate preferred method for me to contact you).

Once we have negotiated the terms of your involvement in this research project, I will draw up a Letter of Agreement and send it out for you to sign. Thank you!

Should you have any matters you wish to discuss with my supervisor, please contact Dr Jane Strachan. Jane@waikato.ac.nz. Phone 07-838-4500 ext 7874.

Appendix Four: Interview guide

Interview Guide: *(listen for her words!)*

- Solo dance piece

- Starting points

- Experiences in solo dance making

- Femininity

- Feminism

- Dance 'knowledges'

- Embodiment

Appendix Five: Explanatory letter with transcripts

31st May 2000

Kia ora *name*

I hope you are well. We are nearly at semester break now. I guess you will be too and no doubt you will be looking forward to it! I certainly am.

Again, thank you so much for agreeing to talk to me for my PhD research project. I thoroughly enjoyed the fascinating conversation! Listening to the tape and reading the transcript has been very interesting too. I have transcribed our interview and enclosed a copy for you. This transcript is confidential between us and I will not be including it in entirety in my research document. However, I will use sections of the transcript and quote from it in my final document writings. As I indicated I will share such writings with you.

Please know that this transcript is by no means an unalterable document! You will notice that I have not edited the transcript, preferring to send it to you as is. I invite you to read the transcript through and to edit, clarify and add to it if you wish. You are very welcome to do so. I have enclosed a freepost return envelope for you to send comments etc back to me.

At the beginning of the interview we decided to focus on your solo... I am also interested to hear your responses to... If you have any time to add notes regarding... I would be most grateful.

Finally, I would love to have a video copy of your solo for reference. If you don't mind me having a copy and can get one to me, that would be wonderful! I'm happy to pay for a copy. Please just attach a note to it indicating that you are happy for me to use it and how much I owe you. If you have any photos from this work that I might be able to use in my research document, I would be very keen to get copies. Again, I am happy to pay you for photos.

Well, happy reading and I hope the remainder of the semester goes well.

Regards and hugs

Karen Barbour

Doctoral Assistant

Department of Leisure Studies

University of Waikato

64-7-838-4500 ext 7738

<http://www.tmc.waikato.ac.nz/support/leisure/karen/index.htm>

Appendix Six: Explanatory letter with Chapter Six draft

Tuesday, 11 September 2001

Kia ora

I hope this letter finds you well and inspired in your work.

I am writing to share with you the first draft of my Research Findings chapter, which I have enclosed. This first chapter draft is confidential between the six of us and my supervisors involved in my PhD research project.

As I have mentioned in earlier letters and in discussion with you, it was my intention to present my Research Findings from our interviews in narrative form. I have chosen to include all of our voices together, using edited quotations from our interview transcripts, in the imaginary context of a day of discussion about feminism, femininity and ways of knowing in dance making. I hope you will enjoy reading this narrative.

I would like to invite you to respond to my writing, and to engage in this on-going process of constructing knowledge together. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith says, I hope to "share the theories and analyses which inform the way knowledge and information are constructed and represented" (1998, p.16). So, please do consider how I have chosen to represent you and positioned your words in this narrative, and offer suggestions if you would like changes. I have highlighted where I have taken 'artistic liberties' and the sections that I would particularly like you to consider.

Also, because I did not always guide some of our interview discussions as well as I might have, I do not have comments from each of you about some issues. Consequently, I invite you to add responses if you wish.

I am working hard now in order to complete my PhD by February 2002. I would really appreciate it if you could read this first draft of my chapter and offer your responses by October 1st. I am happy for you to phone, write or email me. If I don't hear from you by October 1st I will assume that you are comfortable with my narrative.

I also wrote to you a while ago, inviting you to write a short biography as a way of introducing yourself in an earlier chapter of my thesis. I would like to remind you about this opportunity and ask that you also try to contact me by October 1st, if you wish to write your biography.

Finally, I thank each of you for your wonderful, articulate expressions and for sharing your experiences with me. I hope you enjoy reading my narrative as much as I have enjoyed putting it together. I have felt your words guiding me as I worked. Thank you all so much.

Happy dancing!

With love and respect

Karen Barbour

How to contact me:

By Post: Department of Leisure Studies, University of Waikato,
Private Bag 3105, Hamilton.

By email: karenb@waikato.ac.nz

Work phone: 07-838-4466 ext 7738 (voice mail available)

Home phone: 07-839-1123

Appendix Seven: Thank you letter

Sunday, 10 February 2002

Kia ora

I hope you are well at present. I am writing to thank you for your time and commitment to participating in my PhD research project on women's solo dance in Aotearoa, New Zealand. I appreciated your willingness to participate, and I enjoyed hearing your words. You continue to inspire me. Without you, my research project would not have been possible. Thank you very much.

I am presently in the final stages of preparing my thesis document and hope to submit in the next month. I look forward to submitting, and to the examination process and I will let you know how I get on. In the meantime until my degree is confirmed, I will continue to hold your photos/videos safely, and I will return them to you when my research project is completed.

I look forward to catching up with you soon.

Regards and hugs

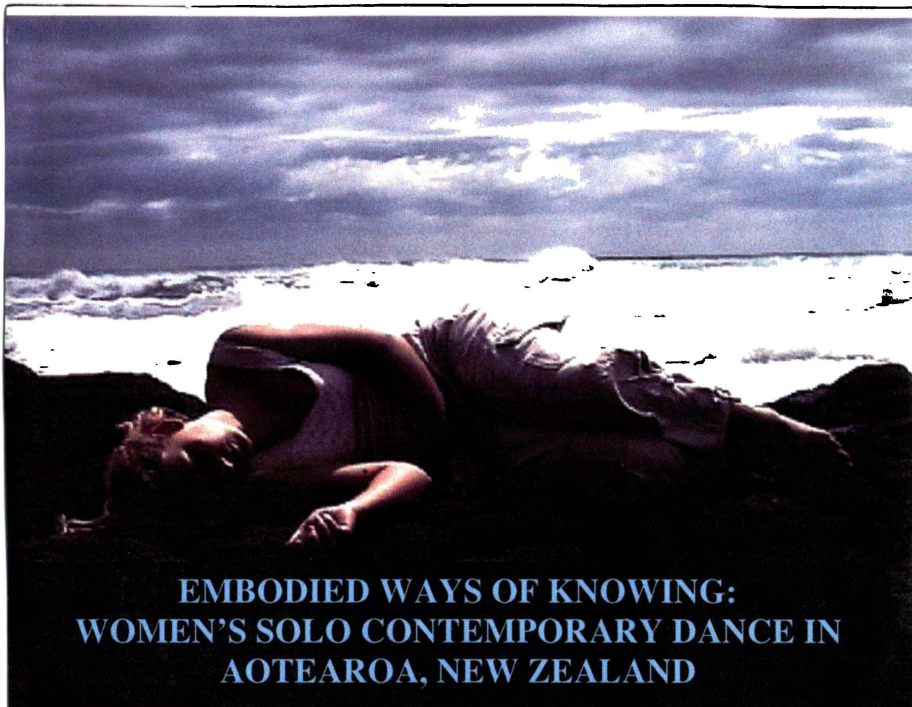
Karen Barbour

Department of Sport and Leisure Studies, University of Waikato

Private Bag 3105, Hamilton

64-7-838-4500 ext 7738

<http://www.tmc.waikato.ac.nz/support/leisure/karen/index.htm>



**EMBODIED WAYS OF KNOWING:
WOMEN'S SOLO CONTEMPORARY DANCE IN
AOTEAROA, NEW ZEALAND**

This CD-Rom accompanies my thesis document as part of
Chapter Five: Findings and discussion: *This is after all the edited life.*

Karen Barbour 2002.

(Technical specifications for computer viewing on inside cover.)