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RHIZOME/MYZONE: THE PRODUCTION OF
SUBJECTIVITY IN DANCE

by

Kim Vines, BScOptom, MFA

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Deakin University (October, 2001)
DEAKIN UNIVERSITY
CANDIDATE DECLARATION

I certify that the thesis entitled: Rhizome / MyZone: The Production of Subjectivity in Dance

submitted for the degree of: Doctor of Philosophy

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INTRODUCTION

The Question of Subjectivity in Dance

This process of inquiry began with the question, how is subjectivity or the self produced in dance? How is subjectivity produced through the individual physicality of each dancer, and how is it produced through dance genres, choreographic gestures and literary and narrative references? Implicit in this question are two further questions. The first is, to what extent is subjectivity produced in the act of dancing? That is, to what extent can dancing be a means of producing new formulations of the self in real time? Conversely, to what extent is the subjectivity ‘produced’ in dance actually a re-production of a previously articulated ‘self’, and to what extent is that self represented, that is, indicated, denoted or otherwise referred to, in the act of dancing as opposed to being actively produced or created?

The second question arising is, to what extent can danced subjectivity be understood as individual, and to what extent does it function as a reiteration of culturally agreed notions of the meaning of the dancing subject defined within particular genres of dance?

The implications of the answers to these questions about subjectivity in dance are profound. If danced subjectivity is purely representational, then dance becomes a goal-oriented activity, and the success or failure of a dance must be measured by the accuracy and clarity of the representation. In this instance dance becomes a purely re–productive activity and the only questions to be asked about it are what kind of subjective position is being represented and how clear is the rendition?

While dance is obviously thoroughly representative in that if there were no conventions of danced subjectivity there would be nothing against which to read a dance, a purely representative stance excludes the effects of particular performances and particular historical moments on a dance. A purely representative understanding of dance recognizes only a pre-existing set of meanings which the dance gestures towards and makes no allowance for the possibility of creating new meanings, new formulations of the self in the moment of performance.
The questions of the extent to which a subjectivity created in dance is an individual one, and the extent to which it is formed by the conventions and expectations, the symbolic economy, of the genre and style of the dance, also have important implications. If dance can only produce existing formulations of subjectivity that are already implicit in existing dance genres, then no new kinds of subjectivity can be produced in dance.

As a choreographer, I work from the position of a dance artist with a unique and individual body. My exploration has been determined by the problem of how my individuality can be made visible in the context of contemporary or modern dance, and the context of these questions about the production of dancing subjectivity. To what extent can an individual statement be made, choreographically and corporeally, when every action is coded in terms of conventions about what kinds of movements are acceptable in dance, what and how they mean, and the ways in which individual bodies are coded ‘dancer’ and ‘non-dancer’? My choreographic investigation has been a process of asking to what extent an individual statement of self, which is not completely determined by the codes of the dance styles and genres within which it functions, can be made?

Subjectivity in Modern and Postmodern Dance

The production of subjectivity has been central to the development of modern dance over the last century. Isadora Duncan’s work placed the question of subjectivity at the heart of dance by performing the radical function of situating the female dancer as choreographer/subject. Duncan’s work was distinctive in the way that it produced the solo dancer as a questioning, evolving, deciding, and acting subject rather than as a dancer performing a choreographic text originated outside the self. Ann Daly describes Duncan’s fundamental shift as the positioning of her dancing self as an embodiment of Nietzschean will.

Ongoing movement became a metaphor for what they then termed “soul”, what we call the self. The body was no longer a product – of training, of narrative, of consumption – but rather a process. The dance was about becoming a self (the subject-in-process/on trial) rather than about displaying a body (Daly 1992, p.253).
The work of the 'early moderns', and particularly Martha Graham, continued the notion of dance as a means of producing subjectivity by situating the psychic interior as the source and subject matter of dance. Graham’s dances are designed to make visible the interior landscape (Foster 1986, p.25).

It is almost as though the audience were able to observe secretly the private world of the characters. In this sense the stage itself serves as an emblem for Graham’s choreographic portrayal of internal experience – the stage, like the dancers’ bodies, houses and reveals the characters’ thoughts and feelings (Foster 1986, p.27).

In the modern dance tradition that developed in the United States in the 1920's and 1930's, choreography was commonly understood as a practice that emanated from the self, both in movement terms and in relation to what that movement expressed. Deborah Jowitt describes the modern dance project as:

...first to intensify the connection between emotion and form as had the Expressionist artists (“...the form is the outer expression of the inner content,” Wassily Kandinsky said in 1912; “Out of emotion comes form,” echoed Martha Graham in 1927) (Jowitt 1988, p.164).

Doris Humphrey called it “…moving from the inside out” (Jowitt 1988, p.164).

The idea that a choreographic work was a process of creating an image of the choreographer’s subjective position, in terms of emotions, narratives and/or more socially oriented concerns about civic and cultural organization, gave rise to a subjectivist and relativist understanding of dance. Dance became valid to the extent that it faithfully and truthfully represented (expressed) the underlying subjectivity of the choreographer and/or performer (Martin 1933, p.30; Graham 1998, pp.67–68; Cohen 1969 pp.4–6).

This subjectivism, however, existed in tension with the imperative of form to which modernist dance was (and is) committed. The direct expression of either emotion or opinion was considered by modern dance artists such as Graham and Humphrey
to be an anathema. Experience had to be objectified so that it could be represented and understood. Susan Foster notes about Graham that:

Her dances present an enlarged, clarified version of psychologically motivated movement. In the same way that she abstracts from her own experience certain archetypal themes for the stage, she has objectified personal movement by finding in it a set of fundamental principles: the contraction and release, the spiral, the primacy of the central body in initiating movement, and the sequential growth of movement from the center of the body to the periphery (Foster 1986, p.28).

Helen Thomas, in discussing Doris Humphrey’s practice, with its more overt focus on social and political structures as opposed to the emotional/psychological issues of the individual, states that “Humphrey, like Graham, believed that dance would suffer if the movement were subordinated to the social or political dogma; it would lose its specificity and thus its independence as an art form” (Thomas 1995, p.108). The authenticity of the message itself was not enough to make a good dance; something more was needed. Thomas quotes Humphrey:

The idea of social reform, class struggle or whatever it is, can overwhelm the dance when nothing counts so much as the message. This is usually better from a speaker’s platform or in a book, because we have strayed into the world of fact. A statistic is not a good subject for a dance, no matter how emotional the composer might feel about it (Humphrey in Thomas 1995, p.108).

Despite this inherent tension, in which it is apparent that modern dance was never a purely or unproblematically subjectivist practice, modern dance is often associated with a subjectivist approach since the work of such influential choreographers as Graham and those who came after her, was couched in the rhetoric of the individual artist with vision.¹

Such subjectivism was subsequently refused by Merce Cunningham and later by the work of the Judson Church choreographers. Cunningham’s method of subversion was to use chance methods to choreograph aspects of his dances (and in some cases whole dances) so that his works could not reflect his subjective preferences.² The Judson Church choreographers used strategies that foregrounded the methods by which their dances were constructed in order to
simultaneously expose and refuse the mythology of the choreographer as expressive artist. They made work which overtly refuted the idea that the dances were expressions of anything by constructing them as tasks or structures in which the way individual performers, both trained dancers and un-trained or pedestrian dancers, functioned within the structures, the choices they made and how they carried them out in real time, became the ‘meaning’ of the work.\(^3\)

Since that time, a range of approaches to subjectivity in dance has arisen, informed by these two paradigms, individual subjectivism and the modern and postmodern counter-formulations of formalism and de-mystification. At one extreme, new dance practitioners\(^4\) have constructed the dancing subject almost entirely in corporeal terms that are deliberately non-psychological, in an attempt to produce new formulations of the dancing self that are not defined by traditional dance techniques and their connections to conventions of gestural expression. Elizabeth Dempster describes this approach as embodying “...a keen curiosity about the multitudinous ways in which thinking, sensing, feeling and moving manifest and shift in and out of focus as a person dances” (Dempster 1995/96, p.3). At issue here is not the denigration of the psychological interior, but a refusal to allow it to be positioned as the privileged means of defining the self in dance, and a refusal to allow the self to be represented only and always in the same corporeal formulations.

At the other end of the spectrum, is dance that is made from explicitly psychological and narrative personal histories. An example is Bill T. Jones' *Still/Here* (1994). In this work, Jones included video footage of interviews with a range of people suffering from terminal diseases. The work is open to the critique of subjectivism on the basis that it is constructed from the unedited psychological perceptions of its subjects. Dance critic, Arlene Croce argued that this work is so subjectivist that it in fact cannot be commented on as an artwork (Croce 1994/95).

The highly specific and personal text and images used in this work, however, are layered with other elements, including conventional dance movements which function as a metacommentary provided by Jones as choreographer. Thus the personal perspectives, although integral to the work, are not positioned as the sole site of meaning or truth.
A Deleuze & Guattarian Perspective

My choreographic practice has been informed by all of these paradigms. I came to modern dance in my early twenties, after an extensive background in ballet. My first training in modern dance was, simultaneously, with two teachers whose approaches leaned towards expressionist modern dance and postmodern and new dance approaches, respectively. My subsequent training in the United States was also informed by a multiplicity of approaches. I studied technique derived from the Graham, Limon, Hawkins and Cunningham systems, as well as ballet.

The focus of my choreographic research for this thesis, which was undertaken through the process of making four dances, was to progressively question the ways in which I could make an individual choreographic statement, in the context of these powerful historical dance paradigms. To what extent could I produce the individuality of my choreographic vision and of my own corporeality and history, in the face of these influences? To what extent could I produce something uniquely subjective, and to what extent would my practice be inevitably marked by the ways in which the self has been understood in modern, postmodern, and new dance?

This question gave rise to a further question; how could I make sense of the multiple layers of influence in my work? How could I analyse and evaluate dances that claimed simultaneous allegiances to very different genres of dance? Implicit in this question was an acknowledgement that the ways in which subjectivity was produced in my dances could never be understood in terms of a single paradigm. Further to this acknowledgement, the issue of the unique nature of my body and its corporeal organization (that is, the ways in which I organize, initiate and carry out movement) presented a challenge to examining my dances in relation to the norms of modern, postmodern and new dance. How could the uniqueness of my body be foregrounded if the effect of any analysis would be to translate it back into pre-existing terms?

These questions necessitated a search for a way to understand subjectivity in my dances that could accommodate both multiplicity and individuality. This search led me to explore a Deleuze & Guattarian approach to subjectivity as a philosophical framework within which I could examine both multiplicity and individuality in my dances.
A Deleuze & Guattarian understanding of subjectivity suggests that subjectivity is always multiplicitious and layered. Subjectivity in Deleuze and Guattari’s terms may be so multi-faceted that it is not necessarily even confined to the ‘self’. Rather, subjectivity is produced through an assemblage of elements, psychological, cultural, and material, which does not originate within a prior, essential self. Elements of subjectivity comprise a kind of cultural and social set of resources that can be co-opted and assembled by an individual. This differs from a purely semiotic, linguistic approach in which subjectivity comprises a set of signs and symbols designating particular elements. In a Deleuze & Guattarian subjective assemblage both sign and non-sign ‘elements’ can cooperate. Names, words, and descriptions can be assembled alongside events, bodies, and histories to produce a subjective assemblage.

The structure of an assemblage is what Deleuze and Guattari term ‘rhizomic’. Rhizomic structures are like the underground root systems of wild grasses that extend in all directions. Rather than progressing in the orderly manner of a tree, in which each branch divides into two, each sub-branch divides into two, and so on, a rhizome is characterised by rampant growth in all directions at once. “An assemblage is precisely this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.8). In contrast to what they term ‘arborescent’ systems, the rhizome

...operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots ... In contrast to centred (or even polycentric) systems with hierarchical modes of communication and preestablished paths, the rhizome is an acentred, non-hierarchical, nonsignifying system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.21).

Subjectivity as a rhizomic assemblage must be differentiated from the subjectivist notion that has developed in relation to the tradition of modern dance during the last century. There is not a unified, essential subject who speaks, but rather, subjectivity is produced from a range of cultural/social subjective capital. In their words,
...the collective assemblage is always like the murmur from which I take my proper name, the constellation of voices, concordant or not, from which I draw my voice... To write is perhaps to bring this assemblage of the unconscious to the light of day, to select the whispering voices, to gather the tribes and secret idioms from which I extract something I call my self (Moi) (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.84).

This kind of assemblage is culturally constructed, but actively so rather than being simply the end result of a long series of inscriptions and imprints. “I is an order-word” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.84). It is also a material subjectivity in that it arises from a historical, concrete, biological, genetic, and socio-economic position. There is nothing generic about subjectivity in this view, although it owes much to genre. It is situated, not outside culture, but located concretely, temporally and spatially within culture.

My choreography is not subjectivist in the modernist sense, in that it does not assume an essential core self that is expressed through dance. In contrast to the anti-subjectivist stance of the work of Cunningham and the early postmodern choreographers, however, my choreography is concerned with the production of an individual subjectivity that is based in the individuality of my physical body and my history. The provisional and constructed nature of that subjectivity is, however, acknowledged. A Deleuze & Guattarian understanding of subjectivity allows me to consider these seemingly contradictory aspects of my work as elements, diverse parts, of a functioning assemblage.

A Deleuze & Guattarian Methodology

Adopting a Deleuze and Guattarian framework for understanding and examining subjectivity in my dances has had methodological consequences. It has shifted my understanding of my dances away from the traditional dyad, process, and product. Consequently, this exegeisis is not primarily about documenting my dance-making processes or about articulating or interpreting my finished dances, although both of these activities take place. Rather, it is about understanding my dances as actions, as what Deleuze and Guattari would call production (1987, p.18). That is, the dances are not processes, although processes are used to make them, and they are not
products in the sense of being completed statements, repositories for information or sites of communication. Rather, they do things, and what they do is to bring together a range of ideas, stories, and ways of moving to produce a danced subjectivity.

A danger in considering what the dances ‘do’, as active assemblages, is that the dances themselves may lose significance in and of themselves, and become simply a signifier for other cultural phenomena or information from other discourses, in this case, Deleuze and Guattari’s theory. Endlessly intertextual, in such an analysis the movement that began the chain of meaning ultimately becomes irrelevant in the wake of its endless readings.

This is not the case here because the Deleuze and Guattarian framework for understanding and analysing the dances has not been imposed upon the choreography, after the fact, but has actually arisen out of the dances themselves. Examining the way meaning is structured in my dances led to a search for a philosophical approach which could accommodate their simultaneous heterogeneity, materiality, individuality and cultural situatedness – their simultaneous debt to the specificity of the individual dancer’s bodies and the cultural codes of meaning extant in the choreographic conventions of modern and contemporary dance.

In the process of this search, I progressively began to make connections between my choreographic practice and Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of the assemblage and its connection to a rhizomic understanding of subjectivity and desire. The dances preceded the theory, and I understand this relationship as one of points of connection rather than one of isomorphism.

This process led to a particular methodological shift. When I began this work, I assumed that the writing of an exegesis would be an attempt to identify and articulate the discoveries I made through my dances. In the words of the Guide to Candidature for Higher Degrees by Research, the exegesis would “... elucidate the performance work and place it in a disciplinary context” and would be “... in no sense a separate exercise in art theoretical discourse” (Deakin University 2001, p.88). In the course of developing the exegesis of my dance works, however, it became apparent that this paradigm creates some significant problems in the context of this particular project.
The first is the assumption that practical inquiry into dance-making will result in a single, originary, philosophical and/or aesthetic stance, which the dances demonstrate. As I will argue, this is not necessarily the case. The very intertextuality of the dances I have made, at the most simplistic level, i.e. their references to diverse sign systems such as literary texts, conventions of contemporary dance as both abstract and expressive, autobiographical and historical information, immediately precludes a singular perspective from which the dances could be understood to emanate, or which they could be understood to embody or demonstrate.

The task of the exegesis in this context cannot be to 'reveal' what has transpired in the dance work because there is not necessarily a core 'effect' or a core 'concern' of the dance work to reveal. Rather, there can be multiple effects and concerns embodied within a dance work, and these elements need not necessarily be coherent. That is, they need not all pull in the same direction, work with the same languages or even the same epistemological bases.

There are two possible approaches to this dilemma. The first is that one can make an active choice as to the main issues a dance work seeks to investigate and focus only on those. This choice can be made at the beginning of an investigation so that dance works are made which function as interrogations of particular sets of issues and which ignore or neglect others. In this case the role of the exegesis is clear: to examine the extent to which the dance work was successful in interrogating certain issues and to articulate the outcomes of this interrogation as evidenced in the dance works produced. Alternatively, this choice can be made upon reflection on finished dance works, so that the exegesis becomes an articulation of an investigation that was perhaps largely unconscious in the process of making the dances, but which becomes evident and manifest in later analysis of the works.

The second approach is to eschew the assumption that a dance work can or should be about investigating a finite and defined set of issues. In this instance, no single focus is assumed in the dance work but rather the expectation is that the work will examine a number of diverse concerns. This is not to say that such dances don't perform interrogations, but merely to refuse to privilege or consider of prime importance any one of a diverse set of interrogations taking place simultaneously.
within a dance work. In this instance, the task of the exegesis is more complex because it must canvass the diversity of concerns embedded within a dance work. Further, it must do this in such a way as to make explicit the fact that any such exegesis is partial and can never hope to represent or translate the full scope of the dance. That is, it must be clear that the range of concerns addressed is at the discretion of the writer and is as much a construction as the dance itself, with no inherent claim to completeness or truth.

My focus on the production of subjectivity in my dances quickly revealed a multiplicity and heterogeneity of purpose with which any inquiry would have to engage. This is what first led me to investigate the work of Deleuze and Guattari as a possible means of engagement with what was happening in my dances. Once their understanding of subjectivity as not just multivalent but actively incoherent/inconsistent at the level of ideology and epistemology was taken on board however, the possibility of understanding (let alone representing in written form) the work of my dance practice as a united set of outcomes was precluded.

I have therefore had to negotiate a course that ranges between the two methodological alternatives described above. I began by making a series of dances. The first dance was not made with a particular 'research paradigm' in mind, but as an attempt to choreograph how I 'normally' choreograph with a view to observing how that dance produced (or failed to produce, or re-produced) a particular subjectivity. A set of concerns was engaged within the work, but I didn't set out to define these in advance, or at least they were defined only in very broad terms. The subsequent dances were made in sequential response to the issues that arose in analysing the previous works. The later works were made to address concerns that emerged from the earlier ones.

In this way, what emerged was a set of issues investigated progressively and from different aesthetic vantage points across three dance works. In this process, it became increasingly clear that although the works shared a seminal concern with the production of self and of subjectivity in dance, they simultaneously interrogated a diverse set of issues. These concerns included the production of dancing bodies as individual and unique, the homogenizing effects of the choreographic conventions of modern dance as expressive yet concerned with abstract form, the overwriting of contemporary dance by ballet and modern dance notions of technique, the
disjuncture between dancing bodies and intertextual literary references made by a
dance, the effect of autobiographical material on a dance work and the potential
malleability of the dancing body.

The diversity of these issues presented the major challenge to developing an
appropriate exegesis of them. Any choice as to which ones to privilege and which
to ignore was immediately a move towards distorting and under-representing the
richness of the dances on the one hand and presented the danger of overstating their
interrogatory nature on the other.

In order to write this exegesis, I needed to find a philosophical framework that
could accommodate the diversity, internal disjunctions, and heterogeneity of the
dance works. I also needed to find an approach that would allow me to write about
these aspects of the work without totalising them, i.e. without allowing the writing to
function as a definition of the dance work. I needed to find a methodology that
would allow me to position the writing as thinking alongside the dance works, and
as subject to the same problems of discontinuity and lack of an essential 'core' of
meaning as the dance works themselves are. That is to say, I needed to position the
writing as constructed by the desire of the writer rather than as the inevitable
revelation of a pre-existing 'truth' about the dance works.

This led to the exploration of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy of difference.
Their conception of the desiring machine as an assemblage of diverse elements of
culturally mediated subjectivity provided a way in which both the dances and the
exegesis could be understood as a meaningful coalition of diverse and
heterogeneous elements which privileged none.

Elements within an assemblage don't have to be limited to ideologically or logically
cohesive systems, and they are connected non-hierarchically. That is, ideas from
diverse and heterogeneous fields of reference function with one another, rather than
one system of reference translating or explaining another. Deleuze and Guattari
suggest that all events, ideas, symbols and languages exist on a single level playing
field. None of them arise from pre-existing, foundational or prior phenomena, but
rather meaning and the illusion of depth (or inferiority if one is talking about
meaning in relation to subjectivity) arise from the interplay of these elements on
what they call the plane of exteriority. In their words,
...the ideal would be to lay everything out on a plane of exteriority of this kind, on a single page, the same sheet: lived events, historical determinations, concepts, individuals, groups, social formations (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.9).

This has implications for the dilemma of how dance can be understood as part of broader cultural and theoretical contexts without being subsumed by them. In the context of a rhizomic assemblage, the integrity of specific dance practices, and of the historically specific experiences of individuals and communities which have given rise to those practices, can be preserved as there is no necessity for elements within the assemblage to be ideologically consistent or causally related. Broader cultural significances and relationships of dance experience and history can then be articulated without having to be explained by or, worse, translated into, languages and symbolic systems derived from other fields of discourse.

In a rhizomic context, issues relating to dances and to written texts can be laid side by side on a plane of exteriority. Any element can be connected to any other but on the basis of functionality rather than ideological consistency. This enables me to talk about different categories of things, for example, bodies, issues and events, without assuming that they are necessarily part of compatible regimes of meaning. Dance writers have long been suspicious of the totalizing power of written and spoken language to usurp the body’s power to speak in its own way by insisting on translating it. Marcia Siegal, for example, in her essay entitled “The Trouble with Apples and Oranges”, argued that dance and language, like oranges and apples, can’t be compared (Siegal 1988). Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy has provided me a means of discussing apples, oranges, pears, bananas, or as many different kinds of fruit necessary, in order to clarify what was going on in my dances. It also provided a way in which I was able to position the exegesis itself as simply a different kind of fruit on the same ‘plane of exteriority’ as the other elements of the dances.

Within this structure, dancing and writing are re-situated in relation to each other. If writing about dance is, in and of itself, a rhizomic assemblage, then that writing cannot be understood to translate or represent the ‘meaning’ of the dance. Rather, the writing creates a new set of symbols and metaphors that plug multiple meanings
into the dance-machine, even while they articulate meanings that emerge from the dance. Guattari writes about dance, "the dancer combines with the floor to compose a machine under the perilous conditions of love and death..." (Guattari 1995b, p.121). In the same spirit, I propose that writing and dancing combine to compose a machine that slides across multiple meanings under the perilous conditions of truth and falsehood.

The implication of understanding both dance and writing as rhizomic, or as Deleuze and Guattari call subjective assemblages, desiring machines, is that no one point of view or system of reference will be able to adequately contain either. In Guattari’s words,

But, in my opinion, the analysis of the economy of desire implies a multivalent logic that legitimates the coexistence of discourses that cannot have an axiomatic homogeneity. If you object and say that this is not what I said ten years ago, I answer, "Too bad," or even, "So much the better." Perhaps this is a good sign! Expressions of desire can simultaneously signify formally contradictory things, because they refer to various universes of reference (Guattari 1995b, p.41).

Consequently, writing about such a dance must be done in such a way as to include multiple perspectives and frames of references without privileging any as the dominant epistemological framework. I have attempted to do this in my exegesis by constructing the writing as a process of sliding across metaphors. Symbolic, stream of consciousness writing has been used along with movement descriptions, personal narratives and intertextual references, interspersed with commentary on the nature of the rhizomic structures produced and the problems these create for fixing any of these narratives as 'the meaning' of the work.

Through this process, various elements of dancing subjectivity are identified and subjected to discussion. These include the way in which the dancing body is produced, i.e. the corporeal poetics of the work, to borrow Godard’s term (in Louppe, 1996), the ways in which intertextual references are constructed in relation to written texts and other symbolic systems such as gestural language, dance techniques and conventions of dance performance, and the materiality which arises from the concrete histories of the bodies and narratives involved.
The success of this undertaking relies on the extent to which these elements can be woven together on paper into a multifaceted, interrelated web of meaning. That is to say, the successful creation of a functional dance-writing machine depends upon the ability to relate these elements not causally or linearly, as if they were all underwritten by a singular ideological formulation, but to create a cluster of interrelated meanings that seems, like the dance, to hang in the air around you after you’ve read it.

The exegesis is structured in four parts. Part 1 addresses the ways in which dance has been understood as subjective in the contexts of modern, postmodern, and new dance over the last century. The problems which arise in applying these historical understandings of dance as a subjective practice to my own dances, which are concerned with foregrounding unique bodies and the possibility of unique dancing subjectivities, are also identified. Part 2 considers the ways in which a Deleuze and Guattarian understanding of subjectivity is able to accommodate these difficulties. Part 3 traces the diverse, and in some cases philosophically incompatible, ways in which subjectivity was explored in the process of making the dances. In particular, the possibility of a disjuncture in the dances between the inevitable intertextuality of bodies and dances, and the unrepresentability of unique, individuals dancing, is examined.

Part 4 re-maps the dances using a Deleuze and Guattarian framework. The result is constructed as four distinct ‘desiring machines’ or, as Deleuze and Guattari also term them, deliriums, based on each of the four dances. The desiring machines go beyond the dances themselves in that they are not translations or explanations of the dances, but assemblages in which the dances are plugged into aspects of theory and vice versa.

Deleuze and Guattari emphasize the productive nature of the desiring machine. That is to say, a desiring machine isn’t a reproduction or tracing of existing ideologies but a map that winds its way between sometimes harmonious and sometimes conflicting elements of subjectivity. The written desiring machines I have produced by assembling writing and dancing are similarly productive in that they do not articulate pre-existing ideologies either from dance theory or from the dances themselves, but construct a new line of flight which connects elements of
both with the specificity of particular dance performances. They combine overtly subjective viewpoints, inspirations for and interpretations of the dances, along with overtly philosophical and theoretical positions developed in and through the dances. I use poetic language interspersed with analytical writing to subvert the idea that any one form of writing can represent the dances, and I constantly develop perspectives that suggest interpretations of the dances only to undercut them by subsequently explaining the ways in which the dances escape the confines of these analyses.

From a methodological standpoint, what I've done is to position both the dancing and the exegesis as part of a larger desiring machine about dance. The production of this desiring machine, an assemblage of thinking in and about dance in relation to the production of subjectivity, constitutes the research for this thesis. The outcomes are twofold. The first outcome is a new way of understanding the production of subjectivity in dances based on Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of the rhizomic structure of the unconscious, and the construction of desiring machines. The second outcome is the desiring machines themselves in which the four dances are plugged into various subjective and theoretical perspectives to produce lines of flight connecting theoretical issues about bodies and meaning in dance with the historical specificity of the dance events.

This methodology represents a significant departure from the standard practice exegesis model, whereby new knowledge and insight is understood to be produced in the process of art-making and then articulated in a less ambiguous way in the exegesis. The methodology of this thesis has been to re-situate the notion of embodied knowledge in relation to written text, and this re-situating is also one of the outcomes of my work. This constitutes a refusal to allow the written exegesis to speak on behalf of the dance work. Instead, both dance and writing are positioned as diverse theoretical practices that function together to produce an understanding of danced subjectivity that is not completely defined by either. The meanings embedded in the dance works shift in response to the writing and the written theory is reinterpreted by the immediacy of the dance performance.

This leads to two significant outcomes. The first is a refusal to consider dance and theory in a dualistic manner. The methodology I have used serves to emphasize the fluidity that is possible between dance and theory, while respecting their inherent differences and points of disjunction, and without reducing either one to the other.
believe that this is an important consideration given the legacy of mind–body
dualism in Western thought, in which the body has been assumed to be incapable of
contributing to intellectual discourse.

The second is a refusal to allow the ideologically divergent and heterogeneous
elements of my dance practice to be funneled into an artificial paradigm that
assumes closure and unification of purpose. My contention is that to do that would
be to lose what can be uniquely produced in dance by virtue of dance’s very ability
to assemble radically different categories of things; bodies, gestural languages,
dance conventions, narratives and textual references, into a productive assemblage
which is only ultimately meaningful in its entirety.

The pursuit of these two outcomes has led to a significantly longer exegesis than is
usual, because it has necessitated a detailed discussion of three independent areas of
thought: the history of subjectivity in C20th dance, the philosophy of Deleuze and
Guattari, and the aesthetic and philosophical underpinnings of my own
choreographic practice. I believe however, that these outcomes justify the length.
Dance is a relatively young research discipline, and the practice exegesis model,
which situates choreography as a primary site and method of investigation, is even
younger.6 It is therefore appropriate that considerable attention be paid to the
development of a methodology that preserves the primacy and integrity of the
dances in the presence of written analysis.7

Overlaid over the whole project is the impact of the subjective voice. The diverse
elements of subjectivity through which I construct myself as a choreographer, a
performer, and a theorist, can be perceived as weaving actively through the texts of
both the dance and the exegesis. This serves to situate both dancing and writing
about dance as subjective activities structured by desire as much as, if not more than,
by ideology. This is in fact the heart of the project as a whole: to find a place for
the subjective, and specifically the uniquely subjective, body/mind/voice, in both
dancing and in thinking about dancing.

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1 See John Martin’s now famous statement, “The modern dance is not a system; it is a point of
view” (Martin 1933, p.20). This statement allowed him to make sense of the diversity of modern
dance practices, for example those of Graham, Humphrey and Wigman, as a genre, while maintaining the primacy of individual vision.

\(^5\) See Cunningham (1985, pp.81–82) where he explains his use of chance (tossing a coin) as a way of circumventing both his usual movement preferences, and his understanding of what movements can be done.

I find this, time and again. When I give workshops, with students, the two questions they ask concerning the chance procedures are: 'If something comes up that you don't like, what do you do about it?' My answer to that has always been that I would accept and deal with what came up. And if they ask 'If something comes up that you can't do, then what do you do?' I explain that I would always try it, because the mind will say you can't do it, but more often than not you can, or you see another way, and that's what's amazing (Cunningham 1985, p.81).

\(^3\) See, for example Banes' (1980b, p.60) discussion of Steve Paxton's Satisfyin Lover (1967), in which a large group of people, not necessarily trained dancers, walk from one diagonal to another, stopping to stand or sit according to a score.

\(^4\) See the preface to the 1995/96 Summer issue of Writings on Dance, in which Elizabeth Dempsyter identifies 'new dance' as a genre to be distinguished from ballet, modern dance and late twentieth century postmodern dance. New dance is characterized by a curiosity about interrelationships between moving, sensing, feeling and thinking and implicates a range of therapeutic body techniques such as Release technique, Alexander and Ideokinetics as well as Eastern in-body disciplines such as T'ai Chi Chuan, Aikido and Hatha Yoga.

It is this sense that I use the term in this exegesis. The term 'new dance' has also been used in relation to German modern dance of the early C20th. Dempster's use of the term arises from its use to describe experimental dance of the 1970's and early 1980's in Britain (Jordan 1982, 1992). The practices she describes under this banner share a common concern with the exploration of physicality through alternative means to conventional ballet and modern dance techniques. Her use of the term 'new dance' differentiates this work from the more blanket label of 'postmodern dance', which is a problematic category in that it now includes an enormous variety of work and its meaning in relation to dance is still widely debated.

\(^5\) I am using the term 'postmodern dance' here in its historical sense, rather than in a strictly philosophical sense. The meaning of postmodernism in dance has been widely debated, with several opposing viewpoints put forward. See for example the debate between Manning (1988) and Banes (1989). While agreement about the nature of the 'crisis of representation' and increasing absence of a hegemonic 'centre' has not been clear (Thomas 1996), it is possible to speak about dance as postmodern in an historical sense, after Banes' (1994) model, in referring to dance which falls outside clearly modern (in the sense that modern dance was modern) paradigms. In this sense, postmodern dance takes in the work of many of the Judson Church choreographers, as well as later work by a diverse range of choreographers such as Tharp, Brown, Jones, Morris, among many others, which focuses on eclecticism and self-reflexivity.

\(^6\) See Part 2, pp.75–80 for a fuller explanation of rhizomic structures.

\(^7\) I am specifically referring to my own choreographic work here because I am deliberately constructing the analysis of my work on the basis that it is a Deleuzian desiring machine. A full examination of the wider issue of whether it is possible and appropriate to understand all dance works as desiring machines is beyond the scope of this work. I would be tempted to argue that it is not only possible but desirable to understand all dance works in this fashion to avoid the myriad and well documented issues of translating and reducing dance to other (usually written) cultural texts. The very act of imposing a prescriptive model for understanding dance works however, in itself contradicts the idea that dance works/desiring machines are by nature heterogeneous and construct themselves into different and not always even internally consistent epistemological frameworks.
8 There have been only two PhD's in dance by practice and exegesis completed at Australian Universities to date.
9 The extended length of this exegesis was ratified and recommended by the candidature committee at Deakin University in 1997 for these reasons.
PART 1
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

1.1 Introduction

This chapter is about setting the context within which my work operates. My concern with the production of subjectivity in my dances is played out within the contexts of both modern dance, and of dance traditions that have been influenced by postmodern and poststructuralist ideas. These contexts carry inherent tensions in that the nature of subjectivity and the production of the dancing self have been practiced and understood in very different and often contradictory terms in these contexts. In this chapter, I will examine how the dancing subject has been conceptualised and choreographically produced within these conflicting philosophical contexts, with particular emphasis on the ways in which the production of subjectivity in dance has been understood as a process of representation.

This emphasis is necessary because the issue of the relationship between subjectivity and representation is crucial in theorizing my choreographic practice. When the idea of danced subjectivity as a representative (or linguistic) process is examined, it becomes clear that this approach is unable to account fully for the role of the unique dancing body in my work. It is this failure that forms the basis of my consideration of the theoretical perspectives of Deleuze and Guttari as an alternative means of theorizing my work.

My work is predicated on the unique history and structure of my body, both in the way in which the movement is constructed, and in the narrative references made to this situation in Kim's Style Guide for the Kinaesthetic Boffin. My choreography functions linguistically and intertextually. That is, elements of the
dancing have meaning by virtue of their reference to dance-specific conventions of dance technique and choreographic forms, and to non-dance-specific sign systems such as literary, narrative and gestural conventions. Thus, the work functions as a statement of self that is played out through the development of a consistent movement style and through the use of autobiographical material. This could be interpreted as a representation of my "self" in movement. Paradoxically, however, a nomadic quality is also created in the dances, by shifts in context and frame of reference within movement phrases and between sections of dances. This property of subtle and not so subtle shifting of frame tends to subvert the presentation of a stable and cohesive sense of "self". The way in which this nomadic quality is constructed in and of itself, however, gives rise to a sense of an authorial signature. This results in an ambiguous mix in which identity is simultaneously defined and asserted, qualified and refuted.

I perceive, however, in addition to this intertextual function, a disjunction in my dances between the production of a representation of "self" through inscriptive and linguistic means, and the possibility of a uniquely subjective position produced by the physical specificity of the (my) body.

It is unproblematic to place the intertextuality of my dances, their references to the conventions of modern dance movement vocabularies and compositional forms, external literary texts, and other culturally mediated systems of meaning, in context with respect to the dance literature. As the following discussion will demonstrate, dance has commonly been theorized, in both modern and postmodern dance contexts, as a representative system that can be interpreted and read within a network of culturally mediated systems of meaning.

My concern to foreground the individuality of my own dancing body, however, raises issues that are more difficult to address using the framework of dance-as-language. The presence of a physically unique dancing body raises the question of whether any set of sign systems, however multiplicious or intertextual, can
fully define the material specificity of that body. This is a difficult question. Can anything that cannot be represented by, or translated into, culturally shared sign systems said to *be* meaningful? On the other hand, however, to assume that what cannot be represented cannot be significant is also problematic because it limits dance and body/selves to the extant systems by which it/they are understood to mean, thereby excluding any possibility of change.

The following discussion engages this issue through an examination of some of the ways in which danced subjectivity has been understood throughout the last century. I have confined the discussion to the dominant ideas extant in the literature, which have for the most part been written in response to the work of the most famous modern and postmodern dance artists. This is not to preclude the existence of alternative viewpoints but represents a focus on the dominant paradigms through which subjectivity has been understood in these dance contexts, which have been pervasive in influencing choreographers including myself.

I will begin by examining approaches in dance theory and practice that deal with dance as inevitably linguistic in nature. I will then examine the problems this entails for the physical uniqueness of the dancing subject and explore alternative approaches that may offer a better accommodation of the issue of physical difference as it arises in my practice.

### 1.2 Dance as a Symbolic System

For most of the twentieth century, dance theory has taken a fundamentally linguistic approach. All movements, all gestures, carry culturally attributed connotations and associations which enable them to be read as signifiers. While the specificity and fixity of meaning between movement signifiers and the objects or concepts they signify may be understood as complex, multivalent, or unstable,
the existence of those connections, however complex, implies that dance is always at least potentially a linguistic structure.

Much dance analysis has therefore focused on dance as a representative practice, that is, how dance can be read as a text, what is being represented and how its systems of representation are structured. Units of movement, choreographic structures, along with variables such as venue, costuming, advertising, staging and casting become signifiers that refer to objects and concepts outside the dance. Dance analysis then becomes an attempt to articulate the representative systems by which dance functions as a language.

In the modern dance tradition, forged during the first decades of the last century, the representative structure of dance was largely theorized as symbolic. Movement and choreographic structures were understood as symbolic materials that can be manipulated to produce a representation. This kind of representation is sourced from the individual choreographer's experience, but is ultimately distanced from that source through the process of abstraction. That is, subjectivity as it may be produced or experienced in real time by a dancer or choreographer, is separated out from the symbolic 'expression' of subjectivity which is embedded in the choreographic form of the dance. Subjectivity is understood in this schema as something to be abstracted and re-presented through symbolic forms. Mark Franko describes this understanding of the production of subjectivity in modern dance as

... a defamiliarization of bodily emotion through the primitive, mechanical, or futuristic sources of movement and the return of expression, once emotion is expunged, as a depersonalised ("universal") embodiment of subjectivity. Choreography is thought to organize movement as an absolute 'self-speaking' material. Movement itself becomes a modernist object (Franko 1995, pp.x–xi).
Working within this perspective, early twentieth century dance theorists tended to focus on the mechanisms by which symbolic representations could be produced in dance. Suzanne Langer, for example, identified the primary image in dance as a representation of force. In her schema,

...what we see when we watch a dance is a display of interacting forces; not physical forces, like the weight that tips a scale or the push that topples a column of books, but purely apparent forces that seem to move the dance itself. Two people in a pas de deux seem to magnetize each other; a group appears to be animated by one single spirit, one Power. The stuff of the dance, the apparition itself, consists of such non-physical forces, drawing and driving, holding and shaping its life. The actual physical forces that underlie it disappear. As soon as the beholder sees gymnastics and arrangements, the work of art breaks, and the creation fails (Langer 1980, p.345).

Most importantly, for Langer, this force and its attendant association with feelings of personal power or powerlessness were virtual not actual. A dancer did not dance as a result of actual, spontaneous or real time emotions, but created a dance, a symbolic system, which re-presented those experiences in a processed, logical way, "...presenting feeling to our intellect through an artistic symbol" (Langer 1953, p.182).

Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, building on Langer's work, developed a phenomenological account of the mechanisms of representation in dance. Using phenomenological accounts of the structure of the 'human consciousness-body' from Sartre (1956) and Merleau-Ponty (1961), Sheets-Johnstone argued that human consciousness is inherently spatial and temporal. The 'consciousness-body' is constituted in time as an internally synthesized position in the midst of past, present and future. Similarly and simultaneously, the 'consciousness-body' is also constituted in space, as a spatial totality 'in-the-midst-of-the-world' (Sheets Johnstone 1979, pp.16–22). Since dance, from a phenomenological
perspective, must be apprehended by consciousness, the primary illusions in
dance must also be constituted in terms of time and space.\textsuperscript{6}

For Sheets-Johnstone, as for Langer, the ‘expressive’ nature of the dance is
virtual.\textsuperscript{7} The dancer

\ldots is not expressing herself but rather, communicating forms of human feeling
through a symbolic representation\ldots The dancer intuits her movement as a perpetual
revelation of sheer force which is spatially unified and temporally continuous—as
sheer form in the making. And her intuition of the import of that form is the same
as that of the audience (Sheets-Johnstone 1979, p.71).\textsuperscript{8}

John Martin’s theorization of modern dance took a slightly different approach to
theorizing the mechanism by which dance became representative. He proposed
that dance communicated through a process he called ‘metakinesis’, wherein
movement conveys meaning through the question, what would I (the spectator)
be feeling/thinking/being, if I were moving in the way that the dancer is? He
wrote:

\begin{quote}
Any movement, no matter how far removed from normal experience, still conveys
an impression that is related to normal experience. There is a kinaesthetic response
in the body of the spectator that to some extent reproduces in him the experience of
the dancer; if the dancer performs some movement without the motivation of inner
compulsion, the spectator will experience no inner responsiveness (Martin 1933,
p.48).
\end{quote}

Martin’s system of metakinesis is interesting in that it introduces an increased
level of ambivalence and uncertainty into the representative system through
which dances are made. For many of the modern dance choreographers, there
was an underlying assumption that the symbolic system a choreographer creates
to express their vision will be understood. Although the system may be, even
must be, new for each dance, it must rely on universally understood conventions of meaning. For example, Doris Humphrey wrote:

It is axiomatic that every emotion has a concomitant movement, and it is the business of the dancer and the choreographer to find out what these movements are in the specific problem at hand; they will only be convincing if they bear the mark of truth (Humphrey 1959, p.119).9

This approach is based on a universalist conception of the way movement is connected to emotion, meaning and subjectivity. There is an assumption, inherent in this insistence on the legibility of movement, that common kinaesthetic, experiential, and, by extension, social, cultural and political, common ground exists which an artist might put to use.

Mark Franko, in his analysis of Martha Graham’s practice of the 1930’s10, suggests that the situation of the dancer as representative of a universal subjectivity was actively produced and cultivated through the placement of ‘legible’ (universally recognisable) gesture and movement dynamics within choreographic structures which refused specific, narrative or dramatic contexts. Franko argues that Graham’s expressive concerns were played out through a refusal of narrative structure and of flow, which served to desubjectify her dancing body, so that it could be interpreted as a universally applicable symbol.

There was, and still is, something irritating about the convergence and concentration of social and psychic concerns into the body which characterizes thirties modern dance. The body becomes a ‘whole’ whose relevance to a totalising array of concerns is indicted paradoxically by the rigid reduction of dancing to physical presence, its elimination of narrative, and paring down to movement “essentials”. It was as if the more the body were confined within these minimalist ascetic limits, the more it might conduct a totality of “naked” significance. In order to open itself to this semiotization, the body must become ‘desubjectified’ (Franko 1995, p.50).
Martin’s (1933) system of metakinesis contains an inherent challenge to the idea of universally legible dance, because in Martin’s schema dance movement communicates through reference to each individual viewer’s neuromuscular and kinaesthetic history. Each viewer interprets a dancer’s movement in relation to their own history of movement and the associations raised by that history. Ironically, Martin was a clear advocate of the universal communicability of dance, in that he believed good dance must be legible on the basis of culturally shared understandings of the emotional significance of movement (Martin 1933, p.43). His theory of metakinesis, however, implies the possibility of a fully-fledged corporeal relativism, even if he did not himself articulate such a position. If each viewer interprets dance movement from their own material, historical, subjectivist position, then no universally understood ‘meaning’ or indeed ‘subjectivity’ can be attributed to the dance.\textsuperscript{11}

Leaving aside, however, the complications of Martin’s view\textsuperscript{12}, the common factor in the approaches of Martin, Langer and Sheets-Johnstone is that the dynamic, spatial and temporal aspects of dance movement, and the abstraction of gesture, were seen by modern dance choreographers and theorists to form the basis of a system of symbolic representation in dance. Numerous examples, from both dance theorists and choreographers, can be found in which this focus on the formal qualities of movement, space, time and force, as the means by which dance functions as a symbolic system, is apparent.\textsuperscript{13} The idea that the formal qualities of movement form the basis of the representative nature of the dance has since become entrenched in discussions and understandings of modern dance, allowing Ann Daly to write, in relation to Isadora Duncan’s practice: “Today we take for granted the expressive potential of these formal means of movement, but in Duncan’s day, they were revolutionary” (1992, p.252).

In the modern dance tradition, the privileged representations crafted in movement were of the choreographer’s experience. If not always exactly a representation of
a choreographer's subjectivity, modern dance was commonly understood to function as serious art to the extent that it was born of individual choreographer's experiences. In the work of modern dance choreographers such as Graham and Humphrey interiority is understood as the true source of dance.\textsuperscript{14}

Where the classic decadence was a machine that manufactured nothing, and the romantic revolution was an attempt to manufacture something without a machine—to express something outside and about oneself, the modern dance has arisen to manufacture something with a highly perfected machine—to express only what is in and of one's own experience, transformed and lifted out of the commonplace and the personal by the very process of artistic creation, of aesthetic form (Martin 1933, p.30).

The concern with the creation of an appropriate aesthetic form to express this interior experience, however, ensures that interiority is not directly accessible to the viewer through the act of dancing. A mediating symbolic system, the composed dance, is necessary to convey the choreographer's experience to an audience. The dual test of an artwork in this context is authenticity and legibility or clarity of expression. Martin, followed by other modern dance advocates,\textsuperscript{15} put forward a historically developmental view of modern dance in which romantic 'experiments' by artists such as Duncan and St Denis were situated as the preliminary steps towards a truly symbolic dance which could be considered a serious art practice. He wrote about Duncan and St Denis,

\ldots in the entire romantic movement, which if we interpret it in its strict sense has been of surprisingly brief duration, there was no essential form discovered in which to express the new spirit. The new wine, poured into old or inadequate bottles, burst the bottles and was lost (Martin 1933, p.5–6).

Martin obviously intends to privilege modern dance as the site at which form and content meet. He sees it as the fulfilment of the ideals of romanticism. Modern dance
... has set itself positively against the artifice of the classic ballet, making its chief aim the expression of an inner compulsion; but it has also seen the necessity for vital forms for this expression, and indeed has realised the aesthetic value of form in and of itself as an adjunct to this expression (Martin 1933, p.6).

In this understanding of dance as expressive only through the construction of form, the interior experience of the performer, in the moment of dancing, is significant only to the extent that it becomes a means of accurately generating the movement as it has been choreographed. There is no necessity for real, or actual, self-expression on the part of the dancer, because feelings and emotions have been constructed into the form and structure of the dance. In Sheets-Johnstone’s terms, “The import of a dance is the pure phenomenon of joy, fear, or whatever, united to any actual situational context, separate from any every day life affective consciousness, symbolically presented through a sheer form of feeling.” (Sheets-Johnstone 1979, p.64). Subjectivity in dance that is symbolic is virtual, not actual. The real ‘self’ of the choreographer is not on display, but rather, an abstraction of the choreographer’s experience.

The moving body, in this scenario, means nothing in and of itself. It is only significant in terms of what it can communicate.

No artwork can ever be directed to the senses or received by them; the senses are merely the channels through which the inner perception — the Europeans call it the ‘soul’ — establishes contacts with the material symbols which constitute the external universe. To try to ‘appreciate’ these material symbols as entities in themselves is as vain as to try to spend a dollar mark. The colour of the paint on the canvas, the sound of the bow on the strings, the words on the page, have no power in themselves to produce an aesthetic response (Martin 1933, p.67).
Similarly, Langer wrote that "...the physical materials of a dance do not have any direct similarity to the structure of emotive life; it is the created image that has elements and patterns like the life of feeling" (1980 p.344).\(^6\)

The view that dance is an expression of inner experience, crafted into a symbolic form that is distanced from the dancer who makes and dances it, leads to an uneasy tension. The concern for distance between the actual, material, physical actions of the dancer and the experiences being 'expressed' (symbolically represented) in an appropriately crafted form is problematic, because it invokes a discontinuity between the symbol and the moving body. If dance is symbolically expressive, the dancer must dance the symbol, not what she actually feels or experiences when she dances. If the choreography calls for strong weight\(^1\), for example, she must apply strong weight to the movement, regardless of whether strong weight resonates with her experience of being in the world at that moment.

This is problematic in relation to the way a danced symbolic representation is produced, i.e. corporeally. The dancer must physically embody the spatial, temporal and dynamic demands of the expressive symbol, but to suggest that a dancer employ a radical split between meaning and movement, experiencing one corporeal existence while expressing in movement a different one, goes against the very thrust of the modern dance project, the production of emotional 'truth'. Graham's famous statement, "...movement never lies" (cited in Foster 1986, p.28) is rendered meaningless if the dancer in fact has to lie corporeally, that is, to pretend to experience physical sensations she doesn't feel, perhaps only remembers feeling, or perhaps has never experienced.

Mark Franko, in his discussion of modern dance, highlights this issue in relation to Isadora Duncan. The inner self, the source of movement, being a physical place, (for Duncan the solar plexus) immediately problematizes the boundaries between inner self and outer expression.
In direct contact with the 'source', itself wedded to the source, the solar plexus may have been inner but was not absent. Rather, it put her audience in direct and unmediated contact with meaning 'in person' (Franko 1995, p.2).

The presence of the physical, moving body complicates the nature of symbolic representation in dance because it inserts, at the site of the expressive act, the material body of the dancer. While this body can and does 'mean', it may not mean the same things that the dance is purporting to 'express'. This slippage may be accounted for as bad dancing, bad choreography, or both, except for the emphasis the modern dancers themselves placed on the authenticity of corporeal sensation in the act of dancing. Graham, for example, wrote that

In life, heightened nerve sensitivity produces that concentration in the instant that is true living. In dance, this sensitivity produces action timed to the present movement. It is the result of a technique for revelation of experience (Graham 1980, p.46).

It seems that while pushing the dancing body away from the symbolic essence of the dance, there is a tension in modern dance arising from the simultaneous emphasis, born right at the heart of modern dance, in the 'discovery' of Isadora Duncan of the source of movement in her own body, on the corporeal awareness of the dancer's actual moving body as the source of meaning. If the interior experiences that formed the source of modern dance could have been translated into a different medium, this tension would not have existed. But by translating the source back into the source, the body, the modern dancers ensured that their symbolic representations would never be fully independent of their material, real time and corporeal presence. Mark Franko, in discussing Graham's work and its relation to Greenbergian modernism, suggests that

Because dance is an art of living bodies, it already has presence on its side; that is, dance has an unorthodox perspective on representation as presentation built into it. Modern dance works its way further out of mediacy and toward immediacy by
jettisoning specified emotional content, its clearest anchor to representation. Nevertheless, transposing painterly definitions of abstract expressionism to dance is difficult because the body itself maintains a literal relation to the world regardless of any particular choreographic program imposed upon it (Franko 1995, p.157–8).

The effect of the material body, and the way in which the dancer is aware of material sensation in the act of dancing, is to make problematic a purely symbolic, representative understanding of dance, even in relation to the modern dance artists whose work was most clearly theorized (and discussed by the artists themselves) in these terms. Balanced against this, however, is the pervasiveness of the idea that dance is and should be symbolically representative and not immediately self expressive within the dance literature. So persuasive has this rhetoric been, that there has been little explicit discussion of the tension it produces in relation to the primacy of physical sensation in actually producing and performing dance. Some dance writers (Siegal, 1988; Jowitt, 1997; Alter 1991; Jordan 1996b; Theodores 1996) have been concerned to counter what they saw as an over emphasis on interpreting dance works in terms of discourses outside dance. These writers have called for an emphasis on direct description of movement as an integral part of both analysis and theory. This call, in its formalist context, can be read as an indirect gesture towards valuing the sensual quality of moving over and above its communicative import, and thus indirectly can gesture towards an appreciation of the moving body in and of itself18. Apart from Franko’s work, however, there has been little explicit discussion of the tension between dance as symbol and dance as a material, corporeal action, in relation to modern dance.

Instead, the tension between the materiality of the dancing body and the symbolic representation of interiority modern dance has sought to create, has been historicized as a sudden and radical shift towards foregrounding the material body, brought about by the work of Merce Cunningham. Rather than examining this tension as something that has existed within the modern dance genre from the
beginning, it has been explained by means of a progressivist historiography in which the significance of the material body in the production of danced subjectivity has been understood to arise only with Cunningham's practice (Franko 1995, p.51–72).

1.3 Dance as an Intertextual System

The advent of intertextual approaches to dance analysis, which has taken place over the last two decades, has provided a means of examining the presence of the material, physical body in dance practice. In intertextual approaches to dance analysis, which have largely been written after the interventions of Cunningham and the Judson choreographers, the materiality of the body is understood as a system of signs by which the body 'means', which can be read as one of many layers of a dance. In this scenario, materiality and interior physical sensation are interpreted through the cultural conventions by which bodies are coded. The materiality of the body as a site of meaning is foregrounded, but can co-exist with more explicitly representational, dramatic or narrative aspects of dance in a complex array of overlapping sign systems (Adshead-Lansdale 1996, pp.54–55, 1999; Adshead et al 1988; Thomas 1995, pp.15–16; Thomas 1996, p.69; Cohen 1982, p.341).

This understanding of the way in which meaning is constructed in dance is significantly different to the model of symbolic representation argued by the early modern dance theorists. Langer (1980, pp.343–344) and Sheets-Johnston (1979, pp.59–62) articulated an understanding of symbolic form that was not linguistic, in a structuralist sense. That is, the symbol, as opposed to the sign, is not arbitrarily related to its referent. A symbol is not completely arbitrary, but bears some inherent relationship to what it represents. Martin (1933, p.11–12) argued that art, and specifically dance, is the means by which experience or knowledge that cannot yet be formulated within a scientific, rational, framework, is first
articulated. Dance is the form by which an artist is able to articulate what is inarticulable in that particular historical context. As such, it implies an intuitive link between experience and symbol. The symbol is not already agreed, does not already have cultural currency, as does a sign. The symbol, for Martin, is newly created by the choreographer by an intuitive leap into the previously unarticulated. For Sheets-Johnstone (1979), there is a connection between what is being expressed, and the form of the dance, so that

...the expressive form is a symbolic form by virtue of its logical congruity with forms of actual feeling, and by virtue of the import it reflects in and of itself through its organized sensuous surface (Sheets-Johnstone 1979, p.84).

The symbolic nature of dance, in Martin and Sheets-Johnstone’s arguments, is what makes its creativity possible. If a dance merely re-produced existing signs (language) for concepts which have already been understood in rational and scientific terms, then nothing new could be articulated. Dance’s creativity, and for Martin and Sheets-Johnstone, its import, lies in the ability of a choreographer to intuit a previously unarticulated (irrational, and hence inexplicable) experience or feeling and to create a form which is structurally similar enough to the experience to allow viewers of the dance to perceive the feeling which is being symbolized. The process of symbolization in dance thus proceeds by the invention of new movement forms that are capable of expressing the previously unexpressed.

In intertextual approaches to dance analysis, there is a decisive shift from the idea of dance as a symbolic form to the idea of dance as a system of signs. A sign, as opposed to a symbol, is arbitrarily related to its signifier, the relationship between the two being determined by social convention rather than by any inherent structural relationship between the two. Julia Kristeva, describing this shift in relation to language described the symbol as “…the absolute, vertical linkage
between the signifier and the vast (transcendent, universal) idea behind it”, whereas the sign

...no longer refers back to the vast ‘idea’ behind it, but instead becomes opaque, ‘materialized’ and identifies with itself. Its vertical dimension begins to lose intensity, as its possible articulations with other signifying units are accentuated (Kristeva 1986b, pp.66–67).

The method of dance analysis developed by Janet Adshead et al (1988), illustrates this kind of intertextual approach. Adshead et al propose a system of overlapping and interrelated sign systems operating within dances. These systems are articulated as categories, which can be applied across a broad range of dance practices.\(^{19}\) The categories are arranged hierarchically. The first layer consists of the ‘components’ of a dance, which are movement, dancers, visual settings, and aural settings. Each of these components functions as a system of meaning governed by particular conventions. Movement, for example, is selected from the range of movement considered meaningful in relation to the cultural situation of the dancer and the type of dance they are involved in. Adshead quotes anthropologist Adrienne Kaeppler: “...only a small segment of all possible movements are significant in any dance tradition” (in Adshead et al 1988, p.25). In the context of the tradition the dance operates in, the choreographer defines a subset of movements that function as a system of reference specific to the dance. The task of analysis of the movement component of the work is to determine “...what kind of movement is typical and how is it patterned in time and space to produce the distinctive style of a choreographer or genre of dance” within the confines of the dance genre and tradition the choreographer works in (Adshead in Adshead et al 1988, p.24).

The other components of a dance similarly function as systems of meaning. Dancers are significant in relation to their age, sex, number and role, and in relation to their identity in the wider community. Visual settings contribute
meaning in relation to the specific visual art conventions they reference, and aural
settings contribute significance in relation to the musical or spoken languages

The relationships between these components, how they are related to each other
at each moment in the dance and how these relationships change as the dance
unfolds, produce the structure of the dance which takes the form of a complex
web of intertextual relationships within and between the elements of the dance
(Adshead in Adshead et al 1988, pp.41–54). This structure is then interpreted as
meaningful in relation to broader systems of reference within which it and the
analyst operate; socio–cultural background, context, genre and style and subject

This system of analysis replaces particular sets of conventions of meaning based
on the formal elements of dance, such as Langer’s and Martin’s, with broader
categories of sign systems within which the particular conventions relevant to
specific cultures and dance practices can be invoked. Dance is analysed, through
a process of interpretation, in relation to the appropriate conventions of genre and
"...genres and styles provide tradition and conventions in relation to which, and
through which, dances can be created, performed and appreciated" (Hodgens in
Adshead et al 1988, p.75).

The conventions of meaning, the symbolic codes through which dance is
interpreted, are not distinct, separate, unified systems which apply neatly to
specific types of dance practice, but overlap with and rely upon frames of
reference outside the world of the dance. In Adshead-Lansdale’s view, the

...idea of a network of overlapping characteristics, shared across dance styles in a
complex manner, opened up for more sophisticated analysis what might otherwise
be thought of as distinctly different, hermetically sealed, forms of dance expression
This shift distances dance from any notion of a univalent or universal communicative code and posits in its place a complex series of interrelated sign systems. The complex web of signifying codes constructed within a dance defies any one explanation or interpretation. Emphasis is then displaced from the idea of a correct or definitive analysis of a dance to the validity of multiple analyses, which are as much influenced by the cultural inscription of the analyst as by those of the choreographer or performers. This leads to a dance theory in which univalent codes constructed from the formal qualities of movement, associated with early modern dance, are replaced by a more polyvalent and intertextual understanding of dance as meaningful only in relationship to a complex web of signifying codes. It further places the understanding of dance firmly in its social and cultural context. Meaning is generated through the socially agreed conventions by which dances, and dancers' bodies, are read, and any inherent connection between the sign and its referent is coincidental.

This is a structuralist position. In relation to language, the structuralist approach, developed from Saussure's linguistic arguments, is that words are assigned to culturally shared concepts rather than real objects, and represent the way particular cultures divide up the world conceptually rather than any essential truth or meaning. Thus language is a culturally constructed system with no essential core of meaning arising from the physical world. Further, meaning can only arise in relation to the way the language is constructed as a whole system and not from individual words. In Saussure's words,

Language is a system of interdependent terms in which the value of each term results solely from the simultaneous presence of the others... In language there are only differences. The actual sound has no inherent value – only what is agreed, its place in the language (Saussure 1996, p.10).
In the context of dance, cultural contexts, conventions of movement vocabularies and choreographic structures function as systems of meaning and individual acts or movements are only significant in relation to the system as a whole. As Selma Jean Cohen argues, "...no movement in and by itself is independently distinguishable as dance apart from its role in a system of relationships that give substance to otherwise insignificant materials" (Cohen 1982, p.34).

The implication of this approach for the dancing body is that movements can only signify concepts that have cultural currency within extant sign systems. They cannot signify a 'real' or 'true' body that exists outside or alienated from culture. When the dancing body is understood in this way, it cannot function as a sign for the identity or interiority of the choreographer and/or performer except to the extent that that 'interiority' is itself a culturally mediated concept of the self. An individual self cannot be signified in such a system. Only the extent notions of the self inscribed in particular dance 'languages' can be designated. Neither can the dancing body even be considered a single sign for such a "self". The dancing body as a language or system of representation must be considered as a site of intersection for multiple systems of signs and may have different meanings in different systems.

Susan Foster's work, which was arguably the first and most influential poststructuralist approach to dance theory, uses this approach to construct an analysis of the way in which subjectivity is produced in the work of four prominent American dance artists. Drawing on the work of Roland Barthes, she argues that discursive dance practices constitute the dancing subject (Foster 1986, p.237). That is, the dancing subject is created by choreographic codes. Choreographic codes do not 'represent' a 'natural', underlying body or subject. "Once the body, the subject, and the expressive act have been 'de-naturalized', then dance can be examined explicitly as a system of codes and conventions that support its meaning" (Foster 1986, p.xviii).
Foster constructs a complex series of choreographic conventions through which the process of construction of the dancing subject in the work of different choreographers can be articulated. Thus in Foster’s analysis, Graham produces herself and her dancers as representative of “internal feelings, thoughts, and desires,” (Foster 1986, p.43) by means of choreographic structures which emphasize imitation of emotional characteristics within a larger replicative framework signifying the dynamic relationships between events, characters and emotions.

Martha Graham expresses the essential dynamics of the human condition through her dances. Her choreography explores a full range of human emotions and relationships between people, often by depicting a familiar group of mythical or cultural heroes whose circumstances and adventures suggest basic themes of human existence.... she is concerned with the characters’ inner experiences, their feelings toward one another, and their emotional responses to their situations. Her dances are designed to reveal an inner landscape, to illumine the 'cave of the heart' (Foster 1986, p.25).

Cunningham’s choreography, by contrast, produces his dancers as alert, articulate movers by means of a reflective (making reference primarily to the performance of movement and only obliquely to events outside the dance) mode of representation.

The dancers’ focus on the events occurring in the performance space and the composition of the movement itself direct the viewer back to the body moving in space and time. Dancers’ interactions usually emphasize the activity of moving. Men and women lift each other and touch each other as moving bodies. They do not approach one another as concrete objects, nor do they show a need to communicate some thought or emotion to one another. They are simply awake, alert, sensitive people moving (Foster 1986, p.76)."
In these descriptions, there can be no authentic, estranged corporeal subject upon which dance conventions are superimposed, since the nature of the dancing subject is in fact constructed by the conventions each choreographer establishes. The very diversity of the dance practices Foster analyses, in terms of the way they produce radically different dancing subjectivities, confirms her thesis. Danced subjectivity is not a given and does not rely on any underlying, essential subject, but is culturally constructed and mediated. Helen Thomas describes this kind of poststructuralist approach to subjectivity in the following way:

Central to poststructuralist thought ... is the critique of the human subject or cogito that was inscribed in Cartesianism and hitherto has dominated western cultural thought. The idea of the individual as a self-reflecting, rational, unified, fixed subject is rejected in favour of a dislocated, contradictory, fragmented subjectivity which is not fixed but is reconstituted in language on each and every occasion we speak (Thomas 1995, p.15).

This kind of analysis has gained considerable currency and influence in dance scholarship over the last fifteen years. Its implication is that corporeality, the body and its movement, becomes a sign system in and of itself, through which not only the meaning of a dance as ‘subjective’, but also the whole notion of a subjective, interior ‘self’ is in fact constructed. The body becomes a cause of interiority, not its result. The body then becomes significant in and of itself, independent of its capacity for symbolic ‘expression’ of an underlying (and now revealed as fictitious) interiority. The idea, associated with early modern dance paradigms, that the body is a mute instrument which only functions to transmit (express) the ideas of the mind and the feeling of the psychic landscape, is thus refuted in favour of an understanding of the body itself as a site of knowledge and understanding equal to and in fact coextant with the mind.

This view has been made possible by the work of Cunningham and the early postmodern choreographers of the Judson Church era, who presented the dancing body as an articulate medium in and of itself, capable of creating meaning.
through its own symbolic systems comprised of spatial and dynamic organization, rather than necessarily dependent on frames of reference outside dancing. In Foster’s words, such dancers

...refuse to let bodies be used merely as vehicles or instruments for the expression of something else. They acknowledge that bodies always gesture towards other fields of meaning, but at the same time instantiate both physical mobility and articulability (Foster 1996, p.xi).

This position situates dance as a way of knowing and making meaning which is an entirely equivalent alternative, if an under-represented and historically marginalised one, to any of the more widely recognized disciplines or cultural discourses. In relation to my choreographic practice, it allows the unproblematic discussion of intertextuality within the works. The conventions of dance techniques and physicality used, and the kinds of subject/bodies they produce, can be discussed in terms of the specific corporeal sign systems to which they refer both inside and outside the field of dance. Conventions of choreographic representation, meaning coded by means of abstract, dramatic or expressive mechanisms and references to other kinds of texts (postural, gestural, literary, theoretical etc.) or even by means of the deconstruction of these paradigms can be identified in the work and represented as its meaning.

The consequence of understanding dance as a signifying field through which the dancing subject is created, however, is that no meaning and no subjectivity can be produced beyond or outside the sign systems a dance uses. The dancing body cannot be understood except within pre-defined categories such as short/tall, thin/stout, trained/untrained, virtuosic/adequate. Only the representable is meaningful. For example, the degree of rotation of a leg within a dance movement is only meaningful in the conventions of ballet and modern dance technique within certain categories; a leg may be rotated out, parallel, or rotated in. A rotated leg is assumed to be rotated out or in to its fullest extent. The exact
degree of rotation is not significant except as a marker of the dancer’s technical ability. An obviously partially rotated leg signifies either poor execution by the dancer or the fact that the rotation of the leg is not significant to the moving and is ‘neutral’. The ‘meaning’ of such a leg in producing subjectivity reverts to non-dance specific codes for reading legs, e.g., thin/fat, long/short, muscular/flaccid. There is no way to ‘read’ a leg rotated out to, say, 37 degrees, as meaningful in and of itself.

When only the representable is meaningful in this way, the production of dancing subjectivity is confined to the recombination of existing signifiers of the dancing subject. The rotated leg, for example, serves to signify a subject who is a technically competent dancer, and to locate any expressive ‘content’ of the work within this frame of reference. Even in approaches to movement such as new dance or physical theatre which overtly refuse the dancer as conventionally virtuosic, the incomplete or indeterminate rotation of a leg can only define a dancing subjectivity in terms of opposition to the dominant genres, that is, by signifying what it is not. It cannot signify what it is.

This paradigm allows no space for the consideration of physical difference that may be outside the codes of meaning extant in particular dance genres. There is no possibility of meaning outside what is considered the norm in relation to specific dance practices. Bodies, or aspects of bodies, which are ‘outside’ in this way must remain mute and insignificant because they are unsignified in the dominant codes. This is problematic in that it means the atypical body cannot be addressed or understood. Unique physical bodies, while not exactly outside language, are incompletely described by it, and are incomprehensible except as signs of marginalisation.

This raises the question of how anything new happens in dance. If we are always confined to culturally mediated and significant ideas about the body, how do new choreographic practices that challenge the dominant dance codes come into being.
and how do they come to be significant? Even a brief look at the history of modern and postmodern dance and the work of radical choreographers such as Merce Cunningham, Trisha Brown and Yvonne Rainer indicates that new kinds of dance practice are constantly being produced which are at first radical and then become assimilated into a new mainstream of dance genres whose signifying codes are widely used and understood.

A strictly poststructuralist view of this phenomenon would be that these choreographers are simply working from culturally mediated understandings of their bodies that have not previously been applied to dance. They cannot be working from a position outside linguistic conventions of the body since no such positions can exist. Any individuality in such practices can only arise from the historical accident of particular kinds of (already culturally inscribed) bodies intersecting with dance at moments when the new formulations they come up with can be understood.

I find this view problematic because it allows no possibility for real change in the ways dancing bodies are understood, but only an endless shuffling of already dominating, imprinted and hegemonic codes. It is the same problem that has long been debated in feminist theory (Grosz 1994, 1995; Kristeva 1986a; Irigaray 1985b). If patriarchal systems structure our social institutions, our language, and our very understanding of what it is to be a subject, then how is it possible to produce a feminine subjectivity that is differently structured? If language is based on a male perspective that is then universalised (masked as ‘neutral’), then feminine experience cannot be represented except in masculine terms. Alternative, purely ‘feminine’ modes of writing or speaking developed as a response to this problem cannot be understood precisely because they do not conform to the conventions of language that allow legibility.

Hubert Godard’s approach to what he calls ‘corporeal poetics’ addresses the problem of individual bodies and the possibility of new and unique dance
practices to some extent. Godard describes dance as "... a symbolic field from which all neutrality has been drained" (in Louppe 1996c, p.21). He describes a poetics of dance based on the inscription of the tonic musculature, the muscles which hold us upright and which orient us within the gravitational field. This is based on the premise that the tonic musculature is inscribed through the earliest history of the human infant, the way a child is touched and carried, and records the history of the child's relations with its first object of love. The way in which this 'tonic dialogue' has been played out, inscribed, in the structural and the functional organization of a dancer's body defines the poetic qualities with which she is able to imbue dance movement. Godard's description of the inscriptive process is that

The tonic muscles, which specialize in gravitational responses, are the very first memory, and perhaps the first language; what has been called the 'tonic dialogue'. That of the child with the mother -- its range of spasms and contractions are already an exchange. An emotional language, like any language probably -- a source of growth, comprising imperceptible emotional channels loaded with essential information (in Louppe 1996c, p.18).

The tonic muscles prevent falling and maintain verticality. Movement requires the release of these muscles and the extent and nature of this release defines the quality of the movement. Each person's gravitational history, the tonic dialogue conducted in infancy, is always unique, both in the dancer and in the spectator. Consequently there is no possibility of identical inscriptions, identical corporeal poetics, either in the production or the consumption of dance performance.

For a dancer, everything is played out around these muscular and emotive zones that produce memory. The essential task of the tonic muscles is to inhibit falling, to maintain one's verticality. In order to make a movement, these muscles have to release. And it's in this release that the poetic quality of the movement is generated. The movement will be invested with authority in a way that is more or
less moving, depending on the greater or lesser degree of tonic inhibition (Godard in Louppc 1996c, p.18).

Godard (in Dobbels & Rabant 1996, p.40) makes the further argument that this inscribed corporeal organization is the means by which the self is constituted in movement terms. The moving subject is constituted in terms of the way in which a series of ‘founding gestures’ are organized in each individual. These gestures, which include moving towards, pushing away, pointing, throwing, and taking, define an individual’s way of being in the world. Specific, historical experiences in which a child moves from having had these actions performed for her to being able to perform them herself and hence independently manage her own gravitational existence, inscribe these gestures in specific ways.

The primary gestures are calibrated, reaffirmed by exteroceptive feedback. That is, they are affirmed by the feedback of successfully pushing, taking, stopping, throwing, etc., an object. Godard suggests that the self is constituted as a unity by means of this gestural language. The self is therefore not a structural given, but an inscribed/learned set of actions.

Lacan expressed the incredible idea that proprioceptive space is fragmented. This space does not exist, I don’t exist, as long as there is no return through the exterior. One can compare this idea with the phenomenological idea that suggests I am constituted, not through corporeal structure, but through events which inscribe me. And it’s the gestures that constitute me, those primary gestures: throwing, pointing, pushing away, going towards, stopping. This is not simply theoretical, it has an entirely practical dimension (Godard in Dobbels & Rabant 1996, p.42).

This gestural ‘self’ is immediately and fundamentally inscribed with qualities of tonic musculature that define how the individual organizes and experiences themselves in gravity. Balanced against the personal and subjective nature of this corporeal inscription, the process of dance training and of working with a particular choreographer involves an attempt to reinscribe the body according to
shared values and corporeal philosophies. Godard (in Louppe 1996c) describes how in the modernist dance tradition choreographers, such as Trisha Brown and Merce Cunningham, developed distinctive and specific ways of experiencing the release of tonic musculature which formed the poetics of their dance practices, and which were reinforced in and communicated to dancers who worked with them through the development of distinctive methods of training and rehearsal.

Godard’s view allows for a relativism in corporeal language that opens up space for new corporeal formulations of dance based on the individual histories of particular choreographers. He maintains, however, the exteroceptive structure of language drawn from Lacan. That is, what can be danced remains mediated by the symbolic structure of language, in which all potential movement is divided up into pre-existing, culturally constructed categories. Godard’s foundational gestures, which constitute a definitive set of gestures that prescribe boundaries for self-definition in movement, are a case in point.

1.4 Dance Outside Language

Some writers such Gardner (1996), Daly (1992), Williams (1996) and Dempster (1993), have gone a step further in arguing that some choreographic practices can be understood to function, at least to some extent, outside the structure of symbolic language. In different, and sometimes conflicting ways, these writers have presented arguments that open up the possibility of considering meaning in dance outside the structures of signification and language. Some dance practices may be structured such that they are unrepresentable in any symbolic order or system of signs. In this way, these dance practices can be understood to challenge existing dance conventions of representation and to posit in their place new possibilities for the production of the dancing subject.
Sally Gardner addresses this question in relation to new dance practices in which there is a deliberate attempt to undo some of the habits and inscriptions of the dancer’s body, in particular those which produce stereotypical gender distinctions, in order to make the body more ‘neutral’, more available for being re-inscribed differently. She questions whether such practices may present a means of subverting the stereotypical representations of gender inscribed in conventional dance practices, given the all-pervasiveness of the representative conventions being challenged. ²³ She asks,

Is there a discourse of truth or universality at the heart of the discourse of the so-called neutral body? Within this discourse and this set of practices how are the (sexual) differences between bodies figured, obscured, ordered? Is there really an imagined masculine body behind the supposedly ‘de-constructed’ one? After all, the kinds of discourses and images used include those of classical anatomy – a scientific discourse and therefore one committed to an idea of a singular truth (about the body). Is there a supposedly ‘natural’ body, that is a feminised one, embedded in these practices or is there, possibly, the body of a woman? (Gardner 1996, p.50).

Gardner’s strategy is to use Luce Irigaray’s feminist theory to argue that, while never outside the disciplinary, inscriptive and productive mechanisms of culture, a dancer’s body is not fully representable in the languages we have. Gardner examines Irigaray’s (1985b, pp.29–30) argument that language, and the speaking subject formed in language, are sexed at the structural level, and that these structures privilege male experience. Lacan’s mirror stage which allows the child to understand itself as a subject through the image of a cohesive, unified, single body confirmed through the visual sense (Lacan 1985, pp.2–4), is based on a patriarchal, male understanding of the body as visual, discrete and unified. This understanding is fundamentally one of distance. The cohesiveness of the visual (and conceptual) image takes precedence over the felt experience of the body (which is not cohesive). The body and the newly created “self” are fundamentally distanced.²⁸
Irigaray (1985b, pp.23–33) argues that the concept of discrete forms separated by distance, the image of self as distinct from others, and the experience of oneself only through the outside, represent the experience of the masculine sex, not the feminine. She develops the idea that it might be possible to posit a fundamental difference in the experience of subjectivity between men and women that is based on physical difference. She argues that there is no distinct, discrete or unitary form to the female sex organ or to the female sexual experience. “But a woman touches herself by and within herself directly, without mediation, and before any distinction between activity and passivity is possible” (Irigaray 1985b, p.24). A woman lacks a concrete, discrete form.

Whence the mystery that woman represents in a culture claiming to count everything, to number everything by units, to inventory everything as individualities. She is neither one nor two. Rigorously speaking, she cannot be identified either as one person, or as two. She resists all adequate definition (Irigaray 1985b, p.26).

Gardner develops the idea that the body has already been spoken and defined as masculine because the concept of the ‘I’ which is enshrined in Lacan’s mirror stage, is already male. The female body and the dancing body are unrepresentable in such an economy of unity, singularity and discreteness of form. 27

If woman is unrepresentable historically, she is not unrepresentable by nature. Irigaray’s argument rests on turning the unrepresentable of woman back on to language: it is language that does not ‘know all’. The absence or negative, she insists, is in patriarchal discourses (most graphically, perhaps, in psychoanalysis), not in women’s bodies (Gardner 1996, p.52).

Her point is that in the context of new dance, the logic of movement and the logic of the (discrete) image, which is the logic of language, may be similarly
incompatible, and that movement is similarly unrepresentable in language because it defies the notion of solid, discrete forms.

If dancers refuse to 'shape' their bodies through developing a kind of muscular armature, if they generate uncodifiable, indefinable movements out of these sexed bodies, might they not be gesturing towards a different body logic – a logic of movement, not of the image (Gardner, 1996, p. 55)?

Gardner’s suggestion is not so much that certain dance practices can take a dancer outside language, as that language, by means of its dependence on the image of a unified speaking subject, cannot accommodate the fluidity of movement. She does not argue that such dance can necessarily disrupt the conventions by which bodies are culturally understood, but chooses an ambiguous state of affairs which is

...not to suggest that a state of de-construction is thought ever to be actually achieved – only that the process becomes incorporated into the practices: that the ongoing commitment is towards a body available for re-inscription in 'other' ways (Gardner 1996, p. 50).

The process is one of striving not to be caught by either the visual image or by the languages which describe and inscribe dancing bodies but to dance spaces in-between those markers which languages and conventions have no means of delineating.

Ann Daly (1992) takes a different approach, drawing on Julia Kristeva’s (1984) theory that situates the unrepresentable as an inherent aspect of any linguistic process. Kristeva (1984, pp. 25–30) postulates the existence of a semiotic ‘chora’, which is an undifferentiated flow of psychical drives and energies that are oriented and ordered in relation to the mother’s body.
The chora precedes the formation of language, which begins with what Kristeva (1984, pp.43–45) calls a thetic split between subject and object. The infant identifies herself through an external image (Lacan’s mirror stage) which is separate, distinct and specifically positioned in relation to the objects around her, and which allows the positioning of objects in relation to herself and to each other in a symbolic, relational manner. The chora is the precondition of language. Aspects of the undifferentiated flow of experience that is the semiotic chora become organized around particular symbolic objects.

There is always however, a residue of chora, psychical energies that are left out of the symbolic system and remain unnamed. This residue is, by definition, excluded from the symbolic order, but pulses underneath language to impart meaning that arises from the primary physiological drives. Thus, there are

...two modalities of what is, for us, the same signifying practice. We shall call the first ‘the semiotic’ and the second ‘the symbolic’. These two modalities are inseparable within the signifying process that constitutes language, and the dialectic between them determines the type of discourse (narrative, metalanguage, theory, poetry, etc.) involved; in other words, so-called ‘natural’ language allows for different modes of articulation of the semiotic and the symbolic (Kristeva 1984, pp.23-24).

Daly argues that Kristeva’s concept of signifying practices involving the semiotic and the symbolic is a much more appropriate model for the production of meaning in dance than linguistic semiotics which operate as “... a building block arrangement of fixed units” (Daly 1992, p.245). Kristeva’s concept of language is a dynamic system in which the fixity of symbolic categories is always under threat of rupture from the semiotic chora pulsing beneath it. Signifying practice is “... the acceptance of a symbolic law together with the transgression of that law for the purpose of renovating it” (Kristeva 1986c, p.29).
Daly argues that dance is not outside signifying practice, but, unlike most linguistic discourses, is located largely outside the symbolic processes of denotation (sign systems) and arises primarily from the realm of the semiotic. "At its best, when the realm of the semiotic prevails, dance's power to indicate meaning far exceeds its capacity to be reduced to the symbolic..." (Daly 1992, p.245).

Daly, like Gardner, suggests that dance is unrepresentable because the sign systems that could account for meaning in dance have not been historically developed. This parallels arguments from Kristeva (1986a) and Ligaray (1985a) that the dominant sign systems through which meaning is produced have been developed with reference only to the male experience and construction of subjectivity, which is universalised. In relation to dance, the dominant systems and structures of symbolic meaning in our culture have been developed primarily in relation to written and verbal texts, and are therefore inadequate for dealing with the production of meaning in movement.

The premise of this approach is that what is included and what is excluded in the dominant sign systems of a society is culturally and historically dependent. What is unnamed in one culture, in one historical period, may figure prominently in the symbolic systems of another. In her discussion of Isadora Duncan, Daly (1992) argues that what was outside the symbolic codes by which dance was understood and produced in Duncan's day, what erupted from the realm of the semiotic and the undifferentiated chora in Duncan's work, was in fact incorporated into the conventions by which dance was produced and understood by the subsequent generation of dancers.

She was extraordinarily sensitive to the dynamic qualities of movement... the sense of intentionality communicated through activated weight, the attentiveness signalled through spatial sensitivity, and the impression of decisiveness or indecisiveness gained through the manipulation of time. Today we take for granted the expressive
potential of these formal means of movement, but in Duncan’s day, they were revolutionary. Her powers of focus and concentration – her ability to stay fully alive inside each moment – produced a compelling sense of presence (Daly 1992, p.252).

The implication of this argument is that the unrepresentability of dance becomes a political problem, not a structural or epistemological one. Dance is perfectly well represented by symbolic codes or culturally shared conventions of meaning, and is always, in fact, mediated by these means. The only thing that shifts is which codes, whose codes, dominate. The problem of language in relation to dance is simply that written and spoken languages are the wrong ones to use in ‘talking’ about dance. Dance has its own systems of signs and inscriptive forces, for example, Godard’s (in Dobbels & Rabant 1996) foundational gestures, or modern dance’s space/time/force, but these tend to be overlooked because written and spoken language is the dominant modality by which meaning is produced in our society. Dance is different from language only in that it has its own conventions of meaning, not in the way those conventions are constructed.

Daly, in following Kristeva’s (1986a) critique of the search for a feminine alternative outside patriarchal language argues that dance must find its voice within that system. She argues that “...seductive as they are, utopian visions of a world “elsewhere” are cultural and theoretical impossibilities” (Daly 1992, p.243). Kristeva’s schema of semiotic and symbolic elements of language positions the feminine within the structure of language we have. There is no possibility of a utopian realm beyond that structure. While feminine experience is marginalized in the symbolic, it can be articulated by means of the semiotic which is an integral and inseparable part of language, and which constantly erupts, rupturing the symbolic order. Rejecting the extreme options of either adopting the male symbolic order on one hand, in order to function in the world, and of remaining silent and unheard on the other, she advocates an attempt to summon ‘truth’ from outside both time and symbolism.
By listening, by recognizing the unspoken in all discourse, however Revolutionary, by emphasizing at each point whatever remains unsatisfied, repressed, new, eccentric, incomprehensible, that which disturbs the mutual understanding of the established powers (Kristeva 1986a, p.156).

Gardner (1996), however, by drawing parallels with Irigaray’s (1985b, pp.106–118) arguments about the status of femininity, goes further in suggesting that it is possible to argue that dance is to some extent fundamentally unrepresentable using symbolic codes because its structure inevitably resists that kind of representation, and that an alternative system must be proposed. Irigaray (1985b) suggests that the whole of Western logic is defined in terms of the visual sense which privileges unity of form in which things are either present or absent, one thing or another. Appearance defines the object (and the subject) as singular, unified and defined, however it is possible that physical sexual difference might give rise to different logics, different imaginaries, and that a feminine subjectivity might be based on the premise of contact, contiguity and fluidity as opposed to the dominant masculine paradigm of separateness, distinctiveness and solidity of form.

Gardner (1996) suggests that there is a logic of movement embodied in new dance practices that similarly refuses the unity of form inherent in patriarchal symbolic logic. The way in which the dancing body is produced in these dance practices makes it fundamentally unrepresentable because it is predicated on the senses of kinaesthesia and touch and not constituted in terms of a unified, visual form. It is the structure of movement, the way it is constituted, that resists reduction to images or symbols.

There is, however, within the broad field of ‘dance’, a constellation of practices, of projects of the body in which the feminine of the dancer is being redefined according to her own logic of movement – a movement which can scarcely be repressed, contained, asphyxiated by available economies of
representation...movement as movement is on the side of women. Movement of the live body is not simply a consecutive sequence of fixed forms – however photography, for example, might represent it as such. Movement as movement has nothing whatever to do with the image despite the claims of those who want to ‘capture’ it there (Gardner 1996, p.58).

Other writers have taken up the issue of the sensory modalities that particular kinds of dance privilege, namely the senses of touch and of kinaesthesis, and how these senses might produce different kinds of knowledge and subjectivity. David Williams (1996, p.23) discusses contact improvisation as a haptic economy based on the sense of touch in which the binary self/other, which he considers “...perhaps the core of Western onto-theological philosophy” disappears in favour of a fluid, shifting relationship with and responsibility for the other. He argues that touch defines the point of confluence between one body and another, a point at which it is impossible to distinguish one from the other, and a point which inside and outside, with respect to the individual, become ambiguous terms.

Elizabeth Dempster (1993) argues that contact improvisation practitioners develop a sense of self that is constituted and experienced, in terms of the sensation of touch rather than vision. She also argues that the kinaesthetic sense can be used to produce a sense of self which is not defined, or at least not completely defined by being seen or observed, and hence objectified. The strategies used in this resistance, also played out in the contexts of modern, postmodern and new dance, have included a focus on physical exploration and discovery, a radical reorganization of the role of the spectator in postmodern dance, the production of complex and excessively detailed movement which privileges the kinaesthetic dimensions of the work, and, most radically, a substitution of the horizontal for the vertical as the dominant axis of movement. Dempster suggests that

...a critique of ocularcentrism has been occurring at a tactical, practical level in dance since the early 1900s ... In modern dance the question of possible resistance
to the processes of visual objectification has been at issue since Duncan's early attacks upon 19th century ballet, with its emphasis upon spectacle and virtuosic display (Dempster 1993, p.19).

These arguments have in common a suggestion that the split between subject and object, between self and another, may be constituted differently (Dempster 1993) or not at all (Williams 1996) in a subjectivity arising from the senses of touch and/or kinaesthesia. A consideration of the way in which the self is experienced in relation to gravity similarly problematizes the disjunction between one thing and another, between subject and object. Kinaesthetically, and proprioceptively, one can't experience oneself as separate from the gravitational field. The mass of the body itself produces the idea/sensation/concept of a gravitational field. Forces of weight are felt to permeate the body, coexisting in the same space as the molecules of matter that make up the body. It is not a matter of the interweaving of the spaces between molecules, as occurs when two bodies touch. The gravitational field is perceived as spatially co-existent with the body, and extending beyond it. The mass of the body instantaneously calls gravity into existence over the whole volume of space occupied. Similarly, force from an external object or person permeates the body as flow. Flow is perceived as a continuity of energy. Whether falling towards the floor or pushing up away from it, the force generated is experienced as continuous with the force with which the body moves.

This perception itself is a cultural construct, defined by the way the concept of gravity is defined scientifically and in movement terms. This does not change the consequence arising from it however, that from a movement perspective it would seem that the fundamental alienation of the mirror stage and distinction between self and non-self is a structural contradiction. This would mean that the unity of form, the distinction between one thing and another, which underlies the linguistic project as defined by symbolic logic and systems of signs, need not be an inherent characteristic of meaning in movement.
Gardner (1996) argues that new dance practices, in privileging the senses of touch and kinaesthesia and in seeking a kind of ‘neutral’, or at least deconstructed body which is available for reinscription in new ways, resist the epistemology of unified, solid forms in ways which other dance practices do not. I question whether this potential for resistance to symbolic logic exists only in new dance practices. Daly (1992) makes a similar claim for the transgressive nature of Isadora Duncan’s practice.

The extent to which either modern dance or new dance practices are able to subvert the logic of the symbol to generate alternative kinds of subjectivities through the privileging of the senses of touch and kinaesthesia is unclear. The arguments put forward by Daly (1992), Gardner (1996), Williams (1996) and Dempster (1993), however, in different ways, problematize the understanding of dance as a solely symbolic operation. The fundamental nature of the symbolic (linguistic) process as it has usually been understood in Western culture, which involves defining objects as singular, unified, and in (spatial) opposition to each other, that is, as being one thing and not another, is challenged by these understandings of dance. Also challenged is the notion of an inherent split between subject and object, and hence between the self and the language one uses. This calls into question the concept that language, meaning and subjectivity are externally imposed and exteroceptively generated, that is, they arise as a result of social forces of inscription. If, as Williams (1996) argues, inside and outside are ambiguous terms at best, how is one then to maintain the principle that meaning is imposed from ‘outside’?

1.5 Subjectivity and the Unique Body

While these approaches problematize the way in which dancing bodies function as signs, they do so specifically in relation to particular genres of dance: contact
improvisation for Williams, new dance for Gardner and new dance and modern dance for Dempster. The discussion is still framed in terms of systems of meaning, even if these systems (genres) are represented as transgressive. These discussions do not specifically consider the effect of uniquely individual bodies operating within these genres.

The consideration of the unique physical body is essential for the discussion of my choreographic practice, since I deal specifically with issues of physical difference. My choreographic practice emphasizes the uniqueness of the physically different, even physically disabled body. While it does construct fields of representation and intertextual references through which the dancing and the dancing bodies are situated within known dance conventions, I wish to argue that it also functions as an assertion of individual, physically mediated, subjectivity.

This subjectivism is not to be confused with the romanticisation of the individual artist of historical dance modernism in which dance practice was understood as an expression of the choreographer or dancer's 'true nature', their inner self, psyche, perceptions and opinions. This approach is highly problematic as it excludes corporeally and kinaesthetically understood knowledge by the reduction of dance to a translation of the psyche (body as a servant of mind, exterior as representation of the inner landscape) in which the physical, corporeal nature of dance is understood as secondary and derivative.

My suggestion is that subjectivity and the assertion of the self in dance practice arise from the specificity of the physical, corporeal body of the choreographer/performer. That is, the subjectivity produced by a choreographic work has a corporeal base. Because the individual physicality and physical history of the choreographer/performer is unique, so is the embodied nature of the dance practice.
Elizabeth Grosz's (1994, 1995) approach to theorizing the body as a hinge between exterior and interior constructions of the body supports this argument. Grosz (1995, pp. 33–37) identifies formulations that emphasize the inscriptive body and the lived body. Theories that emphasize the inscriptive body understand the body as a surface upon which social law, morality and values are inscribed, these external pressures subsequently producing the interior lived body or psyche.\(^{31}\) Theories that emphasize the lived body tend to see the body's internal or psychical inscriptions and the imagined anatomical schema of the body, or body image, as generative of the body's exterior surface\(^{32}\). Grosz prefers to situate the body as a hinge between psychical or lived interiority and socio-political exteriority, with interior and exterior co-implicated in each other's production.

Grosz's formulation is derived from a feminist perspective. She argues (1994, p. vii) that subjectivity can be as adequately accounted for using the physical, corporeal framework of the individual body as it can be using the interior world of the conscious and unconscious, in order to counter phallocentric epistemological constructions which assume that the body is neutral (as it is assumed to be male) in the generation of knowledge (Grosz 1995, p. 38). She posits a malleable co-implication of psychical interiority and exterior bodily inscription in each other's production, using the image of the Möbius strip, which is an inverted, three-dimensional figure eight, to describe the relationship between the psychic interior and inscribed exterior of the body.

Bodies and minds are not two distinct substances or two kinds of attributes of a single substance but somewhere in-between these two alternatives. The Möbius strip has the advantage of showing the inflection of mind into body and body into mind, the ways in which, through a kind of twisting or inversion, one side becomes another. This model also provides a way of problematizing and rethinking the relations between the inside and the outside of the subject, its psychical interior and its corporeal exterior, by showing not their fundamental identity or reducibility but
the torsion of one into the other, the passage, vector, or uncontrollable drift of the inside into the outside and the outside into the inside (Grosz 1994, p.xii).

The uniqueness of the physical body that results from this exchange between the interior and the exterior challenges phallocentric formulations of the male body as definitive and representative of human subjectivity, and also precludes the categorization of women into a single, homogenous and stereotypical category, instead allowing female subjectivity to be understood as individual.

In the same way that the understanding of subjectivity as corporeally produced is strategic from a feminist perspective because bodies raise the question of sexual difference in a way that minds don’t (Grosz 1994, p.vii), in the context of dance practice, corporeally produced subjectivity raises issues of physical difference. The implication of the individual, physical body in the production of subjectivity allows dance practice to be understood as individual and resistant to categorization. While the body is culturally inscribed both on the surface and the interior, the physical differences between bodies raise the question of individual subjectivities.

This understanding of subjectivity as corporeally mediated, assuming the co-implication of psychic and corporeal inscriptions in each other’s productions, can be used to argue against the idea that the production of subjectivity in dance is completely contained by inscriptive codes. While the forces of social inscription and the codes of bodily meaning by which inscription is effected are all pervasive, they act on biologically, genetically and materially different bodies. Parts of that physicality may remain outside linguistic, conceptual conventions, and hence outside the process of inscription of the surface of the body with social meaning.

For example, learning to walk with dislocated hips (as I did; my condition was not diagnosed until I was eighteen months of age) is a very different experience...
to learning to walk with functioning ball and socket joints. Walking with dislocated hips involves a transverse oscillation of the upper spine to shift weight from one foot to the other. Social inscription according to conventional linguistic symbolic systems, which are concerned with discrete forms, divide the conceptual world into categories. There is no category for walking with dislocated hips other than the fairly gross one associated with medical diagnosis\textsuperscript{34} and I would argue, no possibility of any set of categories able to deal with the multiplicity of individual biological, structural features of that walk, let alone the psychological overlays of that particular disability in that particular time and place, with that particular family, that particular kindergarten teacher, that particular day.... The whole process is simply categorized as ‘different’ and ‘a limp’, leaving multiple layers of the corporeal experience undefined, perhaps present only in Kristeva’s (1984) undifferentiated semiotic realm, or, in Irigaray’s (1985a, 1985b) terms, even completely undefinable.

A further challenge to the categorization of corporeal experience arises from the way in which the functional organization of the body can shift, not so much slowly, over years, as in the process of inscription and patterning, but instantaneously, in response to a task or situation which may be new and which may challenge historically inscribed corporeal ‘scripts’. This is what Goddard (in Louppe 1996c) describes when he describes the body as geographical rather than historical; the body reorganising spatially, its function a response to the specific tasks of the moment as much as a product of its organization according to a predetermined, historically produced, script.\textsuperscript{35}

If physically produced subjectivity in dance is unique because physicality is unique and resists categorization, and because physicality is temporally unstable and resists fixed codification, then it can never be fully represented. No system of categories, no system of signs can contain it, or if they do, it may be only for an instant and then everything has changed. This means that the understanding of dance as inherently and inevitably symbolic in a conventional linguistic sense is
unable to account for the variability and instability of the physical body. Specifically, it is insufficient means for discussing the production of physically different bodies and physically unique subjectivities, which is one of the focuses of my choreographic practice.

1.6 The Unique Body in the Work of Contemporary Choreographers

If theoretical approaches have not fully addressed the implications of the unique body in dance, a consideration of the work of contemporary choreographers whose practice has specifically dealt with this issue may be more productive. The choice as to which artists to consider is difficult, as the paradigm of the choreographer as producer of a unique movement vocabulary as the basis of an individual choreographic ‘voice’ is deeply embedded in practice influenced by the modern dance tradition. It is therefore possible to make the case that most contemporary dance addresses this issue to some degree. I have, however, selected three artists whose work demonstrates particular approaches to the issue that allow me to situate my own practice: Bill T. Jones, Dana Reitz and Molissa Fenley.

Jones and Reitz represent poles on a spectrum. Both choreographers’ work is concerned with a highly personal notion of subjectivity, but their methods for producing that subjectivity in performance are very different. Jones works with textual and often biographical information, which presents individual and specific stories as the substrate of subjectivity. Reitz, by contrast, produces a far more abstract, but no less personal vision, by working with the formal qualities of movement. The choice of Fenley as a point of reference is perhaps a more personal one for me, because I have studied with her, and because I feel an affinity for her dynamic range, her use of space, and her cultivation of the idiosyncratic within the context of modern dance.
Bill T. Jones uses dancers of radically different shapes (fat dancers, short dancers, etc.). The dancers, however, are not so much distinctive in terms of how they execute the movement as in terms of their physical appearance. That is to say, it is not so much their functional corporeal organization, the dynamic and rhythmic peculiarities with which they like to imbue their movement, which is foregrounded, although it is fair to say that the physical differences of the dancers do give rise to these differences in kinetic organization. To the contrary, what is emphasized is that, despite their differences, despite their appearances, which in some cases do not match our expectations of what a dancer should look like, these dancers can all cut the mustard. They can all do the movement, and do it more like ‘normal’ or ‘conventional’ dancers than one would ever expect.

Jones’ use of biographical material, particularly in pieces like Still/Here (1994) in which he incorporated video footage of a range of people with terminal illnesses discussing their situations and feelings, adds a layer of subjectivism over the work which works to specifically foreground individual experience. This material, however, is distanced to a degree from the dancers37, who do not appear in the videos. We assume, therefore (perhaps erroneously) that the experiences the piece is based on are not theirs.

The work of Dana Reitz provides a radical contrast to that of Jones, because in her practice, corporeal uniqueness is presented almost entirely in abstract movement terms. There is no reference to events beyond the movement of the dance. The effect, however, is curiously more personal in some ways than Jones. Deborah Jowitt wrote, “Reitz is one of a select band of American choreographers (Isadora Duncan was perhaps the first) who will not make a move they can’t believe in” (Jowitt 1980, p.29).

Reitz’s work takes place in intimate settings, is usually solo in nature and usually improvised. What is foregrounded here is a corporeal subjectivity produced through the action of moving, through the kind movements chosen and the
precise manner in which they are executed, rather than the situation or context in which they are presented. Reitz's work has been described as analogous to the brushstroke in Japanese calligraphy (Steinman 1986, p.85). Reitz says about performing,

"You're turned on to that part of the dancing and you can attend to it; you pay attention to it as a main idea, an idea you can play with. You can stretch it or confine it; you can say look it's taken this much time to get through this amount of space, where this other space forces the timing. That's a very direct experiment that I'm doing. But it's for my benefit. What do I do with this amount of space and time? Not what one does, but what do I do? Maybe that's what we're looking at (in Dempster 1991, p.26).

While on the surface, my use of conventional modern dance vocabulary and references to situations, contexts, autobiographical material and literary texts is more in line with Jones' work than Reitz's, on a corporeal level, it is more concerned with an individual journey through the movement than Jones'. In Jones' work, the message is important. The deliberate use of dancers with different body types functions as a statement. In my practice, working with dancers who are not chosen for their compatibilc movement styles but for their ability to assert their own paths through movement results in a similarly heterogeneous, 'messy' aesthetic. There is also, however, a more explicit concern with the development of unique ways of doing the movement, and the cultivation of a movement vocabulary based on my own idiosyncrasies which is designed to force this issue in the movement.

Reitz' work defines an extreme in this regard, in that she is entirely concerned with the individual movement pathway. In my practice this is an important focus, but not the sole focus of the work. References to other contexts, and to the conventions of modern dance including the contradiction of 'unison' movement, intervene. Reitz works in the context of new dance practices and of improvisation, both of which impart particular characteristics to the movement.
In contrast, my practice uses the movement conventions of modern dance and the uniqueness of each dancer is only displayed in the context of that genre, which indicates what the movement might have been, but isn’t quite.

Molissa Fenley’s work provides another point of contextualization in that it is concerned with the production of a unique experience of movement, but, like my own practice, remains situated within the modern dance genre. Fenley’s work is particularly relevant to this discussion because it has been theorized, categorized and discussed in ways that have often overlooked the unique physicality of her dance practice precisely because it is situated within the modern dance genre.

Albright dismisses Fenley’s work as a possible means of de-stabilizing conventional modern dance codes because it

...fail(s) to challenge a traditionally static ‘male gaze’ because (she) continue(s) to accept a classic split between the audience and the performer...Fenley seems more interested in displaying the body than in the pleasure of moving (Albright 1990, p.34).

This contrasts dramatically with Fenley’s own comments about her work. She makes dances not to display the body but to experience herself moving. She is engaged in producing an aesthetic that demands an appreciation of speed and power. Her work is created completely on her own body, and shows the marks of that idiosyncratic approach. Stephanie Jordan (1982, p. 258) wrote about Fenley’s practice,

...it is dancing of a kind we have never seen before, not just because she keeps going fast and for longer than any other dancer seen in this country, but because she has discarded traditional styles, finding something instinctive to her yet strange to the rest of us (Jordan 1982, p. 258).
Her arm movements are stylised in a convoluted way that is simultaneously an aesthetic choice, and a means of propelling her body forwards and upwards. Albright reads the work in relation to new dance approaches to movement, which for her, constitute (represent) a destabilization of the female dancing body as object. She therefore reads Fenley's musculature as fixity and her 'failure' to release as a collusion with the notion of body as object. Paradoxically, the speed and detail of Fenley's choreography can be read in precisely the opposite terms. Its ongoing nature produces a constant kinetic drive that works against the establishment of a static object-body. Fenley says about her work:

I have gotten a lot of criticism that my dances are too energetic and if I'm interested in forming metaphors, I have to slow down, because people just can't think that fast, the images are coming at them like strobe lights. And I say, 'Tough, quicken up,' because I think that the images come because of the speed, in the fleeting qualities and in the staging (Fenley 1987, p.214).

It is valid to note, as Adair (1992, p.217) does, that Fenley's work does evoke the gym and fitness culture of the early 1980's and that this can also become a limiting stereotype. The whole cult of self-development can be understood as a ruse designed to make women feel in control of their lives when in fact the means of control, the regimes of exercise involved actually have the opposite effect of disciplining their bodies to images of male desire. Albright's reading however, categorizes the whole of her practice in these terms, overlooking the uniqueness of Fenley's own dancing body.

I read Fenley as technically radical, muscularly radical in terms of the excess of muscular effort she uses and fails to conceal (she in fact emphasizes it), and radical in the sense that she offers few of the framing devices of dynamic; build up, climax and recovery. For Fenley it is all climax because it is all fuelled with the same intensity of experience of the power of her body.
Fenley privileges the idiosyncratic in her dance. She displays her unusual technique and physique, which she has developed through training for endurance, cardiovascular and muscular strength through running and weights rather than in conventional dance classes. This power is evident in her dancing. She also makes use of idiosyncratic technical approaches, for example deliberately lifting the hip with the leg in second position to emphasise the height and attack, and deliberately using a contracted pelvis in the air to drive the weight forward across the floor.⁴¹ Fenley herself says

I use a lot of lifting of shoulders and isometric pressure in the arms. For a person who’s had lots of ballet, it’s difficult because their mind says, ‘No, that’s not right.’ To them, its tension; to me its attention...I have a very raw, very personal way of dancing, and when I train every day by running and lifting weights, I’m going to look very different from someone who is in ballet class (Fenley 1987, p.225).

Albright fails to read the idiosyncratic nature of Fenley’s work because she fails to consider the way Fenley produces her body in resistance to the very dance conventions she is using. Albright cannot read what is outside the two sets of conventions she sets up: modern dance and new dance. There is no in-between, and she fails to see Fenley’s deliberate distortion of conventional modern dance.

Fenley’s work provides an example of an approach to dance that privileges the idiosyncratic dancing body. My work differs from Fenley’s in some important areas. My movement is concerned with energy and excess, but also with release, and hence does not address extremes of endurance and muscularity in the way that Fenley’s does. Fenley does not address texts or contexts outside the dance in an overt way as is the case in my practice, and her choreographic structures are more monovalent, more concerned with creating a constant dynamic drive than mine which acknowledge conventions of build and release.
My practice is aligned with Fenley’s however, in terms of the concern with foregrounding of the individual dancer, and in the reliance on the development of idiosyncratic movement vocabulary within the genre of modern dance to do so. While they are very different in terms of the actual choice of movement and the choreographic structures used, my practice and Fenley’s are similar in the presentation of individual dancing which asserts individual physicality within the bounds of the modern dance genre. In both cases, the one-off nature of the dancing is significant, but not in an improvisational sense of real time composition. Rather, the significance is the one-off nature of the bodies involved and the pleasure taken in the differences of those bodies.

My choreographic practice sits within a context of artists, such as Jones, Reitz and Fenley, who are concerned, in different ways, with the production and meaning of individuality. Locating my choreographic concern with physical difference, and with the production of an individual dancing subjectivity, within the theoretical dance literature is, however, more problematic, since this literature fails to fully consider the implications of the individual dancing body. This makes visible a disjunction between dance practice and theory, which must be more fully considered in order to develop an appropriate philosophical framework within which to examine my dances.

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1 See Julia Kristeva for a definition of intertextuality as the transposition of one or several sign systems into another.

The term *intertextuality* denotes this transposition of one (or several) sign system(s) into another; but since this term has often been understood in the banal sense of “study of sources”, we prefer the term *transposition* because it specifies that the passage from one signifying system to another demands a new articulation of the thetic-of caesura and denotive positionality (Kristeva 1984, pp.59–60).

Kristeva is articulating here the concept that polysemy implies an adherence to (and shift between) the ways in which the spatial relations between subject and object are structured in each sign system. Of relevance to the ways in which my work functions intertextually, described in the following paragraphs, is the idea that when shifting between sign systems, it is not simply a matter of using different signifiers for the same signifieds, but a more complex process in which the very relation between speaker, signifier and signified changes.

2 My aesthetic is not so much about creating radically different movement styles for each work, as it is about producing myself as a dancer in a way that reveals my physical difference, and placing this construction in different choreographic contexts.
Autobiographical material is used overtly in *Kim’s Style Guide for the Kinaesthetic Boffin*, but is also deployed covertly, as starting points for particular sections of dances that are not explicitly revealed in the finished dances, in *Festival for a Quiet Life* and *Dances from Hell*.

An example of a shift within a movement phrase is the change from the elongated vertical rise onto half-toe with tense curling hand gestures at the beginning of *Dances from Hell*, in which Paul opens his chest and looks upwards as if embodying the heroic, expressive modern dancer facing adversity. This action resolves into a softening through the chest which shifts the body into a much more pedestrian mode. The signifiers of specific psychological expressive gesture (clenched hands, upward and outward orientation of the upper body as if projecting into mythic space) disappear, as do the signifiers of modern dance technique (balance on half-toe, twist of the upper spine, which is called epaulement in ballet terms, vertical alignment and the deliberate production of length through the spine). The double entendre is, as a Dance figure, “I” have courage to go forward—no I don’t, and as a dancer, I’m creating an expressive, narrative gesture—no, I’m just here in the space. Even within this movement dyad however, the contexts are not clear cut. The initial rising movement, with its balance on half-toe which signifies ballet and modern dance technical ability, happens with the other foot sickled in, toe touching the other ankle. The foot is casually rather than deliberately placed, in neutral flow rather than the bound flow (and consciously orientation towards design and shape) associated with ballet or ballet influenced modern dance. In a further mixing of references, the release into a more pedestrian, less held body happens still on half-toe.

Examples of shifts of reference between sections within dances are the shift between dancing and ‘lecturing’ the audience about the content of a series of slides in *Kim’s Style Guide for the Kinaesthetic Boffin*, the shift between Paul’s initial movement sequences and his pronouncement “dances from hell” which is followed by parodies of various popular dance styles in *Dances from Hell*, and the shift between formal phrase orientated movement and the introduction of couples hugging in *Festival for a Quiet Life*.

As will be examined more fully in section 1.2, shifts such as suddenly substituting a more pedestrian body for a clearly virtuosic modern dancer’s body represent more than simple changes of idiom. They represent fundamental shifts in the way in which the dancing subject is structured and produced.

An exhaustive examination of every perspective on dancing subjectivity is beyond the scope of this exegesis. I have confined the focus to the genres that have been most influential in my own dance practice: modern dance, post modern dance and new dance.

See Sheets-Johnstone (1979) who argued that any symbolic representation in dance must be understood and experienced as a whole. That is, images in time and space must also be in the same moment and the same movement, images in force, and they must exist in a continuum of experience for both the dancer and the observer. From this perspective, she critiqued Langer’s idea that force was the ‘primary’ illusion in dance, suggesting that rather than making a substratum of illusion, one may question whether, on the contrary, the illusion is not itself spatially unified and temporally continuous, for it is phenomenologically as well as logically impossible for virtual force to take place in “real” time and in “real” space without thereby losing its virtuality (Sheets-Johnstone 1979, p.34).

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See Sheets-Johnstone’s later work (1978; 1979, p.x), in which she revised her notion that dance must always be symbolically representative in the light of the work of Merce Cunningham and the Judson Church choreographers. In this context, however, the important point is the association of the idea that the self is symbolically represented through the form of the dance with the practice of modern dance, rather than the appropriateness or relevance of this paradigm to other dance practices.

The phenomenological approach Sheets-Johnstone took is different to that of Langer in that Sheets-Johnstone (1979, p.50), emphasised the indivisibility of the elements of a dance and
refused the notion that a breakdown of individual movement ‘qualities’ or ‘constituents’ (space, time and force) could be meaningful. In her view no aspect of a dance had “...a denotive or emotive significance in and of itself...”, that is, apart from the total dance.

For Langer, the indivisibility of the symbolic form of a dance was related to the similarity between the artistic consciousness and Cassirer’s (1953) “mythic consciousness” in which there is a “...telescoping of symbols and meanings, word into world, into one metaphysical entity... (which is) structurally the same as the artistic consciousness. It is metaphorical almost from first to last” (Langer 1953, p.186). The dance symbol was indivisible because of its metaphorical function, its relationship to the world, rather than as a consequence of the specific spatial and temporal structures of consciousness. Langer’s use of Cassirer was based on the premise that the artistic consciousness was a ‘development’ of a more ‘primitive’ approach to dance in which reality and symbol were fused in a magic worldview. This view, which has been attributed largely to Curt Sachs (1937), has been strongly criticized in recent anthropology as based on an inherent ethnocentrism. See Thomas (1996, pp. 169-170) for a summary of such critiques.

The point in this context, however, is not so much the divergences between Langer and Sheets-Johnstone, but their common understanding of the distanced relationship between danced symbolic form and the experience or emotion which the form represents.

There are numerous examples of this idea that the dance must be universally legible in the writing of modern dance choreographers and theorists. See, for example, Horst (1987, pp.16-22), Cohen (1969, p.8), Martin (1933, p.43), Hawkins (1988, pp. 3-6 pp.85), Sorell (1981, p.382). Mary Wigman put this view strongly, and revealed its reliance on the assumption that human experiences are universally the same.

Movement gives meaning and significance to the artistically shaped and formed gesture-language. For the dance becomes understandable only when it respects and preserves its meaning relative to the natural movement-language of man (sic). Beyond the personal interpretation underlying the dancer’s gesture, there is always the responsibility and obligation to make clear the universal, super-personal meaning – which the dancer can neither change forcibly nor exchange arbitrarily without endangering the general validity of his message. Also in the dance I cannot call the earth heaven, if I mean the earth (Wigman 1966, p.10).

Another quote from Wigman, reveals that in her view this is an ideal, something to be worked towards, but perhaps never quite attained.

Alas, there is the fearfull question during the process of working. Will it succeed? Will it be this time, this one time, quite perfect? And if it will be surrendered to the public as the confusion it is, can it stand up to that trial by fire? As long as it is within the sphere of the workshop, it is under my protection and invulnerable! But when the last step has been taken, when the final gesture writes its finish and I must not change anything anymore and must be satisfied with what I have accomplished – then not only do I face the form-filled work, but also the original image calls me to account: “What have you made of me? Shrouded in a hundred veils I came to you. They all had their meaning. Have you wrenched them into your wool and warp, which should have turned into my image, into my mirror reflection? Did it become this mirror image?” And the answer would be a hesitant or even an unconsidered “Yes” – if it had to be “Yes” because the newborn creature of fantasy wanted to live, should live, and – perhaps – could live – behind all this, however, would still lurk the deeper awareness: imperfect – unfinished – this time too (Wigman 1966, p.14).

10 See Franko (1995, p.51) where he stipulates that he is, in this instance, discussing Graham’s work in the late 1920’s and early 1930’s, which was much more severely modernist in a Greenbergian sense, i.e., concerned with the essentials of movement, than her more emotivist later work. It is important to note that Graham’s career spanned at least sixty years, and to recognise that the issues and choreographic paradigms she created were not static over that time.

11 Martin’s theory must be understood in the context of what Thomas has called
... an incipient racism and ethnocentrism in many historical studies and dance histories in which dance is viewed explicitly or implicitly as a form of natural (instinctive and universal) behaviour which has developed from its starting point in 'primitive' culture into stylized western theatre dance, with the latter being venerated as the most 'advanced' civilized form. (Thomas 1995, p.169).

The point here is not that Martin was necessarily racist, but that the idea of an unexamined universality of experience, derived from western, "civilized" (read also male, see Grosz 1995, p.39) perspective, was in common currency when Martin was writing.

17 Martin links the idea of universal communicative power in dance to the idea of universal 'truth'. If a choreographer is 'true' to their own inner experience, then the universality of kinaesthetic subjectivity means that they can expect that most, or even all, viewers will find something in that statement that is meaningful because it resonates with their own experience. Martin (1933, p.48) argued that a dancer must dance with an authentic inner intention.

There is a contradiction in his argument, however. The immediate experience of a dancer dancing, in Martin's view, was not sufficient to communicate; it must be crafted into a coherent symbolic form. For this, a process of distortion was necessary.

... primitive man expressed through movement concepts that he felt must be expressed and for which his intellectual means of expression were inadequate. In finding a way to make his intention understandable to his fellows he evolved a dance form which is the model for the form of the modern dance, and which, indeed, has based all art form. Simply to let the movement flow as it would, gave him perhaps an outlet for his emotions but it produced no corresponding effect upon others. To make himself clear he found that he had to repeat certain movement and certain sequences several times. Still further to point his intentions he found he must eliminate all but the essential details and concentrate on them with all his force (Martin 1933, p.43).

Once a process of distortion is invoked, however, the 'truth' or 'authenticity' of the dance is one step removed from its source, and the question of the degree to which the distortion of the experience in the process of crafting a suitable form subverts, changes or obscures the connection between the dance and the dancer's original experience comes into play.

I find it interesting that Martin's idea of metakinesis actually predicts far more relativist positions of the kind articulated by Goddard (in Louppe 1996a, 1996c), in which the spectator's material physicality, inscribed by cultural norms but also by individual, historical experiences, dictates the dance's 'meaning'. See Franko (1995, 1996b) for detailed discussions of the tensions in Martin's work.


15 See Horst, (1987 p.16) and Humphrey, (1959, p.18) for other examples of this view.

16 There is a danger that, in comparing the marked similarities of modern dance theorists such as Martin, Langer and Sheets-Johnstone, the significant divergences of their arguments will be overlooked. This quotation is a case in point. Where Langer feels that only the finished dance as a symbol has a structural relationship to human feelings, and that there are no internal consistencies between the feeling and the form, Sheets-Johnstone argues that a danced image replicates the form of the human feeling abstracted. In Sheets-Johnstone's understanding, the actual dynamic structure, the "...sheer dynamic form..." of a feeling, is abstracted to produce a symbolically meaningful dance (Sheets-Johnstone 1979, p.61). Martin is different again on this point. His idea of metakinesis weds the danced movement to its symbolic form in a more direct way, as the actual muscular sensation of the feeling to be represented must exist, at least in abstracted form, in the movement of the dance (Martin 1933, pp.13-14)
Strong weight, assertive, powerful pushing against gravity, is one of the Laban Movement Analysis effort qualities (Bartenieff 1980, pp.55-56).

This issue is not, however, clear-cut. Formalism has in some of these writers’ work, functioned clearly as a means of maintaining emphasis on the moving body as a source of meaning independent of the overt (and covert) intertextual ‘content’ of the dance (Siegal, 1988, 1996). In the work of others however, (Jordan, 1996a, 1996b, Jowitt, 1997), the situation is viewed more in the nature of a tension which must be resolved without forsaking either dance-specific movement analysis or the inevitability that any analysis of dance, even movement description, is culturally based and inevitably intertextual. This latter approach points out the weakness in a purely formalist approach, which is that it fails to explicitly acknowledge that formalist dance analysis is itself a historically specific cultural construct.

Adshead et al’s sample analyses encompass such diverse dance practices as French court dance of the Renaissance, Tongan dance and twentieth century modern dance [Ashead et al, 1988].

This argument about danced subjectivity is analogous to Lacan’s formulation of the subject defined and produced by the symbolic order. Mansfield describes the alienation of the Lacanian subject as follows:

The system of meanings and identities from which your selfhood derives is not your own. This system is what Lacan calls the symbolic order. This over-arching order is structured as a field of signification, defined in terms of the difference of each of its elements from the others. It is the field that Saussure had defined as language, a system of circulating signifiers. The self’s mirror-image of itself that it had discovered in the imaginary finds its archetypal in the signifier. The word ‘I’, for example, provides an image of the self, but only when that selfhood concedes its meaning and definition to the system of signification, of which the signifier ‘I’ is a part. The imaginary unity it seems to provide is sucked away by its alien nature, the fact that it is part of a system that pre-exists the subject, that other subjects also use, and over which no individual subject has control. The subject’s sense of itself is lost in the very field of signs that seemed to provide it in the first place. It is this paradox that governs human subjectivity (Mansfield 2000, pp.43-44).

Foster offers

...a blueprint for choreographic meaning, assimilating many choreographic conventions into five broad categories: (1) the frame—the way the dance sets itself apart as a unique event; (2) the mode of representation—the way the dance refers to the world; (3) the style—the way the dance achieves an individual identity in the world and in its genre; (4) the vocabulary—the basic units or “moves” from which the dance is made; and (5) the syntax—the rules governing the selection and combination of moves (Foster 1996, p. 59).

She situates these categories within her own socio-historical and aesthetic perspective. Foster insists that these categories are only valid in the context of the Western concert dance tradition and that they have arisen in response to the work of contemporary dance artists including Merce Cunningham, Deborah Hay Yvonne Rainer and Trisha Brown. This is a much more precisely situated theory of dance than that offered by Adshead et al, who extend their schema to the examination of non-Western and non-concert dance contexts.


This parallels Judith Butler’s (1998) argument that gender is constructed as interiority and signified performatively on the surface of the body. In Butler’s view, both gender and the interior ‘self’ that the concept of gender is predicated on, are fictions, assumed causes for surface actions. These illusory fictions are created to regulate sexuality and gender by naturalizing them, i.e. by
ascribing the ontology of gender to a prediscursive, ‘natural’ cause, the interior or ‘soul’ of the human being.

In other words, acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence of identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts that constitute its reality. This also suggests that if that reality is fabricated as an interior essence, that very interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse, the public regulation of fantasy through the surface politics of the body, the gender border control that differentiates inner from outer, and so institutes the “integrity” of the subject (Butler 1998b, pp.41).

24 This is despite the fact that all bodies, being different, are to some extent atypical.
25 She refers specifically to ballet, modern dance, and neo-expressionist postmodern dance.
26 In Lacan, the notion of distance and alienation from the proprioceptively felt body is fundamental to the very formation of the subject. Mansfield (2000, p.43) summarizes this point:

The subject, at its very birth, only gets a sense of its own definition from the outside, specifically from an image of itself returned to it from the world. The subject does not define itself. Instead, it is defined by something other than itself. Put in Lacanian terms, the subject is the discourse of the other.
27 See Gardner, where she suggests, “...the ‘dancer’ has never been ‘neutral’, but has always been on the side of the feminine (1996, pp.58).”
28 See Daly, who uses the term ‘semiotics’ here to refer to a structuralist notion of language, unlike Kristeva’s (1984, pp.21–24) use of the term ‘semiotic’, which refers to a pre-symbolic state that precedes the very constitution of the subject, let alone language.
29 See Kristeva (1986c, 1993), who suggests that poetry and music, along with transgressive traditions such as the carnival and satire, are also located primarily in the semiotic.
30 See also Dempster (1993, p.19).
31 See Grosz (1995, pp.33–36), where she draws on Nietzsche’s (1974) account of physical inscription as a means of social control, and Foucault’s (1979) understanding of bodics as normalized through discipline, such that they become engraved with surface markers that produce the body as a system of signs to be read. External elements such as food, clothing, gesture, etc. produce meanings and values which the subject then incorporates into a psychological ‘interior’ which is in fact simply a projection interpolated from these external markers.
32 See Grosz (1995, pp.36–37), where she refers to the parental-social meaning of the child’s sexed body becoming actively incorporated into the child’s conception of self.
33 See Grosz (1995, pp.45–58) where she identifies the risk of basing any feminist theory of the body on sexual difference: “...any attempt to define or designate woman or femininity is in danger of relying on commitments that generalize on the basis of the particular, and reduce social construction to biological pre-formation” (Grosz 1995, p.53). Grosz argues, however, that if women cannot be categorized in any way, then there is no possibility of a feminist project. She chooses to risk women becoming (again) defined by their bodies in order to establish, by means of the uniqueness and malleability of their bodies, their individual subjectivity.
34 See Visser (1984), for the description of the gait of the toddler with CDH as a characteristic ‘duck waddle’, with increased lordosis and genu valgum.
35 See section 2.3 for a description of Godard’s idea of the geographic organization of the body as a process of mapping rather than a static map.
36 I took my classes with Fenley as a student at Mills College from 1987–1989. Fenley is also a graduate of Mills College, and this may be a factor in the affinity I feel for her work.
37 But not from Jones, who is publicly known to be HIV-positive.
This is not to suggest that Reitz' is extreme in the sense that she is the only one who works in this manner, but rather that in the context of the spectrum of contemporary and modern dance, her work is heavily skewed in this direction.

See Fenley (1987, pp.212), who writes

"I choreograph so that I can perform; it's a need, and it's also an extreme pleasure. For me the performance experience is quite unbelievable." She is interested in dance that is concerned with the purity of the movement elements themselves, and not about the presentation of the self (Fenley 1987, p.214).

See Banes (1980a), who reads Fenley's use of arms as primarily an issue of choreographic style. My understanding of Fenley's use of the arms as simultaneously mechanical is based on my experience in her classes.

This observation is based on my experience of Fenley's classes, and on my observations of her in performance.
PART 2
RHIZOMIC STRUCTURES

2.1 Introduction: The need for an alternative framework

The discussion of my choreographic processes, as covered in Part 2, highlights four main issues relevant to the ways in which subjectivity is produced in the dances. The first of these issues is the effect of individual physicality in the production of a corporeal subjectivity. My dances foreground individual physicality, particularly my own. Specifically, my dances emphasize the ways in which the individuality of dancers' bodies escapes the genre of modern dance.

This presents a challenge to purely intertextual approaches to dance analysis discussed in Part 1,1 because the specificity of the dancing defies reduction to any set of signs (linguistic categories), no matter how complex or multivalent that system may be. Daly (1992), Gardner (1996), Dempster (1993) and Williams (1996) have suggested theoretical approaches that support the idea that corporeal, danced subjectivity may lie outside the systems by which meaning has been linguistically structured in our society. These approaches all deal with the issue, however, by proposing, in different ways,2 that certain genres of dance practice operate outside accepted codes of meaning. The genres themselves (early modern dance for Daly, new dance for Gardner, contact improvisation for Williams, and all three for Dempster) then become new systems for codifying or re-inscribing the individual body. They do not examine specifically how an individual body might function at a level of historical specificity that cannot be fully inscribed.

The second issue is the historical specificity introduced by autobiographical material. Kim's Style Guide for the Kinaesthetic Boffin cannot be read as a universalised statement because the material is presented in such a way as to identify a specific history and a specific set of circumstances. It is not about 'disability in dance' in a general sense, because to watch me dance the final section of the work, after listening to the discussion which reveals aspects of my physical history, locates my dancing as the specific result of this set of circumstances. This
presents a further challenge to the purely intertextual approaches to dance analysis discussed in Part 1. While the presentation of historical, autobiographical material can be read in terms of systems of signs (the story represents my history), the history itself, the fact that it happened and I now dance the way I do, is also a source of meaning in the work. The work would mean something completely different if it were clear that the story was not true, or related to someone else.

The third issue the discussion of my choreographic processes will uncover is the complexity and instability of any subjective position produced through the dances. This arises from the ephemeral nature of dance, and the complex interactions between the various people involved in creating and performing the works, all of whom have different ways of constructing themselves as dancers. This instability is reinforced, particularly in *Dances from Hell* and *Kim's Style Guide for the Kinaesthetic Boffin*, through my choreographic aesthetic, which privileges discontinuities and multiple approaches to performing movement.

The fourth issue is the effect of analysis itself on the nature of the discourse that arises. The process of re-mapping that I have undertaken in reflecting on my choreographic practice continually shifts the emphasis from one element of the dance to another. As will be apparent in the discussion of *Festival for a Quiet Life*, the discussion is easily skewed towards the particular element of the dance under consideration, to the apparent exclusion of others.

The last two issues challenge the structure of dance analysis as a translation of syntactic or intertextual codes. If the kind of dancing subject being produced in a dance is shifting moment by moment, then dance analysis can only be accurate moment by moment. Dance analysis as translation is also limited because while several conflicting things may be going on at once in a dance, perhaps arising from the negotiation of fundamentally different ways of producing oneself as a dancer between choreographers and performers, dance analysis as an interpretation of codes cannot provide a way of reading conflicting codes simultaneously.

The work of Deleuze and Guattari promises an alternative means of approaching dance analysis that may be more accommodating of these difficulties. Because Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy embraces complexity at a structural and epistemological level, it allows the connection of disparate and incompatible aspects...
of subjectivity. In this chapter, I will examine some of Deleuze and Guattari’s ideas, and their relevance to understanding subjectivity in my dances. I have focused the discussion on Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the rhizome, which provides a structural model that may be adapted to the problem of discussing subjectivity in dance.

2.2 Anti-Representation

Deleuze and Guattari’s theory attacks rigidity of form on all epistemological levels. Rather than fixed, static, systems of knowledge, they prefer the idea of flows, intensities, movements and velocities (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.162). In particular, they reject the expressionist notion that the self, or soul, can be expressed. They reject representation as a neat and unproblematic means of relating self and artefact. In Ian Buchanan’s words:

...it is not the fact of an originating schism between image and copy (Plato) or appearance and reality (Hegel) that Deleuze objects to, but rather the assumption that the schism can be so readily bridged with so simple a mediating device as expression. While such a device preserves the integrity of the two terms, rigorously maintaining the copy status of the copy and the original status of the original, according to Deleuze it does not actually explain the relation between the two, but in fact suppresses the very question (Buchanan 2000, p.4).

This leads Deleuze and Guattari to critique the idea that subjectivity can be adequately represented by a system of signs. The structure of subjectivity, as they understand it, is too multiplicious, too fluid and too unstable to be adequately represented by any system of signs, however complex. Trying to represent the self “…amounts to thinking one can read the book of the soul in the book written in ink, which can’t be done...” (Buchanan 2000, p.3).

Deleuze and Guattari challenge the authority of representation as the sole means of structuring and understanding subjectivity. This is not to say that subjectivity is not represented in many ways (how we dress, how we move, how we speak, for example), but to question whether subjectivity can be completely defined in those terms.
This approach presents a possible means of resolving the difficulty in discussing subjectivity in my choreographic practice, which arises from my understanding that the dances produce both intertextual and symbolic meaning, and my own unique physicality, which is incompletely represented by the categories of any sign system. If Deleuze and Guattari present a means of understanding subjectivity that allows meaning outside what can be defined by the structure of representation (this bodily sign = that subjective correlate), then the uniqueness of the dancing physicality my work aims to produce can potentially be understood in their terms.

2.3 Arborescent and Rhizomic Structures

In disputing the idea that subjectivity can be adequately represented, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that subjectivity is, instead, a ‘rhizomic’ structure (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, pp.3–27). They argue that there are two kinds of structures of knowledge, the arborescent and the rhizomic⁴. Arborescent systems are hierarchical. A single origin or foundation, like the trunk of the tree, supports a branching system that emanates from the core. In this kind of system meaning is controlled and can only pass along prescribed pathways with continually branching bifurcations at which a choice must be made, this way, or that way, with the consequence that a particular choice immediately precludes a whole range of other journeys which emanate from the other half of the bifurcation (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.5, 7).

Deleuze and Guattari term these structures fascist since they control knowledge and prescribe one’s journey through it. Their prime examples are capitalism and psychoanalysis. They write about capitalism, “It only selects and valorises those things that fit its specific needs. Everything else is devalued, polluted, massacred” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.44).

Deleuze and Guattari criticize psychoanalysis as a fascist, arborescent structure, because it presents a single template for the process by which every human subject is formed. Deleuze and Guattari (1987, pp. 12–13) disagree with the way Freud used the Oedipal drama as a template to control meaning in both the conscious and unconscious. Psychoanalysis reduces a patient’s performance to a re-tracing of ready-made meanings. Ian Buchanan situates Deleuze’s objection to
psychoanalysis as an objection to the process of homogenisation where everything about the subject is defined by a code that maps the unconscious onto the conscious.

The fundamental theoretical problem Deleuze has with psychoanalysis—the one that leads Freud into error, he says—is that it supposes its signifiers are adequate expressions of its signifieds, such that one can always decipher the latter from the former (Buchanan 2000, p3).

Deleuze and Guattari are at once more playful and more vitriolic in explaining their objections:

Look at what happened to Little Hans already, an example of child psychoanalysis at its purest: they kept on BREAKING HIS RHIZOME and BLOTCHING HIS MAP, setting it straight for him, blocking his every way out, until he began to desire his own shame and guilt, until they had rooted shame and guilt in him, PHOBIA (they barred him from the rhizome of the building, then from the rhizome of the street, they rooted him in his parents' bed, they radicled him to his own body, they fixated him on Professor Freud). Freud explicitly takes Little Hans's cartography into account, but always and only in order to project it back onto the family photo (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.14)

Deleuze and Guattari's attack on Freud is fundamentally an attack on the codification of knowledge and of subjectivity. Rather than a direct, isomorphic mapping of subject onto object, content onto form, and the use of the Oedipal drama as a consistent and universal pathway for that mapping, Deleuze and Guattari suggest a completely different structure by which subjectivity might be understood. They suggest a structure that is not static, but constantly in the process of being remapped, with not only the connections changing continuously, but also the very rules that govern the connections (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, pp.12–13). In contrast to psychoanalysis, in which subjectivity is always formed in the same way, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that subjectivity is rhizomic.

The idea of the rhizome comes from the botanical model of plants, such as grasses, which propagate by multiple root systems that can originate in any part of the plant and expand in multiple directions (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.5). In a rhizome, any two elements may be connected to produce meaning. One may pass from one
element to another, or connect one idea with another, in any way one chooses. The defining characteristic of the rhizome is its functionality. Particular pathways are not prescribed, but rather whichever pathways are useful, whichever pathways make the elements of meaning function as a machine, may be created.

In this sense, rhizomic structures, or assemblages, are productive rather than reproductive. They don’t follow existing structural templates, as do arborescent systems. Rather, they are systems in which new meanings may be produced by the making of new connections.

A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles. A semiotic chain is like a tuber agglomerating very diverse acts, not only linguistic, but also perceptive, mimetic, gestural, and cognitive: there is no language in itself, nor are there any linguistic universals, only a throng of dialects, patois, slangs, and specialized languages (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.7)

In a rhizomic structure, interpreting particular elements is less important than examining the range of ideas the assemblage connects. Things hunt in packs and meaning is understood to arise from collections of events, histories and references, rather than single ideas. In this context, meaning is more than just a representation something already known. It is a creative bringing together of new things, new elements and new sets of ideas. In discussing a book as an assemblage, Deleuze and Guattari write:

We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier: we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed, and with what other bodies without organs it makes its own converge (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.4).
2.4 Anti-Hierarchy

The organization of the rhizome is non-hierarchical. All elements are understood to be on a consistent plane and produce meaning by means of their interconnection to one another. They can include elements of language, historical events, cultural tropes and subjective perceptions, and these need not all originate from within the same ontological or epistemological system. The rhizome is capable of linking elements of culture and subjectivity across diverse fields of reference.

...unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.21).

Meaning is created through a series of plateaus (rhizomic structures) over which intensities are constant. That is, no particular elements of the assemblage are privileged over others. Words are not more important than identities. Symbols are not more important than limbs. Signs are not more important than historical events. There is, in effect, no narrative structure to the rhizome, no direction, no culmination, no finale. There is no central point that everything leads up to, no destination or end point. The rhizome simply exists as a network that produces meaning across its entirety as a result of its entirety.

The ideal would be to lay everything out on a plane of exteriority of this kind, on a single page, the same sheet: lived events, historical determinations, concepts, individuals, groups, social formations (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.9).

2.5 The Body as a Rhizome

Of particular importance for dance is the way in which the rhizomic structure allows the physical, material body to contribute directly to meaning in dance. Rather than understanding the dancing body as simply an instrument for the transmission of meaning, a surface upon which cultural meanings have been inscribed with no resonance or power of its own, the body may be understood as a rhizomic structure in which a multiplicity of disparate elements, including social inscriptions, biological
structures, genetic effects, histories, and events, can be linked to produce meaning. The non-hierarchical structure of the rhizome allows the unique functional and material make up of the body to be understood on its own terms as a contributing factor in the production of dance meaning. Rather than being made subservient to symbolic language as the product of social forces of bodily inscription, bodies can be understood using Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the rhizome to contribute directly to the production of subjectivity in dance.

Interestingly, Julia Kristeva in an essay she wrote about gesture, predicted this stance in relation to dance. She argued that gesture is not a process of denotation such that the gesture denotes some signified by means of socially determined codes, but is rather a process of inclusion within the same semiotic space. She suggests that the gesture is rather

... a practice of designation, a gesture which shows not to signify, but to englobe in one and the same space (without the dichotomies of idea–word, signified–signifier), let us say in one and the same semiotic text, ‘subject’ and ‘object’ and practice (Kristeva 1978, p.269).

The idea that movement, and by inference physicality, might also function at the same level as language, rather than being defined and produced by language, bestows upon physicality an autonomy which allows it to participate in the production of subjectivity in a primary way.

Most significantly, however, the structure of the rhizome frees the body of becoming simply a product of cultural forces, the representation of meaning that is created elsewhere and written onto passive waiting bodies. The non-hierarchical nature of the rhizome, the level playing field it creates for all possible elements of meaning, both sign and non-sign, allows the understanding of the physical body as a primary contributor to the meaning and subjectivity produced in dance as an equal partner. This allows the effects of unique physical bodies, unique genetic and biological bodies, to contribute to the production of subjectivity in dance without being essentialized or romanticized as the inevitable determinant of that subjectivity.

Deleuze and Guattari’s view that events and histories are elements that contribute to the rhizomic assemblage on the same level as symbols and signifiers, allows bodies
to be understood as events as much as things (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.9). Deleuze and Guattari emphasise the individual as productive, linking specific elements of being and constantly re-configuring them. “Something is produced: the effects of a machine, not mere metaphors” (Deleuze and Guattari 1998, p.2). Consequently, bodies can be understood not just as unique in terms of what they represent, but materially and historically unique, i.e. variable and meaningful in their effects on different days and in different situations.

2.6 Dancing Subjectivity as a Rhizome

Deleuze and Guattari’s theory provides a way of discussing the particular kind of dancing subjectivity my work aims to produce, that is, a subjectivity which is the inferred presence behind constant shifts between different conventions of representation brought about by the constant reconfiguration of the body within and between movements. The very instability with which the danced subjectivity is produced implies a constant selection of disparate elements of form and representation.

Approaches to dance theory such as those suggested by Adshead et al (1988), Rothfield (1988, 1994/95), Foster (1986), and Gardner (1996, 1999), which consider the body a result of processes of social inscription that produce the body as a system of signs, constitute the body as a kind of historical record of the cultural (familial, social) forces it has encountered. This kind of formulation cannot account for the ability to reconfigure the body as a system of meaning in the very moment of moving. If the body were produced entirely by its history of social interactions, since it has only one history, there would be only one, static, body. There is no room in this approach for an autonomous agency on the part of the individual in selecting which inscriptions she will accept, make use of or reveal, and which she will not, as the very individual herself is simply a product of these forces. There can be no ‘self’ that constructs subjectivity, since subjectivity is simply an artefact of surface inscription.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987, pp.75–110) offer an alternative view, which is that the individual actively undertakes the production of subjectivity. They understand language not as communication (transferring information) or as intersubjectivity
(exchange between two stable entities), but as action. The act of speaking accomplishes transformations. It brings together an assemblage of multiple voices in a temporary, provisional alliance that becomes the “I”.

...the collective assemblage is always like the murmur from which I take my proper name, the constellation of voices, concordant or not, from which I draw my voice... To write is perhaps to bring this assemblage of the unconscious to the light of day, to select the whispering voices, to gather the tribes and secret idioms from which I extract something I call my self (Moi). I is an order-word (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.84)

The self is not produced by what they call a ‘tracing’, which is a deep structure, or generative axis, for pre-determining what kind of meanings are possible, by definition a hierarchical, arborescent structure. This is the psychoanalytical model in which individual subjectivity is reduced to a re-enactment of the prescriptive, generic template of the Oedipus complex. The tracing is immutable and pre-determines what meanings, what kinds of subjectivities are possible. Deleuze and Guattari propose instead that the individual constructs their subjectivity as a political activity in response to extant circumstances and needs. As they put it:

Drives and part objects are neither stages on a genetic axis nor positions in a deep structure; they are political options for problems, they are entryways and exits, impasses the child lives out politically, in other words, with all the force of his or her desire (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.13).

In Deleuze and Guattari’s view, the subject is not produced interiorly at all. All the effects of subjectivity take place on a “plane of exteriority” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.9). But this plane of exteriority is a creative, active plane. It is not produced by an authoritative imprint imposed from outside, any more than it is produced by an inner ‘self’ alienated within an oppressive social and cultural context.”

The unconscious is a rhizomic structure, an a-centred system or network bringing together a multiplicity of heterogeneous elements (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, pp.16–17). Subjectivity, in this view, is always provisional, changes in response to circumstances and is an active selection of disparate elements. It is a heterogeneous collection of signs, histories, bodies, which the individual assembles for their own
purposes. This model can account for the shifting nature of physical subjectivity, the constant reconfiguration of the body which underlies my understanding of my dance practice, and which Godard (in Louppe 1996c, p.14) describes as the geographical nature of the body as a map. Physicality is not only a re-iteration of existing inscriptive codes but involves the production of new physical articulations as a disparate and original set of elements brought together in each dancing moment.

This view allows an understanding of the malleability of physically constituted meaning (danced meaning) and how it is negotiated between choreographers and dancers, which will be identified in the discussions of Festival for a Quiet Life and Dances from Hell. The historical/inscriptive model is problematic in this regard because it can only offer a kind of re-inscription, a take over, of one kind of physicality by another. The degree of re-inscription, the degree to which the dancer is willing or able to assume the corporeal poetic of the choreographer determines the tone of the resultant work. Deleuze and Guattari’s model on the other hand, emphasizes the active choice of the individual in how they constitute their subjectivity and the malleability with which this can be changed as the individual selects from the multiplicity of elements available to create an assemblage. This emphasis allows the choreographer-performer relationship to be an active negotiation, a process of choice in terms of constructing a new hybrid physicality between the two, and also allows the reversibility, the revocability of this process.

This sits much more comfortably with the choreographer’s and the dancer’s experience as I understand it in my own practice. Dancing subjectivity as I experience it in my work is provisional and actively created. It is produced in real time. It isn’t static, but is produced in the moment of performance, so that while some aspects of it are ‘set’, codified, fixed, the exact configuration of the body in the moment of moving is chosen in that moment and brings together a heterogeneous set of things, ideas, histories, inscriptions and physical structures in a set of actions that originate in the performer’s desire.

It is important to emphasize that although this approach posits a subjectivism that is uniquely produced by each individual performer and uniquely negotiated between each choreographer/performer combination, what we are talking about is not a return to a modernist sensibility in which the self is essentialized. The physical
uniqueness of the body does not represent a ‘core’ self which is unavailable to
inscription by social forces. On the contrary, it is always and powerfully inscribed
in this way. What I am arguing is that those inscriptions are not the only
mechanism by which the self is produced. Material, genetic and biological aspects
of the body’s structure are available as elements that an individual may draw
together in what Deleuze and Guattari would call a subjective assemblage. The
individual need not interpret or construct the meaning (and hence the structure and
function) of physical aspects of the body in pre-determined ways, according to the
extant codes for bodily meaning in their immediate cultural milieu, but is able to
select contrary meanings, paradoxical constructions, connect parts of the body with
a multiplicity of different, distinctive, perhaps unheard of meanings. The
construction of physicality can be understood, like that of Deleuze and Guattari’s
child who adopts and manipulates drives and part objects to assemble a self, to be
an active construction, rather than a socially defined foregone conclusion.

What dance practice contributes uniquely to this argument is that it is able to
foreground and display physical difference, revealing the impossibility of any set of
cultural codes holding the body at bay, homogenizing it completely and eliminating
its difference. My own body and my own practice address this issue directly
through the fact of my physical abnormality and the modes of choreographic
practice I use to reveal its influence on my corporeal subjectivity.

2.7 Heterogeneity

Deleuze and Guattari’s theory provides a way of dealing with the disjunction which
occurs in my practice between what is overtly intertextual, referring to sign systems
both dance specific and non-dance specific, and what arises from the unique
physicality of the body. Deleuze and Guattari argue that there is no homogeneous
category of things that produce meaning. Signs, symbols, events, bodies, histories,
organizations, circumstances, all are potential elements of a rhizomic, meaning
producing, assemblage. Taking this approach allows the collapse of the signifying
field of the work, that is, the processes of intertextual representation, and the unique
physical subjectivity produced by the performer, onto a single ‘plane of
consistency’. All elements of the work, sign and non-sign, dance specific and
non-dance specific, inscriptive and unique, symbolic and material, can be assembled
into a rhizomic structure. In this formulation, all elements of the work function in combination, as a machine, to produce a unique set of meanings and a unique dancing subjectivity. The inscribed (trained, modern dancer's) body, and the unique (material, resistant, uncategorizable) body, are also collapsed onto a single plane of meaning.

This approach has the advantage of dispensing with the privileging of symbolic and linguistic processes that has categorized much of dance theory. This privileging implies a hierarchy of meaning; cultural convention produces language, language produces the body, the body produces dancing, dancing produces meaning. Deluze and Guattari's idea of the enunciative assemblage does away with this hierarchy so that cultural convention, language, bodies and dancing are all arranged together in an interconnecting, multi-directional and heterogeneous structure which produces meaning. The historical concern in the dance literature for the status of the body as a site of knowledge, and producer of meaning, which is equivalent to the realm of the mind and symbolic language, is uniquely assuaged using this model as the body is implicated in the production of meaning in the same way as a host of other disparate (and often just as marginalized) elements. The reduction of the moving body to the paradigms of the dominant medium of text is circumvented at the epistemological level.

In terms of dance analysis, this approach cuts to the chase. Rather than assembling a whole series of complex sign systems, sifting out their use and the way in which they are interrelated intertextually, as in approaches such as Adshead et al.'s (1988) and Foster's (1986), the idea of the assemblage allows the overall meaning of a work, the plane of intensity it creates, to be addressed. Dance analysis in fact becomes a new enunciative assemblage bringing together elements of the performance with elements of the analyst's choosing (for example, history, circumstances, events, physicalities, theories) to produce a new rhizomic structure. This allows the theorist/analyst the freedom to write creatively, avoiding the problems created by attempting to translate the dance by means of a set of signs that will always be inadequate to the task. This theoretical approach provides an alternative to translating according to pre-existing templates, or deep structures of meaning, which is to create a new rhizomic structure that connects new sets of elements in new configurations.
In relation to my own choreographic practice, this approach accounts for the relationship between the intertextual references which function to provide some shared cultural context for the work, and the particularity of the dancing physicality displayed within that context. These two aspects of the work are conceptually and philosophically distinct, but they produce meaning by their co-implication. They do not function as a simple juxtaposition. In Kim’s Style Guide for the Kinaesthetic Boffin, for example, the whole field of the work, both in its contextual representations and its physicality is in fact particular and subjective. It is not possible to posit a strict dichotomy between the context and intertextuality of the work representing the categorization of meaning according to cultural codes, which is then lined up against the physicality as unrepresentable. The two aspects of the work are inextricably linked. The use of autobiographical material in the dance situates me as a particular person with a particular history and perspective. The knowledge of who I am and what my personal relationship to the material is adds a dimension of meaning which is unique. The discourse about physical disability would have a very different significance if presented or even just performed by someone without my real physical disability. It is not just what is presented that is significant, but also who presents it, and these elements are woven inevitably together in the dance.

2.8 Desire, Delirium and Dance Analysis

Perhaps the most radical implications of Deleuze and Guattari’s ideas in relation to dance practice are those that arise from their discussion of desire. Contrary to the Lacanian perspective that desire is lack\(^4\), Deleuze and Guattari understand desire as production without reference to any exterior agency (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.154). That is, rather than desire being endlessly and inevitably produced in the same way in everyone through the acting out of the Oedipus complex, predicated on the idea of castration and a constant lack or unattainability, Deleuze and Guattari understand desire as an immanent process. They talk about desire as being produced by a ‘body without organs’ in which the body is not articulated or differentiated, and not organized into areas of more or less significance (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, pp.149–166).
Desire does not arise from externally generated and imposed codes of meaning, even the meanings attributed to the different structures of the body (limbs, organs, bones etc), hence the term ‘bodies without organs’. Instead, they understand desire as an assemblage that distributes intensities of pleasure, of joy, across the body in an immanent field that produces nothing outside the body. What is produced is pleasure distributed over the surface of the body.

There is, in fact, a joy that is immanent to desire as though desire were filled by itself and its contemplations, a joy that implies no lack or impossibility and is not measured by pleasure since it is what distributes intensities of pleasure and prevents them from being suffused by anxiety, shame and guilt (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.155)

They suggest that the distributions of desire across the body are always rhizomic. That is, they are a heterogeneous assemblage of disparate elements interconnected by the individual into a consistent structure.

So, there is no desire, says Deleuze, that does not flow into an assemblage, and for him, desire has always been a constructivism, constructing an assemblage (agencement), an aggregate: the aggregate of the skirt, of a sun ray, of a street, of a woman, of a vista, of a colour... constructing an assemblage, constructing a region, assembling (Deleuze in Parnet 1996).

Desire is never for a single thing, such as father, mother, or phallus as advocated by psychoanalytic models, but always about a multiplicity of elements linked by the individual. As Parnet describes it,

Delirium, linked to desire, is the contrary of delirium linked solely to the father or mother; rather we “delire” about everything, the whole world, history, geography, tribes, deserts, peoples, races, climates... (Parnet 1996.)

Desire is hence multi-factorial, complex and individual. It is also internally generated. The distribution of desire within an individual changes, and not necessarily in response to what is occurring at the level of historical circumstances. When the change is great enough, what they describe as a rupture, or line of flight occurs. The line of flight is a sudden reselection and reconfiguration of elements (both sign and non-sign) into a new assemblage. This leap occurs conceptually.
As they put it, nothing has changed and yet everything has. A new rhizomic structure that cuts across the existing symbolic organization (which categorizes things as one thing or another, a or b, woman or man, etc.) is brought into being.

They describe the line of flight, or rhizome, as not a new symbolic organization but a displacement of the binary structure of symbolic orders. Just having a multiplicity of elements is not enough to produce a line of flight. The elements must be arranged in a new way. They must be connected by new logics and in new configurations, and they must interconnect in a network over a consistent plane rather than merely asserting a new binary code of representation.

One only really escapes by displacing the dualism as one would a burden, when one discovers between the terms, whether two or more, a narrow pass like a border or frontier, which will make of the ensemble a multiplicity, independently of the number of particles. What we call an arrangement (agencement) is precisely such a multiplicity. (Deleuze and Parnet 1983, p.85)

Lines of flight can be blocked, halted, or rechannelled back into segmented systems of meaning. Deleuze and Parnet describe a continual flux between lines of flight, which move at high speed in new directions, re-segmentation into rigid structures that are stationary, and slow ‘molecular’ flows which bridge the two. They do not position the two extremes as alternatives, but rather envisage a constant movement, incorporating both stasis and movement, or what they call processes of de-territorialisation (ruptures, lines of flight) and re-territorialisation (re-solidification into binary forms) (Deleuze and Parnet 1983, pp.84–86).

Finally, Deleuze and Guattari, associate desire with the formation of lines of flight, the production of new rhizomic assemblages, and they link the production of joy to this process. Joy is produced by desire itself, that is, the creation of a line of flight, rather than being contingent on attaining certain pre-defined objects or goals. 15

This idea of desire as immanently generated within/by the individual allows my dance practice to be understood as a process of unique subjunctification while avoiding essentialist models. Desire encompasses rhizomic structures that combine intertextual and non-intertextual (physically unique) corporeal elements into a consistent surface of intensity. The whole structure of the dances, both the
uniqueness of the individual corporealities of the performers, and the incorporation of intertextual elements relating to dance specific codes of meaning (technique, training, choreographic conventions) and general cultural codes (literary, current events, etc.), can be situated as a potentially rhizomic structure which creates a line of flight. The line of flight de-territorializes existing systems of meaning (for example, modern dance technique, the well trained body) and produces a new and unique dancing subjectivity.

This concept allows the understanding of the specific pleasure, what Kristeva might call 'jouissance', which arises in the dancing of these works (Kristeva, 1986c, p.26). The pleasure arises because it is produced by desire generated by the body/self. In my case this desire is to produce my body as different, disabled even, in relation to conventional understandings of the trained dancing body, and inherently pleasurable in this difference. This desire is corporeal, arising from the way I constitute movement in terms of dynamic and the quality of the tonic musculature, and as such incorporates both what is named in dance terminology and what is unnamed, arising from what Kristeva would call the semiotic chora (Kristeva 1984, pp.25-30). It is also artistic however, and incorporates a disparate collection of elements that might be termed intertextual, relating to literary texts, modes of relationships, gestures, ideas and choreographic forms.

The idea of the rhizome, or line of flight, allows all these elements of my choreographic practice to be understood in relationship to each other. The tensions between language and body, intertextuality and unique subjectification are absolved using this approach, as they cease to be binary terms, signifying this, not that, one thing, not the other, but instead function together to create a unique and original structure.

This strategy provides a methodological approach that is able to deal with the difficulty in discussing the dances identified in sections 3.2.5 and 3.3. Discussing the dances becomes a continual process of re-mapping their relationship to the production of subjectivity. The maps are never adequate, because what they are trying to map (the dances) is also under constant revision with every performance and with every reflection on the dances after the performances.
The idea of the rhizome, which is constantly productive, provides a way of mapping the dances as heterogeneous physical, artistic and theoretical undertakings that does not assume that the map has a consistent core or a temporal stability. The process of cartography itself, if it is understood and undertaken as a rhizomic enterprise, can be allowed to change, grow and produce with each iteration. It is therefore never in danger of being mistaken for a comprehensive, static and authoritative representation of subjectivity in the dances. The implementation of such a strategy forms the basis of the final part of this exegesis.

1 See section 1.3 for a discussion of intertextual approaches to dance analysis, with particular focus on those of Adshead et al (1988) and Foster (1986).

2 See section 1.4, for a comparison of the strategies of these writers. Gardner, Dempster and Williams argue that dance is structurally unrepresentable to the extent that it defies the logic of the sign in which one signified is distinguished from all others. Daly argues that dance is not structurally unrepresentable, but often lies to a large extent outside the concepts of linguistic sign systems are able to designate.

3 See section 3.2. where the effect of focusing on the production of subjectivity through the cultivation of a personal movement style is to deflect focus from the effects of the choreographic structure in producing subjectivity.

4 This is not to suggest, however, that the arborescent and rhizomic structures form a new duality. See Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p.13, 1983, p.86), where they articulate the view that arborescent and rhizomic structures are implicated in each other’s production.

...there is no dualism between these two planes, the plane of transcendent organization and the plane of immanent consistency; it is rather from the form and subjects of the first plane that the second ceaselessly tears away particles among which there are now only relationships of speed and slowness (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, p.86)

5 See Buchanan (2000, pp.3-4), where he situates an attack on expressionism at the heart of Deleuze’s work. He suggests that it is the expression of the soul by means of an artefact (a book), that is the fundamental problem.

6 See Kristeva (1978, p.281) where she situates this denotive aspect of gesture within her own schema of the semiotic and symbolic, and defines gesture as a primarily semiotic practice. She suggests that gesturality is a “...semiotic text in process of production, and not so blocked by the closed structure of language.”

7 See Grosz (1994, p.180) where she defines Deleuze and Guattari’s project as

...the flattening out of relations between the social and the psychical so that there is neither a relation of causation (one- or two-way) nor hierarchies, levels, grounds, or foundations. The social is not privileged over the psychical (as crude Marxism entails); nor is the psychical privileged at the expense of the social (common charges directed against psychoanalytic theory). They are not parallel dimensions or orders, rather, they run into, as, and through each other.

8 See section 3.2.3 for a discussion of the ways in which the configuration of the body shifts in my dances.

9 See sections 3.2.3, 3.2.4, 3.3.5, and 3.3.6.
See Langer (1953, 1980), Sheets-Johnstone (1978, 1979), and Martin (1933, 1965), whose views are discussed in section 1.2.

11 See Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p.9), where they define a ‘plane of consistency’ as a surface with no depth. That is, no element on a plane of consistency stands for, or indicates another.

The point is that a rhizome or a multiplicity never allows itself to be overdetermined, never has available a supplementary dimension over and above its number of lines, that is, over and above the multiplicity of numbers attached to those lines. All multiplicities are flat, in the sense that they fill or occupy all of their dimensions; we will therefore speak of a plane of consistency of multiplicities, even though the dimensions of this ‘plane’ increase with the number of connections that are made on it.


13 See formalist dance theorists such as Siegal (1988), Jowitt (1997), Alter (1991), Jordan (1996), and Teoflores (1996). See also Foster (1996) who articulates the methodological imperative of locating the body as a site of meaning in and of itself in dance research.

14 In Lacan’s analysis, desire is an ever-present longing to fill a lack that is experienced at the heart of subjectivity because the very formation of the subject has involved an abdication of “...the magical feeling of oneness it had in the imaginary” (Mansfield 2000, p.45).

15 See Deleuze and Guattari (1983 pp. 73–82), where they describe three kinds of lines of movement: the segmentary, the subtle, molecular flow, and the rupture, or line of flight.

16 See Deleuze and Guattari (1987, pp. 154–155), where they differentiate joy from Lacan’s ‘pleasure as discharge’.

Then, facing south, the priest linked desire to pleasure. For there are hedonistic, even orgiastic, priests. Desire will be assuaged by pleasure; and not only will the pleasure obtained silence desire for a moment but the process of obtaining it is already a way of interrupting it, of instantly discharging it and unburdening oneself of it. Pleasure as discharge: the priest carries out the second sacrifice named masturbation (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.154).

Where Lacan sees desire as a profound lack that pleasure masks temporarily, Deleuze and Guattari see pleasure as something that is defined by desire in the sense of a positive production. That some of the modes of production they discuss, such as masochism, are not actually pleasant experiences is immaterial to them. They define desire in relation to action. This is similar to Randy Martin’s definition of desire in relation to dance. “Desire (is) defined as the physical agent of activity...In this sense, the body is the seat of desire and desire a mode of performance” (Martin 1992, p.10). Both Deleuze and Guattari and Martin define desire in terms of action, rather than of enjoyment.

17 See section 3.2.3 for a discussion of Kristeva’s concept of ‘jouissance’ as descriptive of the kind of movement experience I aimed to produce in Festival for a Quiet Life. The concept could equally be applied to Kim’s Style Guide for the Kinaesthetic Boffin.

18 See section 1.4 for a discussion of Kristeva’s concept of the semiotic and the symbolic in language.
PART 3
CHOREOGRAPHIC PROCESSES

3.1 Introduction to the Discussion of Choreographic Process

This chapter documents the process of investigation that took place over the making of the first three works. It discusses the questions I was asking in the process of making each work, and how these questions were woven into the choreographic process of each successive piece.

This discussion is undertaken from a point of view that is a composite of my awareness of the issues involved during the choreographic processes, and the ways in which my understanding of the process of inquiry changed upon reflection. In the process of writing, the activities of choreographic enquiry, reflection and theorization have been telescoped together and it is no longer possible to see them as separate, even though they may have been at the time.

This chapter articulates the tensions and difficulties involved in applying both the modernist and post-structuralist ideas of dance subjectivity, outlined in the previous chapter, to my concern to foreground uniquely individual bodies and subjectivities. These were the tensions that led me to the exploration of Deleuze and Guattari’s notions of subjectivity in relation to my work, which is dealt with in Part 2.

It is important to note, however, that the process of choreographic enquiry and reflection, and the examination of the work in relation to Deleuze and Guattari’s theory were not as discretely separated in time as these chapters are separated by pages. This separation is an artifact of writing. Significantly, this examination of my choreographic processes prefigures and anticipates the interweaving of dance practice and theory that is pursued in the final part of the exegesis. The enquiry into the production of dance subjectivity took place in the process of making the dances, but it was at the same time inevitably and inseparably theoretical.

The eschewing of a strictly formalist or movement analysis approach to discussing my process, in favor of a more philosophical tack, is at once a methodological
choice, and an outcome of the kind of choreographic enquiry I undertook. The process was one of constant mapping and re-mapping. I understand my role as a researcher as that of a cartographer. In the process of making the works and in the process of examining the processes by which they were made, I was constantly accumulating information of different orders: choreographic, technical, philosophical, theoretical and personal, and constantly re-mapping this information to address the production of subjectivity which took place. In this chapter, the process of map making is focused on the choreographic processes I used to generate the movement and the choreographic structures of the dances, however it is written from a perspective that is constantly accumulative, rather than one that adopts a strictly chronological approach.

3.2 Festival for a Quiet Life: The Question of Physical Difference

I felt as though the dancers could do anything. I could send them flying through the air in any shape or configuration. It was as if I was constructing their youth, their ability to take a movement phrase and bend it around to suit themselves, their ability to slide through the movement not forcefully, like technicians, but smoothly, silkily, with ease and pleasure.

I sent them dancing alone in the space, in solos, duets and trios, as if the whole weight of the dance rested on exactly how they did a particular movement, with what kind of weight, what kind of emphasis, what speed, with what relationship to the space. I allowed the pleasure they took in the movement and in the moments of dancing alone feeling the warmth of a spotlight to become the meaning.

I wanted to see what the dancers could do. They were students, the first cast, in their final year of dance training, all energy and promise, yet not sure of their capabilities. It seemed appropriate to make a work that would let them strut their stuff. I wanted to see my movement transformed by their particularity, their energy and their pleasure. I wanted to see them carve it up.

That's what I like to do. Dance allows me to reveal my physical difference in the presence of, and perhaps in defiance of, the norms of ballet and modern dance technique. I colour outside the lines on purpose, to demonstrate the failure of
physical inscription (training, technique) in the face of my physical difference and to reveal the pleasure that transgressive physicality affords me (Vincs, Journal entry, 1987).

3.2.1 Corporeality, Inscription and Difference

The production of particular kinds of dancing bodies is not simply the imprinting of a particular physical appearance and set of movement conventions. In terms of Godard's notion of corporeal poetics, the production of a particular kind of dancing body involves a reconstitution of a foundational moving subjectivity, that is, how the dancer understands herself to be and to mean (Godard in Louppe 1996a; in Dobbels & Rabant, 1996). Consequently, the process of physical inscription, in terms of particular corporeal poetics, is more than simply learning the movement. It is internalizing the intent, effort quality, and tonic muscularity underlying the movement.

For this reason, successful and comprehensive inscription of dancer's bodies in particular dance styles must take place over long periods of intensive work. Godard describes this process in relation to the corporeal styles developed by Merce Cunningham and Trisha Brown:

With all of those who made something very strong emerge...they all have in common this immensely long period of work with the dancers: a daily working regime by means of which the philosophy of the dance gradually infiltrates the symbolic circuits, and passes into the deep strata of the non-verbal. Failing which the choreographer's or teacher's only resource consists of multiplying the metaphors: either to try to invent a movement starting from a projection (reliving an event, etc.), or to try to effect a 'frame shift' by working from a privileged corporeal component (skin, gland, etc.) (in Louppe 1996c, p.18).

The physical inscription of dancers' bodies takes place as a result of their indoctrination, their willingness to submerge themselves within the physical, metaphoric and epistemological concerns of particular dance traditions over a period of time. This process of inscription has been represented as a system by which institutional power is wielded and the production of physicality in dance is controlled (Dumas, 1988; Innes, 1987). While it is important to understand the political implications of the inscriptive processes involved in dance training, it is also
necessary to bear in mind that this is the normative process by which dancers are produced in Western dance. Lawrence Louppe (1996b) presents the argument that physical inscription is a positive and necessary process in the production of dancers who are able to fully embody particular choreographic practices and complex systems of poetics inherent in them, and that contemporary dancers often do not study long enough with any one artist or system of training to be able to adequately embody that practice.

In the inscription of dancers by the corporeal philosophies and traditions with which they train and work, physical difference forms a constant limit. Processes of inscription can never be complete because they must always negotiate the unique physical and psychic make up of each dancer. This uniqueness encompasses both the biological individuality bestowed by genetics, and the uniqueness of the historical and cultural forces that inscribe the body/psyche.

This difference is resisted or cultivated to different degrees in different dance philosophies. In some dance traditions, such as ballet, differences between dancers are resisted and efforts made to minimize their effect. At least this is true at the training level. Once students become professional dancers and rise to positions of soloist and above, differences again become important and in fact form the basis of these promotions (Dumas, 1988). The differences in question however must remain within relatively narrow limits of physicality and technical style. In other dance traditions, such as modern dance, differences between performers are valued, and dancers are admired for their individual performances, although this difference is again only cultivated within definitions of what constitutes good technique.

In other dance practices however, difference is valued to the extent that it becomes a foundational paradigm within the politics of the work. The inscriptive practices of conventional dance training are consciously refused or denied. The work of the Judson Church choreographers in the early 1960's with pedestrian movement and untrained dancers might be viewed in this light. The pedestrian performers were not presented as failed dancers, but as testimony to a complete refusal of the inscriptions of traditional dance training on the part of the choreographers (Livet 1978, pp.18–19; Jowitt 1988, pp.303–338; Banos 1980b, pp.17, 60).
More recently, a diverse range of new dance practitioners (Dempster 1995/96, pp.2–3) have undertaken the more radical task of actively dismantling and rewriting the inscriptive codes of traditional dance techniques, using various physical practices, including body therapies such as Feldenkrais, Ideokinesis and Alexander to reverse the inscriptive forces of ballet and modern dance training. While the aesthetic and political agendas motivating these practices are by no means uniform, they have in common a resistance to paradigms of visual display, the concept of the ideal dance body, (and often to the stereotypical gender roles associated with traditional dance genres), and a refusal of the body as merely an instrument for the expression of psychic interiority. These practices situate the body as a site of knowledge and meaning in and of itself (Foster 1996, p.185; Gardner 1999, p.191, Dempster 1994, p.48). This foregrounding of the body itself and not the body as representative of interiority, and the refusal of visual spectacle as a motivation for movement, has allowed physical differences between performers to become prominent as movement paradigms are defined in conceptual terms rather than in terms of specific appearances, and in terms of the tactile and kinaesthetic senses which generate them rather than in terms of the resulting appearance of the movement.

This is not to say that these practices do not impose physical inscriptions that are characteristic and recognizable. On the contrary, these kinds of approaches produce very specific modes of embodiment that constitute new forms of corporeal poetics. The point is that the modes of corporeal organization these approaches produce is more generative of visible physical difference between dancers because much of the inscriptive coding is based on the interior sensation of movement, which is highly subjective and individual, rather than a homogenized visual outcome. The generation of the movement in new dance practices is often based on the interior motivation of the dancer using strategies such as visual imagery, kinaesthetic or tactile sensation. In this way, the motivation of the movement is shared between dancers but the physicality of the outcome is not as tightly controlled, as is the case in traditional dance training methods.

As a result of this orientation towards difference, new dance practices produce a radically different kind of dancing body to the familiar ballet or modern dance body. As Elizabeth Dempster writes in relation to the first wave of postmodern choreographers and those who have followed this line of investigation, these
practices "...refused virtuosic display, the display of mastery in which dance performance traditions had been grounded. In doing so (they) refused, withheld or denied traditional audience pleasures" (Dempster 1994/95, p.47).

The new dance practitioners who followed this line of development produced and presented the body defined by the senses of touch and kinesthesia. This body is not communicative in terms of what is usually understood as gestural language, i.e. shared understandings of the meanings of certain movements and certain dynamic movement intentions. The project is in fact to undo this kind of gestural language in order to privilege aspects of the body that are marginalized in traditional dance paradigms.6

The nurturing of this kind of body is something that takes many years of concentrated practice. As Louppe has argued, the kind of specialization required to embody a radically different kind of corporeality is something that was taken for granted in the context of modern dance. He describes the erosion of this expectation during the mid 1980’s in Europe as dancers were increasingly expected to be able to move between styles and genres, to be adaptable, versatile, and catholic in their movement practices. He describes an era in which

...dancers are no longer formed by a constitutive technique, one that gives them what writer Louis Calaferte (an expert on bodily matters) called our 'visible part of eternity', but are happy to glean whatever operational savoir faire they need to produce the aesthetic flavour of the month (Louppe 1996b, p.65).

He sees this as the result of a kind of hybrid dance practice that is due to

... the emergence of 'auteur' dance, in which diverse elements are brought together at the fiat of personal fantasy, dispensing with the need to consciously identify the materials involved or for the actors articulating them to achieve a corporeal, sensible and ideological unity (Louppe 1996b, p.64).

The Australian situation is significantly different in that a kind of hybridization between ballet and modern and new dance practices has been in currency for much longer. The dominance of ballet over what is considered and funded as mainstream dance in this country has led to a situation where, in order to work with many of the
funded contemporary dance companies, dancers are expected to be proficient in ballet technique as well as modern, contemporary and new dance techniques. The majority of tertiary dance programs in Australia influential in training professional contemporary dancers consequently maintain ballet streams which students are expected to participate in and to which significant percentages of contact hours are devoted. While a full discussion of this issue on a national level is beyond the scope of this exegesis, for the purposes of this argument the effects, in terms of hybridization of style in the training and work practices of dancers, are similar to those Louppe has described in Europe.

Dancers who have specialized in one particular dance practice are now the exception rather than the rule. The dominating paradigm is one of eclecticism and the synthesis of many different influences on the part of the dancer. This is so whether one examines the training of dancers or the work practices and career paths of professional dancers.

My use of predominantly young performers in Festival for a Quiet Life determined that I would not be dealing with dancers who had been working long enough to thoroughly embody very specific approaches to modern or new dance. In the context of increasing hybridization of modern dance practice described above, it could be assumed that these dancers would have an eclectic set of stylistic influences. While the dancers brought with them influences drawn from heavily inscriptive dance practices which work to normalize the physical appearance and style of dancers (for example, ballet and modern dance), these dancers also, however, brought with them a reliance on and commitment to their own physical histories and corporeal constitutions. This second aspect of their work arose because they had not been working long enough in any one kind of modern or contemporary dance practice to completely internalize a corporeal poetic from the outside, and this forced them to rely on their own corporeal histories and preferences. This reliance on a personal corporeal organization was further emphasized in this group of performers because I actively sought out dancers for this piece who I felt demonstrated an aesthetic commitment to their own, unique, corporeal histories and resources.

This choice of dancers was a strategy for foregrounding physical individuality in the context of a group dance. My concern was to foreground physical difference,
but the approaches used in new dance practices to produce difference in performance were not practical in the context of the length of the rehearsal process and the backgrounds of the dancers. Rather than attempt to subvert the influences of my dancers' training in the course of the rehearsal period by creating radically new ways of moving, my strategy was to look for difference within the limits of modern dance technique and choreographic conventions. In doing this, I was relying on and (actively fostering in the rehearsal process) the commitment of the dancers to their own personal corporeal resources and histories.

This strategy produced difference in the microsm of detail rather than by creating a new kind of dance genre. What I was concerned with, therefore, was not the avoidance of the conventions of particular genres of dance, specifically in this case mainstream modern dance, and the kinds of physical inscription they bring with them, but a demonstration of the failure of those inscriptive processes to completely subjugate even the most diligently trained bodies.

To demonstrate that failure, the inscriptive codes of the relevant dance traditions must be referenced within the work. Otherwise, there is no indication of the conventions that the individuality of those bodies breaches and therefore no indication that the dancing bodies in question might have been otherwise. To this end, the movement style and the choreographic conventions of Festival for a Quiet Life remain within the modern dance genre. Muscularity, virtuosity, weightedness, free flow, ongoing momentum and reference to dramatic and emotional states characterize the style of the dance. Within these parameters however, the movement was also actively designed to force the issue of the physical uniqueness of the dancers, by working against their abilities and tendencies to homogenize and normalize the movement according to known inscriptive codes.

This was achieved by the creation of movement material that is both intricately detailed and highly idiosyncratic. The movement phrases are based on the particular embellishments and ornamentations of style that arise when I dance. The movement contains elaborate detail such as odd finger movements, embellishments of wrist and arm movements, and unusual twists in the body. While conventional modern dance vocabulary often forms a basis for the movement, it is distorted or embellished by shifting the normal relationships between upper and lower body halves, and by the addition of torso and arm ornamentation. In addition, the spatial
arrangements do not conform to the directions normally used as a reference grid in modern dance, i.e. the six primary directions forward/back, up/down and side/side, and the pure diagonals that form the spatial grid against which movements are usually named in modern dance. The directions are rather hybrids, set in the spaces between the standard directions by which dance is normally calibrated.

These distortions of known dance vocabulary and movement style force the issue of physical differences between dancers because they introduce a level of specificity which is not coded within the genre, and which is therefore outside the inscriptive field of those dance traditions. This specificity comes from my own physical disability. My body can never be inscribed completely by and can never conform fully to dance codes because my body has structural abnormalities that no system of dance training can eliminate. Consequently, movement generated from my own physicality will always contain elements that are outside the boundaries of known dance codes. When other dancers perform this movement, they are forced to work to some extent outside normal codes of bodily inscription in dance and this allows their own physical differences, and by inference, their own corporeal inscriptions through which they constitute a moving subjectivity, to become visible. What is being referenced in this process are the individual inscribed modes of corporeal organization the dancers bring with them to the project, which include the influence of dance training and the more general (and yet in a familial sense, more historical and specific) social influence on the functional and structural organization of their movement.

The risk with this strategy is that instead of allowing the performers to display their own unique physicalities, their differences will simply be subsumed by a new inscriptive template formed from my movement preferences. In all choreographic practices where choreographers construct movement phrases which dancers learn, this kind of overwriting of the dancers’ own corporeal styles with that of the choreographer becomes a possibility. In modern and contemporary dance the ideological valuing of difference and the concomitant commitment to specific notions (although these notions may vary from practice to practice) of what constitutes good dance technique, sets up an inherent tension between the desire for dancers to conform to the corporeal paradigms set up by the choreographer and to simultaneously transgress those limits. This tension is endemic in contemporary dance and the way in which it is resolved to a large degree determines the nature of
choreographers’ practices. In some practices the imprinting of the choreographer’s physicality on the dancers is understood as a given, and efforts are not made to limit this process. At the other end of the spectrum, some choreographers either ask their dancers to generate movement or perform various choreographic manipulations on their own movement in order to eliminate as far as possible the corporeal subjectivity of the choreographer from the finished work.

My own processes of making movement material for Festival for a Quiet Life negotiated this tension in a very specific way. Because my movement material was generated deliberately out of the idiosyncrasy of my physical disability, it was impossible for other dancers to replicate exactly. Because none of the performers shared my physical abnormalities, it was impossible for them to perform the movement in exactly the same way that I do it. This prevented the individual differences between the performers being completely subsumed by a new inscriptive template formed from my own movement preferences, and allowed space for the physical uniqueness of the performers to emerge.

This is not necessarily a unique approach in that many, if not most choreographers, create out of the individuality and uniqueness of their physical make up. What is perhaps unusual is the degree of physical difference involved. After all, “...to get into most dance schools you have to have a physiotherapy examination which is designed to weed out people like me.”¹⁴ This ensures that the physical differences cultivated are more pronounced and more consciously a focus of the work than is often the case.

This is not to claim that the work deals with physical disability per se in the way that companies like Candoco in the United Kingdom, Axis Dance Company in the United States, or State of Flux in Australia do, by involving dancers who are profoundly physically disabled. The point in my practice is not the disability itself, which is mild. The point is the insertion of disability as a marker of incontrovertible difference into the context of the inscriptive processes of dance technique, where there is always at least the implication that bodies will (should) be homogenized in terms of corporeal style.
3.2.2 Corporeal Poetics in Festival for a Quiet Life

There's an explosive energy that is really me. When I learned ballet as a teenager I used to like to jump with the boys. I lived for grand allegro. Developmentally, psychologically, even sociologically, that bravura energy is perhaps a construction of youth, a means by which the young identify themselves as such, and an expectation to which their bodies are socially inscribed. Perhaps this is simply physiological, a developmental stage, except that I never lost the thrill of that kind of movement, even now that I've reached my forties and have acquired a newly post-pregnant and lactating body, with less certain shock absorbing capabilities (Vinco, Journal entry, 1999).

Having identified my own physical difference, my own personal and subjective corporeal inscriptions, as the main source of the movement material for Festival for a Quiet Life, it is possible to identify some of the underlying paradigms which inform this corporeality using Godard's idea of tonic musculature and Laban Movement Analysis.15

Although this task inevitably involves generalization and homogenisation of the specific body, it is important to acknowledge the power of the inscriptions which have historically shaped the moving subject and the characterisable movement patterns or tendencies these give rise to. These areas of patterning determine the overall or general corporeal poetics of a particular choreographic practice.

The throw
I like to throw movement. I like to throw it down, slamming it in faster than gravity. Throwing and hitting are often blurred in my movement vocabulary. To hit is to half throw, to throw is to have to hit, to counter resistance, to shatter resistance. The contradiction is between free and bound flow. The extreme resistance of the space to movement that generates bound flow is assumed and anticipated. The resistance is constantly hit through, smashed to allow the explosive release into free flow.

Moving isn't easy and it isn't a given. You have to fight for it. This is Bartenieff's (1980, p.51) fighting body. The urge is to fly, to escape the ground and go hurtling through space. You can push the ground away and go up, or you can throw (hit through) yourself forwards, sideways, backwards through the space. But it has to be done with a certain violence. The space won't just let you move, without any effort.
The hit/throw is about what I wasn’t allowed to do. I spent months in plaster casts and iron calipers. Now I smash resistance to break into that glorious realm of free flow. “Don’t hit it in”, a teacher of mine used to say. She didn’t see the need for that excess of energy. But for me, the excess is the point. There was never enough movement allowed me and now I want too much, as much as I can get.

The twist
The movement isn’t about going somewhere. It isn’t narrative in that sense. It’s about going, per se. So I twist, this way and that way in the space. Again, it’s about excess, about as much movement as I can fit in. It’s also about finding a way to go when forwards is denied you: anything, anything to be able to move. Smoothed out, it performs the same function but it lets you glide, sail as you spin. Take in the scenery. See everything, in front of you, behind you, all around you.

The motivation is usually from the upper torso or the arm, often the elbow. It’s about how you would initiate movement if you didn’t trust your legs. I didn’t, for many years, so I invented other means of getting going. I remember swimming down Olympic sized pools as a child (they thought it would be good for me, like ballet) and my legs giving out about a third of the way down. Thereafter they would just trail, giving the occasional faint indication of an up and down movement. I’d keep going with the strength of my arms and shoulders, which I enjoyed. I used to commando crawl as an infant, dragging a plaster cast that came up to my armpits.

The path of the twist itself is about complicating, about trying to fit too much in. It’s the antithesis of the straight line, the direct path. In Laban terms, its indirect, constituting the constant exploration of possibilities. It could never be as straight forward as just going straight forward. You have to look for the complexities. At slower speeds and smaller magnitudes, it turns into the Laban spatial attitude of carving. It’s about caressing the space, making it visible as you draw curves and spirals through it.

The weight
There has to be some respite for breath, some acknowledgment of fatigue, limits, mortality. This exists in the softening into the ground, the quiet weighted moments that punctuate the exertion. Giving weight to another, giving weight to the ground,
allowing the body to disarm gives time for pause. It affirms the failure of energy, the limits of muscularity, and displays this failure for all to see. Sometimes it’s awkward and that’s all right. Sometimes it’s gentle, affirming the continuous bedrock of the gravitational field in which I exist and that’s fine too. Sometimes it’s a sudden loss of courage at a crucial moment. In Laban terms, weight is to do with the self, the ‘I’, the assertion or otherwise of one’s presence and will (Bartenieff 1980, p.53). In this context weight is about the ambivalence of the will, moments of doubt in what is otherwise indomitable. Sometimes these doubts are accepted, embraced. Occasionally they are allowed to become the unthinkable, the indication that the will could fail.

The jump
It isn’t about the suspension of weight, or about transcendence in the C19th otherworldly or ethereal sense as is often the case in ballet, but rather about sheer exhilaration. It’s about flying through the space. You take off fast, push with the feet and lift the centre of gravity. It’s motivated from the head, chest and feet simultaneously; that’s how you get the speed and the height. The hips were unreliable, so I bypassed them, used the extremities and the centre of the body had to follow by interpolation.

Jumping is about pushing. I don’t so much push the floor away as launch myself off it. It’s a trampoline. I only come down to bounce back up again. Or bounce sideways, or forwards, or around. A teacher of mine once said, “You have to really like being in the air to learn ballet because you’re there two thirds of the time.” That was the only part of ballet I did like, but that passion sustained me through eighteen years of it. Another teacher of mine once said she’d like to get a bell jar and put it over me, just to keep me on the ground for a few seconds.

The space
The space is there to be used. I always want to stay wide, to expand into it, even in flight. I’m always going out in space, connected to it. What’s there, what can I get, where can I go? How big? How wide? Again it’s the motivation of movement from the extremities. The centre, the main proximal joints of the legs, are unreliable, so forget them. Send out the extremities and the centre will just have to come along for the ride. In Laban terms it’s the far space, the edge of the kinesphere. It’s about staying wide and expansive in flight. Again, as always, it’s about how much
can I get? I want every ounce of movement I can have. Someone once said to me “If you don’t enjoy dancing then there’s no point. You sure as hell don’t get paid much for it.” Well, I enjoy it.

3.2.3 Corporeal Uniqueness

Undertaking this kind of articulation of the corporeal poetics of a dance, such as *Festival for a Quiet Life*, is problematic because it implies that these poetics are stable. The articulation of categories or paradigms which describe the way movement material is constituted assume that the body that dances this material is always constituted the same way, and that the way a body is constituted can be coherently and comprehensively defined. The act of attempting such a definition carries these implicit assumptions, and what is written is taken for the whole story about the body.

While acknowledging the power of the historical inscription of the body to produce consistent and articulable patterns, and indeed the power of systems of movement analysis which themselves orient us towards understanding dance in these terms, I will argue that there is a level of specificity in the moving body which problematises any system or paradigm which can be formulated. It is not that the preceding description is not true. It is just that it is not the whole truth, and it is not always true.

The specificity of the body is both temporal and spatial in nature. The temporal specificity of the body arises from the understanding that the structure of the body is not necessarily stable over time. The spatial specificity of the moving body has its origin in the physical uniqueness of the bodies on which inscriptive forces work in the production of the material structure of the body.

The temporal specificity of the way in which bodies are constituted arises from the argument that Godard puts forward, that the dancing body is not produced sequentially, the end result of a compounding of successive historical inscriptions, but functionally, rearranging its configurations of energy and movement pathway according to the functional demands of the moment as much as to the historical patterning it brings with it. Godard (in Dobbels 1996, p.45) describes how, in his work with cancer patients at the National Centre for Cancer Research in Milan, he is able to effect radical change on the dynamic qualities of gestures by calling into
play different object relations. That is, by suggesting new relationships (stories) between the patient and the object, he is able to help patients modify the quality of the tonic musculature that supports the action.

To give a very simple example, instead of saying to the patient; ‘Grab the bottle or the weight that’s over there’, which she will do with a particular tonic state, I tell her: ‘That object is going to grab your hand, the object is attracting your hand.’ If the proprioceptive and exteroceptive relation is modified, immediately the tonic function of the organization of the gestures is changed...When the (hi)story that’s in the process of unfolding in relation to the object is modified, it’s staggering to see the immediate modification of the body state (Godard in Dobbels, p.45).

The implication of this is that the quality and meaning of movement can be radically altered by changing the object relations, and the concomitant histories attached to those relations, by which a dancer understands or constructs a movement. Working with these kinds of shifts in rehearsal processes is commonplace, and this kind of methodology was used extensively in defining the movement material in Festival for a Quiet Life. For example, the opening hand gesture was constructed verbally and spatially, as well as kinaesthetically, through the words “I can go so far, so far, as far as I can”.

What is perhaps more important, and more disturbing to the notion of a temporally stable corporeal poetic, is that these shifts also occur throughout rehearsal periods and into performance. The corporeal style articulated above in relation to throwing, twisting, deploying weight, jumping and using space is utterly relevant to the process of choreographing Festival for a Quiet Life. In retrospect, however, it seems far less relevant to the ultimate performance of the dance because these aspects were mitigated by the different ways in which the performers appropriated and manipulated the material in rehearsal and during performances. Changes in the material were instituted as the dancers worked as much with each other as much as with the original material. The imperative to articulate this ‘style’ became less important in my direction of the work than the imperative of working with the way in which the dancers were shifting and constructing the dance as a group.
Deleuze and Guattari (1987, pp.3-25) describe the idea that organization can be fluid rather than static by referring to maps which are constantly revised, and in which the configuration of the elements (and even the elements themselves) are always changing. The map is a model for fluid organization of meaning that contradicts the idea of meaning as a tracing, in which all constructions are copies of preexisting deep structures or generative paradigms.

The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible, to a constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group or social formation (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.12).

Godard’s description of the body is strikingly similar:

If I had to point out to you a way of getting to a particular place in the city, I would have two options; I could either situate it with the help of a map and spatial orientations, or I could indicate a route to you: turn right, then after the post office turn left, and so on. The second option necessitates language, and you can’t reverse two propositions without getting lost (chronology). This kind of orientation—by means of directions, routes—is that of the theatre writer, as well as of the historian and the psychoanalyst, all of whom are looking to reconnect a thread of events. On the other hand, a dancer operates more like a geographer, accumulating maps, intra-corporeal dispositions, geographical situations which subsequently produce a history. Given that language (the route) is not the primary necessity, a quality of wandering is created, a nomadism that perhaps partly escapes the history’s determinism (in Louppe 1996c, p.14).

I understand the dancing bodies of the performers in the context of Festival for a Quiet Life as a map in which intensities can constantly shift and regroup, lived moment by moment as a functionality rather than as a tracing which is stable, consistent and historically pre-determined. While allegiances to particular versions of phrases and specific directions of mine provided areas of stability, the dancers were also abila and in fact forced to re-organize the way in which they danced in response to the movement itself, and in response to rehearsal and performance situations.
I deliberately left inconsistencies and awkward moments in the movement material by using the idiosyncrasies of my own body in making the movement phrases. When I first made the phrases, they contained many instances of raised shoulders, of excessive tension, and of actions thrown down faster than gravity. Over the process of refining the dance, however, these details changed even in my own body. I was influenced by the way the dancers smoothed the movements out and made them flow more seamlessly than I did. In addition, my familiarity with the material coincided with a reduction in the necessity I had once felt to drive the movement so hard, to make the point so vigorously. This drive for authorship was transferred gradually to the choreographic structure of the work. The uniqueness of the movement gradually became less important to me than the placement of the movement within the context of the dance as a whole.

In rehearsing the original versions of Festival for a Quiet Life at University of Minnesota and Rusden Dance Theatre, I tended to provide detailed spatial pathways and verbal instructions regarding effort quality (for example “do this movement as if you are sinking”, “this movement is as tense as you can make it”). In rehearsing the final version, however, I found that I had internalized these instructions in my own body to the extent that I no longer needed to articulate them. It seemed clearer for me to simply move with the dancers. This made their interpretations of the material less precisely choreographed, but more directly connected with their own sense of the logic of the phrases. My own physical sense of what the phrases were had become more subtle and more present in actually dancing them than in explaining and articulating them.

The spatial specificity with which bodies are constituted, that is the material differences between bodies, was also important in the way in which the corporeal poetics of Festival for a Quiet Life shifted during rehearsal. Because the inscriptive experience of each individual is unique, structural and functional differences between bodies at the muscular, skeletal, neurological and fascial levels result in a slippage between the movement signs that make up particular dance-specific codes of meaning and the physical actuality of movement danced by individuals. Physical, material, differences between the dancers resulted in unique and specific dancing bodies and the unique aspects of these bodies remain incompletely determined by inscriptive codes. The slippage between the convention and the actuality remains
unnamed and undefined and it becomes impossible to completely represent the physical uniqueness of the dancer within any system of inscription.

It could be argued that physical individuality in dance arises not from a failure of inscriptive processes, but rather from the unique configuration of inscriptive forces, arising from the unique family, social and cultural history of each individual. This argument allows the position that the dancing body is completely produced by the all-pervasive forces of social inscription that arise in both familial, general cultural and dance-specific spheres. In this view, the dancing body is understood as produced, represented and always mediated. There is no neutral or given body, but only representations of the body constructed within sign systems specific to particular socio-historical discourses. This position distances dance theory from the romanticized understanding of the self which characterized the rhetoric of modern dance during the first half of the C20th, in which choreographic practice was understood as the expression of an essentialised, biologically given interiority of the choreographer.

Elizabeth Grosz’s (1994, 1995) argument that subjectivity can be understood to arise from the physical, corporeal framework of the individual body can be used to question whether bodies can be completely defined by the ‘languages’ of social inscription.

For Grosz, understanding subjectivity as corporeal provides a means of countering the assumption of the body’s neutrality in determining knowledge, which allows the further assumption that there is a singular, unified perspective on knowledge, and masks the fact that this perspective has been defined only in masculine terms.

Bodies “...raise the question of difference in a way that minds don’t” (Grosz 1994, p. vii). Because bodies are implicated in the production of subjectivity, material, physical differences in the female body give rise to specific and different kinds of subjectivity that lie outside the systems of meaning, and hence inscription, which have been formulated by a patriarchal society, and which do not take into account feminine experience. Feminine subjectivity lies outside the limits of cultural sign systems. It remains unarticulated as it lies outside the linguistic structures that control the naming of experience.
Likewise, in a dance context, aspects of individual physicality can be understood to lie outside what is culturally defined as meaningful (good, interesting, virtuosic, expressive) in dance. My understanding of my choreographic practice is that my own physical difference, embodied in unique movement material, works against the idea that the body can be completely produced and understood through processes of cultural inscription. This process is also at work when each of the dancers forms their own version of my movement material. That which is unnamed in the dancer’s body resurfaces in performance to attest the physical individuality of the dancer and to signify private spaces in the body that have not been overwritten by social conventions of meaning.

Julia Kristeva, in relation to literature, calls this realm of unnamed experience ‘jouissance’, which she defines as “...the privileged areas where this is put to non-utilitarian use, the areas of transgression and pleasure: one thinks specifically of ‘art’, of ritual, of certain aspects of myths etc. (Kristeva 1986c, p.26).” This is the internal physiological energy and experience that is not labeled within the linguistic sign systems of an individual’s society. It remains outside the symbolic systems of language and therefore outside the realm of shared cultural meaning and outside the social contracts which define the role and function of individuals within a society. Kristeva used this concept to discuss the marginalisation of feminine experience by the failure of patriarchal culture to name that experience within the dominant sign systems, and in fact the impossibility of representing that experience within those systems (Kristeva 1986a).}

In relation to the interpretation of choreographic material in my practice, physical differences between dancers are manifest in the microsm or detail of how a movement is performed. What I am talking about here is not movement invention. It is not a question of coming up with movements no one has ever seen before, even were that possible. It is rather a question of the idiosyncratic detail of the movement and the unique performances this draws forth; the exact curl of the wrist, the exact height of a jump, or the exact trajectory of a fall. This is what I am looking for when I make a dance, whether I dance myself or whether I choreograph a dance for someone else, and what I look for when I watch someone else’s dance.

This unique movement is pleasurable when I perform it, and when I watch it in others. I infer that it is pleasurable to other performers but of course I cannot know.
that for certain. In terms of my choreographic practice and the kind of movement I select, it is not pleasurable because it is meaningful in terms of particular choreographic, technical or expressive paradigms. It may well be pleasurable in these terms, but this is incidental rather than central to my selection of it. This movement is in fact pleasurable to the degree that it remains outside conventions of this kind. The detail of this movement is to some extent outside the inscriptive codes of dance traditions and is not completely overwritten with the social contract. It does not therefore carry the same associations of others watching, judging, assigning consequences on the basis of where we fit, if we fit, within the social order. The pleasure of this movement, if it does not arise from external factors, how it fits within the social order, must then arise immanently within the body/self, signifying the existence of private spaces in the body outside the inscriptions of technique and social convention.

The pursuit of this signification, and the implications it has for how subjectivity is produced in the body, was at the centre of my choreographic strategy in making Festival for a Quiet Life. I chose movement that felt significant in this way when I performed it, and worked to foster that feeling in the dancers when they performed it.

3.2.4 Difference in Festival for a Quiet Life
I sent them dancing in patterns, canons, duos against trios, so that the complexity of the movement phrases set against each other was the essence of the dance, and my pleasure in the design of speed versus stillness, unison versus complexity, order amidst the fast moving limbs became visible.

I sent them close to each other, gently hugging, standing still in each other’s arms. I sent them flying dangerously close to each other, a mass of shapes in the air, sailing by each other with precision timing. (We called that part ‘precision watches’, after the Lois Grenfield advertisement). I sent them pounding in unison the weight of their collective presence through the space. I sent them every way I could through the space, allowing their pleasure and mine in the malleability of space/time/force, their presence and my structures both at the heart of the dance (Vincs, Journal entry, 1997).
The aim and the challenge of the choreographic process for *Festival for a Quiet Life* was to allow space for the dancer's own individual movement values, their own sense of inner enjoyment of movement, their own sense of detail and idiosyncrasy and their own consequent moving subjectivity to be displayed within the conventions of modern dance genre. In essence, I was looking for the dancers' individuality and difference within the context of the modern dance genre. The use of my own idiosyncratic physicality to generate the movement was designed to define territory outside the accepted codes of modern dance techniques in which the dancers could explore their own moving subjectivity.

Ironically, the attention to intricate detail within the movement material that was intended to draw the dancers away from codified ways of executing modern dance movement in fact raised issues of conformity and homogenization. Attention to detail is a feature of highly inscriptive dance techniques such as ballet that are taught by reference to the visual result and rely heavily on imitation. The attention to detail in my work, although intended to have the opposite effect, often led the dancers to try to do it 'exactly right'.

This gave rise to a tendency to homogenize the movement, to edit out the inconsistencies and make it conform to pre-existing and known dance styles. The effect of this was the production of movement that was more generic and less precise. It was as if the dancers were performing a précis of the phrase rather than the phrase itself. A shorthand, communicative version was produced which indicated movements (this is the movement I'm doing now, you know, this movement) rather than actually performing the movement.

I worked by allowing what I perceived to be individuality and difference in the movement to pass uncorrected and largely unremarked except to say 'that's fine, just do it like that', as I found that when I tried to articulate what it was that was personal and idiosyncratic in the way a dancer performed a movement, the dancers often responded by changing the performance to make it conform more closely to what they understood by what I said, and often the idiosyncrasy of the movement disappeared. What was happening was that in the discussion and particularly the naming of movement, the qualities which lay outside shared technical codes tended to be lost. The naming of movement qualities brought with it a set of associations
that did not exactly match the quality of the movement as the individual dancer experienced and understood it corporeally.  

While I gave the dancers explicit explanations of the spatial, rhythmic and dynamic detail of the movement material, I gave no particular instructions of how they should ‘feel’ in dancing the work, preferring to allow the way they dealt with the physical movement qualities to take precedence. On interviewing the dancers of the original cast, it became clear that for some dancers the physical detail of the movement was enough to work with, while others perceived this non-interference as a semantic void that they needed to fill. Specifically, while the first group of dancers was content to allow their own kinaesthetic experiences of the movement to form the basis of meaning within the work, the second group felt the need to construct specific dramatic narratives in order to make the dance meaningful for themselves as performers.

This highlights the issue of difference in the construction of dance in a different way. Not only are the stylistic aspects of movement vocabularies inscribed in dancers’ bodies, but the ways in which dance is understood to be meaningful are also inscribed. The genre of modern dance which Festival for a Quiet Life references brings with it expectations that the movement will communicate emotional meaning through the formal movement qualities, that the choreographic structure will make reference to dramatic interpersonal situations, and that these two processes exist in tension with processes of abstraction which provide a level of ambiguity and a means of universalizing, i.e. depersonalizing or generalizing the symbolic content of the work.

By not dictating the dancers’ understanding of the movement material, space was allowed for dancers’ own inscriptions, in terms of their understanding of how dance means, to enter the work. For some of the dancers, the production of meaning in dance relied heavily on the extent to which the dance was narrative in a dramatic sense, i.e. to the extent that it represented specific, situational, interpersonal relations. This led them to impose this kind of narrative on the choreographic structure. For other dancers the formal qualities of the movement itself were more important in producing meaning, either as communicative of emotional states or as a means of abstraction.
My choreographic practice allowed this ambiguity as all of these possibilities were built into the choreographic structure. Different sections of the work overtly made reference to each of the conventions of representation mentioned, that is, communication of emotion, dramatic narrative and abstract movement. Narratives of a dramatic nature were suggested by the relationships between the dancers, dancing in couples, alone or in groups, their proximity and connection or distance and unrelatedness, and the references in the movement to gestures such as hugging, lifting, carrying, pushing, touching. The communication of emotional states was suggested by the emphasis on the dynamic qualities in the movement as well as the gestural or narrative contexts in which it appears. The use of abstract movement worked against both of these tendencies to reposition the work within the context of movement for movement’s sake, that is, the understanding of movement phrases as interesting in terms of their structure and dynamic qualities, regardless of any communicative or representative qualities they may have.

These three conventions of representation were woven through the dance so that while certain sections are obviously skewed in one direction or the other, all three were present in all sections, and the structure of the dance was to present them as a montage. Within sections and even within movement phrases, these conventions were switched, alternated and juxtaposed so that no one section emerged as homogeneous or consistent in its mode of representation. This produced a certain ambiguity within the structure that allowed the dancers flexibility in terms of their constructions of meaning throughout the dance.

This space, which allowed the physical, stylistic and epistemological differences of each dancer to be manifest in performance presented certain risks. Firstly, there was a certain loss of choreographic control or authorship inherent in this kind of process, which meant that ultimate control over the outcome remained with the dancers. Secondly, given that the work was constructed in terms of the conventions of modern dance, the risk was that the dancers (and audiences) would construct it purely within these terms, editing out the differences, the failure of physical inscriptive processes, which the dance was designed to reveal. The result of this is that ‘their presence and my structures’ sometimes worked in harmony to produce a commonly understood dance product, but also worked in tension to produce ambiguity and multiple constructions of meaning throughout the work.
3.2.5 Narrative Structure in *Festival for a Quiet Life*

The emphasis in this discussion on the production of subjectivity in *Festival for a Quiet Life* through the construction of the movement quality is necessary, however it also raises a problem. A discussion of this kind tends to skew the analysis very strongly towards the detail of the movement material, to the neglect of the choreographic structures and forms in the work, which lend a narrative quality.

It is possible to read a clear narrative progression in the work in terms of how the dancers are grouped and in terms of what kind of performative frame they are working in at different points of the dance. The dance begins with a solo male figure, who dances on his own. Then there is a gradual accumulation of dancers and of complexity: from one to two to five dancers in the space, and from solo movement, to unison, to a two part cannon, to a three part cannon. This can be read as a shift from a single perspective to a group perspective, with the focus maintained on the production of a subjectivity couched in formalist movement terms.

Following the opening section, there is a shift towards movement in couples. This shift begins with a sextet in which three couples can be distinguished, even though each couple does the same movement at the same time. A solo female figure is then juxtaposed against three still, hugging couples. The act of hugging produces a different performative frame into the work. The action is clearly legible in dramatic narrative terms as a reference to a loving relationship of some kind. It also produces a corporeal quality which is not defined in dance terms so much as it is resonant with ordinary, everyday gesture.

This theme of hugging is then developed into more movement oriented duets that still, however, retain the idea of hugging. This theme is progressively juxtaposed with more energetic, expansive dancing, in which there is a long and gradual build of the number of dancers juxtaposed and the energy of the movement. This build continues until all the dancers are running and jumping in the space, each with their own individual material.

This section resolves to an image of a single, hugging couple. This couple then lead the group into a dance in which a single energetic, vigorous and rhythmic movement phrase is repeated in unison. This section itself resolves into a group, unison return to the quieter, more introspective movement of the beginning of the dance, then a
return to the hugging couples, this time with all the dancers moving in unison, and finally a return to the solitary, male figure, dancing alone, who began the dance.

Subjectivity is produced through this structure as much as through the detail of the movement material, but in different ways. The hugging, for example, focuses attention on the differences between the dancers because their bodies are corporeally constructed as individual people engaging in an ordinary, if intimate, activity. They look like ‘real people’, as opposed to virtuosic dancers. They are framed as individuals because we are able to appreciate the subtle differences in the ways they enact the activity of hugging. The activity itself speaks of interpersonal relationship and hence also frames the dancers as individuals.

The juxtaposition of hugging couples and dancing individuals produces a different sense of subjectivity. Rather than focusing on the minute differences between individuals performing the same activity (hugging), the difference between a solo figure, dancing for her own pleasure, and engaging the details of her own idiosyncratic pathway through the movement phrase, and the hugging figures who are engaged in exchanging weight, touch and proximity with another person, stretches the notion of subjectivity to include both activities, and to embody the possibility of both.

That the production of subjectivity in the dance needs to be examined from such different perspectives brings up a methodological issue which is discussed further in relation to Dances from Hell. Analysis of a dance is always limited by the expectation that it will function in only one way, and that it will function in a consistent way through its entirety. As this discussion indicates, a dance such as Festival for a Quiet Life may function to produce subjectivity in several different ways. Which aspects are privileged becomes a function of the mapping of the dance in the process of writing. As the meaning of the dance is mapped and re-mapped in the process of analysis, and as these mappings are reorganized in relation to the passage of time, the influence of theory and that of the research question itself, these emphases inevitably change. This problem is actively engaged in Part 4 of this exegesis, where a strategy for dealing with it is developed and adopted in a further re-mapping of the works.
3.3  *Dances from Hell: Multiple Constructions*

*The movement was tense, bound with sudden stops and equally sudden shifts of genre. An expanded movement would suddenly drop, out of nowhere, into a pedestrian gesture, the heroic, modernist, dancing Dante constantly undercut by normality, bad jokes, parodies of tragic dances, expanding physically against the huge space and the huge sound, but shifting immediately back into the ordinary ugliness of gesture.*

*The dance was a rondo of images, cycling back and forth between dancing and referring, the specific versus generic associations. I fought hard for the dancing, and could only keep hold of it by suddenly switching genres and performance frames, throwing unexpected shifts at the performer’s body, my structures pitted against his desire for cohesion (Vincs, journal entry, 1997).*

3.3.1  *Multiple Subjectivities*

The process of making *Dances from Hell* dealt more explicitly with the multiple constructions of meaning that arise from the different ways in which dancers produce corporal subjectivity. Because *Dances from Hell* is a solo, the negotiation of how the performed subjectivity is to be produced in the dance took place between three people, the choreographer, the dancer and the musician rather than between a larger group, and the politics of this process was more clearly observed.

The choice to work with a male dancer whose physical make up is radically different to mine was deliberate. It was motivated by a desire to investigate the extent to which my own moving subjectivity could be both subverted and preserved in the process of working with someone who constructs dance movement very differently to the way I do. While the dancers in *Festival for a Quiet Life* were also diverse in terms of their movement styles, they were predominantly women. They were also selected on the basis of my knowledge of their previous work, and in some cases my experience with working with them. I was careful not to select a physically or dynamically homogenous act of movers, but I did select people who I perceived to take a certain passion and joy in their movement, and who had some predilection for cultivating individual movement approaches. The situation in *Dances from Hell* was quite different. I chose to work with someone I did not
know before the process, whose dance background was radically different to my own. This dance deals more overtly with the juxtaposition of different conventions of representation, ranging from obvious references to the emotional and dramatic content of Dante's (1971) *The Divine Comedy: Inferno*, to movement that is abstract and related to codes of modern dance technique, and movement that is pedestrian and unrelated to dance techniques. As such, it represents a deepening of the exploration of the different ways in which subjectivity is produced in dance. The idea of narrative and of a specific, well known, literary text as a base provided a platform for an exploration of more overtly intertextual and representative images in juxtaposition with the specificity of a single, individual dancer's corporeality.

Difference in *Dances from Hell* arose from the negotiation of three very different subjectivities, that of the choreographer and the performers. In order to discuss the nature of this negotiation, it is first necessary to examine the perspectives each person brought to the process.

### 3.3.2 The Choreographer's Perspective

My construction of dance is always multiple and never continuous. I dance as if the flow of my inner world is constantly ruptured, interrupted by changes of plan, changes of circumstance. Decisions are constantly being made and acted upon. I am always stopping without stopping, pausing to change directions, change thoughts, change gears. My body is constantly reconfigured, rearranged to meet different circumstances imposed from without and sudden new thoughts from within. I experience the continually changing kinesthetic sensation of the movement as meaningful rather than its gestural references or its place in a sequential narrative, and I experience the meaning as complete and distinctive in every moment rather than meaningful in terms of its chronological arrangement.

I experience a profound discomfort working with narrative, which is one of the reasons I set myself the task of investigating it in this dance. It seems to me that I don’t have a narrative bone in my body. This means that when I engage the situational, specific and literary and the referencing of external texts in *Dances from Hell*, the result is not a dramatic work but an ambiguous work. *Dances from Hell* makes reference to Dante's (1971) *The Divine Comedy: Inferno*, and in particular
themes of suffering, punishment, illness and death. This brings associations with expressive, communicative, modern dance paradigms, such as those associated with Graham and Wigman, in which dance is understood to represent the interior psychic landscape of the choreographer and the potential universality of this experience. I find that when I make dance, however, I am in no danger of producing work that is defined by these conventions because my body refutes these paradigms with every movement.

I experience the sequential arrangement and structure of the work as meaningful in a way that is on a different time scale to the sequencing of dramatic or emotional narrative. I organize phrase material in terms of constant, sudden shifts in movement persona and genre. I produce fast moving montages of different configurations of the body that are animated and connected not by narrative or emotional logic, but by my presence and intention as a performer. I do not, therefore, perform acts of representation via a consistent metaphor (e.g. dancer telling a story, skilled dancer extending the movement through space, expressive dancer representing an interior landscape, postmodern dancer presenting the movement as itself). Rather, the performed subjectivity is the inferred presence or agency behind constant shifts between different kinds of representation, producing them whole, in a moment, and shifting instantaneously to new ones.

I experience this as an ambiguity between my dancing body as an image that represents something (myself as object) and my interior subjectivity that decides what will be represented (myself as subject). In the effort to produce my physical self as something other than simply a plastic, maneuverable object that represents things, I have to subvert this ever-present economy by creating gaps and discontinuities in the images I create. Focus can then shift, by implication rather than by a direct representation, to the agency or subjectivity that must exist to produce these disjunctions. These choices subvert narrative, logical, emotional or kinesthetic connections between the configurations of representation and the connecting factor becomes the ability to produce them without any break or discontinuity in my (subjective) sense of presence.

The function of the dramatic and intertextual references in Dances from Hell is to contribute to the multiple modes of representation present in the dance rather than to provide a central theme or subject matter. The focus of the dance is not specific acts
of representation (of emotions, actions, situations or even abstract movement values) but the performer's connection to them and the constantly shifting nature of the performer's presence. In *Dances from Hell*, this was set in place by the structure of the material, which used constant juxtapositions of style and genre within movement phrases and between sections in order to subvert the performer's natural tendency to smooth over the discontinuities and make a consistent narrative whole.

I was trying to beat the common formulations or, in effect, any one single formulation, e.g. dance as spectacle, dance as communication, dance as story telling, in order to foreground the subjectivity of the performer as the primary construction. The dance kept becoming reduced to particular inscriptions and conventions. I wanted to highlight the active choice that underlies all those epistemologies, makes them provisional and subject to revision, i.e. the subjectivity of the performer as an active, ongoing construction.

The very act of creating a dance, however, implicitly produces an assumption of a single, or at least unified, purpose. I was working therefore, to create gaps and ambiguities in this assumption; rather than a dance without a centre, I was trying to make a dance with multiple and shifting centres.

### 3.3.3 The Dancer's Perspective

I was astounded when I interviewed Paul and discovered that he had constructed a whole set of narrative imagery through which he performed the piece. I had known, in the rehearsal process, that I was working against his corporeal desire for integration, fluidity and continuity, but I had not known that he had substituted a dramatic continuity for the connection denied him in the physicality of the phrase material.

Interestingly, Paul does not always feel a drive towards narrative, emotional imagery and dramatic intent. In other choreographic projects which he does not perceive "...have to mean anything..." he works simply with the feel of the movement (Schembri, Interview, December, 1997). The narrative imagery he created was a response to my work. He understood the presence of emotionally loaded imagery and references in the choreography to indicate that this kind of communication should take priority, and he accordingly directed his dancing in this direction.
(I thought about) creating a space and how this character would be in this space...
When I first appear, as far as I’m concerned, like, yes, I know the audience is there but I just ignore them. All I’m doing is walking on this predestined path that I have to walk on, and there are hot coals on this path and they’re not burning me, they’re just there, and its the idea of looking back from where I came from but not being able to go back there.

The falling thing, for me that was the last judgment and not accepting the last judgment the first two times so that’s why I fall and then the third time when I fall and go on to start the phrase it was like alright, I accept it, I have to go through (Schembri. Interview. December, 1997).

Paul has his own, highly specific, way of organizing the production of meaning and subjectivity in dance. While he and I share many common inscriptive codes of dance technique, training and choreographic convention, we are also very different. Disjunctures in time that signal decision and change dominate my organization of phrase material, while continuity in the flow of time dominates Paul’s. Paul likes to dance in spell drive: the timeless, ongoing, hypnotic state. In spell drive the engagement is with weight (self), space (thinking) and flow (adapting). Time is an unending, continuous flow uninterrupted by specific occurrences. In this state time is universal rather than historical. There are no decisions to be taken in the here and now because they’ve already been made. Spell drive is about story telling. Once upon a time..... It is narrative and dramatic in that things happen, but they do not happen now. They have already happened, and within the world of the story/spell, they are inevitable and unchangeable. The state of things, the state of the performer/persona/character is not being created, spontaneously, as we speak, but was defined before the dance began, in the rehearsal process where the spell was generated, and is played out with only minor variations every performance as the story unfolds.

This is in direct contrast to my desire to produce a danced subjectivity that appears to make decisions and shift directions while the audience is watching. I produce choreographic structures in which time in the Laban sense, which signals decision, defines the material. I drop from passion drive, time (decision), weight (self) and flow (adapting) into spell drive for respite, where there is all the time in the world to
savor the space the way it is, but the point is always to move back into the momentum of passion drive.

Paul’s understanding of his job as performer was to integrate, to pull together, to make coherence and sense of the choreographic material. His way of doing that was to create imagery that was narrative, situational and dramatic. In doing this, he knitted together the choreographic disjunctures with a sense of a consistent subjectivity, a single, unified consciousness negotiating the invisible forces confronting him, those of his creation and those engineered by myself as choreographer and embedded in his journey through the performance.

Synthesis also marks his corporeal style. Movement is sewn together in one long continuous flow. He has to work at stopping. The pauses I continually place within and between phrases, the places where gears are shifted, modes of representation changed, refuse Paul’s desire for connection, for an ongoing, luxurious, luscious flow of movement. He is in no hurry to change speeds, directions or spaces. I am. He has spent years synthesizing a coherent technique. I am hell bent on exposing the gaps in mine.

3.3.4 The Musician’s Perspective.

Rob listens. A note, for Rob, indicates a commitment to certain directions, certain harmonic and rhythmic consequences with which he then has to deal creatively.

Rob plays a note, listens to it, then plays something else to make sense of it, either following its trajectory or cutting across it in contradiction. He also listens to the dancer, timing his changes in support or in counterpoint to what Paul is doing. Sometimes he pushes Paul, plays louder, harder and makes him have to yell over the top. Sometimes he anticipates a change of mood, leaves Paul to make his own transitions in his own time. Sometimes he hangs back and lets Paul make the running. And sometimes they hit something together.

Rob is an improviser and the moment is everything. He plays in response to everything, as if the whole world is connected in to the sound of the horn. He responds to Paul, to what he has played before, to the structure of the work and to the acoustics of the room. He allows the saxophone to mimic a human voice, human breaths, human words, but the structure of what he is doing, which is to
work with the texture of the sound of the horn, is always primary and what he values is ultimately the quality of sound he can make the saxophone make.

3.3.5  A Delicate Balance
I remember I first saw Paul at the company class at the very beginning of the rehearsal period. My first impression of him was sitting, bathed in a patch of sunlight coming through the window. He was stretching out in the space around him, calmly. I remember thinking 'angelic'. It was an incredibly beautiful image. I remember thinking not so much what should this piece be, but what this piece should be with Paul in it, that that beauty should be utilized, incorporated into the design (Vincs, Journal entry, 1997).

My desire to let Paul’s individuality, his difference, be visible was continually balanced against my desire to produce a particular kind of ruptured, discontinuous dancing subjectivity which constantly shifts as the body reorganizes in response to different external situations and different inner impulses. His need to synthesize, to illuminate the character and the text of the dance, existed in tension with the kind of provisional subjectivity I was trying to create. Foregrounding his unique corporeality therefore meant allowing the nature of the dancing subjectivity produced in the dance to shift from my own vision for the work.

I negotiated this tension by watching Paul move, first with my phrase material and then in improvisation. I chose movements of Paul’s from videotaped footage of rehearsals and recycled them back to him in new phrases I constructed. I was looking for movement that looked distinctive, individual, to me, in Paul’s vocabulary. Then I embedded that material in phrases of my own which demanded the kind of constantly shifting physicality that suited my choreographic idea. In effect, I used the consistency in Paul’s movement style woven through phrases that demanded constant changes in the organization of the body. Paul said it felt like he had to learn to dance with a limp (Schembri, Interview, December, 1997).

For Rob, the detail of each movement phrase was irrelevant because he had his own musical detail to develop. Within each section, Rob developed musical material, textures of sound that defined a field within which he improvised, making new compositions each performance. These themes were developed with very little conscious discussion. He played something. He liked it and kept it or disliked it
and changed it. I commented when something didn't work, but most of the time I kept out of it. The variability in the sound, the impulse of each precisely improvised moment and the all-inclusiveness with which Rob tended to move between sounds which have specifically voice-like and emotionally laden references and sounds that reference abstract musical languages and the conventions of avant garde saxophone playing, produced a kind of shifting subjectivity which complemented that produced by the dance.36

Paul's ability to create cohesion, both corporeally and in relation to narrative, allowed me to focus on disrupting it. Working with someone else, I might have been more concerned to work on building cohesion and fluidity into the choreography. In this process, a polarity developed between us. As I became more aware and confident of Paul's desire for and ability to synthesize, I was able to focus more on disrupting the continuity of the phrases. In this way, the dance became a kind of working ecology of subjective production. The danced subjectivity was produced between us, with each of us adapting to the other's position. Paul felt the need to overlay narrative as I wasn't providing, in his view, enough of it, and I was able to focus on subverting linear narrative confident of Paul's constant re-synthesis of it.

Rob formed his own relationship with each of us. For him, harmonic language provided a sense of continuity and narrative through the work, and he was free to play with and against Paul and I in terms of timing, dynamic and the timbre of the sound. His aesthetic is perhaps closer to mine than to Paul's in that he can tolerate a relatively high degree of discontinuity of image. In a compositional sense, he was therefore more in line with my choices and more adversarial in terms of playing against Paul's choices. In the actual performances however, Rob and Paul developed a synergy and sensitivity to each other that I had no part in. While I had directed their interactions throughout the rehearsal process, the improvised nature of Rob's playing and the liberties Paul took with the material to make it work for himself during performances resulted in a collusion between the two of them around particular performed moments, with myself as choreographer excluded.

The emotional and dramatic references to Dante, as well as the performers' desires to integrate the material into a cohesive whole kept working to hold the dance together. Those cohesive forces were very strong, and allowed me to concentrate on
blowing the dance apart, knowing it would hold no matter how hard I pushed. I worked against the resistance, the stubborn ‘I am a dance about...’ presented by both the intertextual references and the performers’ expectations which arose from those references.

I could have used my choreographic authority to shatter those cohesive forces, I could have made the dance disintegrate, but didn’t. That would have been easier in some ways, afforded me more control, stamped my authorship more firmly over the dance, but it would also have denied the negotiation of subtleties and foreclosed the possibility of allowing the performers’ unique ways of constructing subjectivity a significant presence in the mix. For me, the presence of those narrative, expressive conventions allowed their intermittent failure in the face of the underlying instability of dancing subjectivity to become visible.

3.3.6 Instability and Generalization

There was an inherent instability in the way in which subjectivity was produced in Dances from Hell, as a consequence of the differences in the ways in which the three artists involved understood the production of the subjective. The production of the dance involved the corporeal and choreographic inscriptions of the choreographer in negotiation with those that the two performers brought to the work. These three perspectives were constantly negotiated and re-negotiated throughout the process and into performance. This makes defining a set of choreographic paradigms through which meaning and dancing subjectivity is produced in the dance problematic as the negotiated outcome is not necessarily stable over time. The way in which both Paul and Rob organized movement and sound, respectively, was not static and inevitably determined by structure, but functional and capable of reorganization in response to specific tasks.

This instability means that trying to define ‘my practice’ in relation to Dances from Hell inevitably involves significant generalization and approximation. On a structural level, trying to define the rules by which the dancing produces a subject and a meaning is analogous to the physicists’ project as James Gleick (1990) describes it in his history of chaos theory. Physicists look for linear, solvable differential equations that accurately describe the complexity of natural systems. Physicists and mathematicians have been ignoring non-linear systems for decades because they are non-linear and hence have no mathematical solution, however, non-
linear systems are the norm in natural processes, rather than the exception. As he points out, quoting Stanislaw Ulam, "...to call the study of chaos non-linear science is like calling zoology the study of non-elephant animals" (Gleick, 1990, p.68).

Describing the way in which the relatively rare instances in which physical systems do have linear, mathematical solutions have become the focus of the physical and mathematical disciplines, Gleick writes:

The solvable systems are the ones shown in textbooks. They behave. Confronted with a nonlinear system, scientists would have to substitute linear approximations or find some other uncertain backdoor approach. Textbooks showed students only the rare non-linear systems that would give way to such techniques. They did not display sensitive dependence on initial conditions. Nonlinear systems with real chaos were rarely taught and rarely learned. When people stumbled across such things—and people did—all their training argued for dismissing them as aberrations. Only a few were able to remember that the solvable, orderly, linear systems were the aberrations (Gleick 1990, p.68).

In terms of dance analysis, in order to say something about the work, in order to define one choreographic practice in relation to another, systems of language, structural frameworks are put in place and the inconsistencies are edited out, or ignored as aberrations or complexities beyond the scope of particular modes of analysis. The preceding discussion of the three different subjectivities brought to Dances from Hell, in its attempt to differentiate and articulate choreographic paradigms involved in producing the work, could be understood to work in this way. The generalizing of three distinct approaches tends to fix and define those approaches in terms of each other. Their constant negotiation is hinted at but remains undefined, a matter for extrapolation.

The problem this raises is that there is a temptation to extrapolate, almost to add the three approaches in one’s mind the way one would mix colours, and imagine a dance process which is a product of all three. What this doesn’t take into account is the constant flux in the epistemological structure of a dance that arises from the continual reorganization, improvisation, of the dancing body (in this case, Paul’s body) in performance. The constant regrouping of the single body and the
continual negotiations that go on between the bodies of choreographer and performers, even in the moment of performance, is beyond such systematics. Deep structures, such as the articulations of choreographic subjectivity given for each participant, which appear to explain the dance, only do so for an instant. Such schematics are like differential calculus, drawing a tangent to a graph at one particular set of coordinates that determines how y changes with respect to x for the infinitesimally small moment \( x(2) - x(1) \), which is at best an approximation and which reveals nothing about what might happen at \( x(3) - x(2) \).

If one is interested in the big picture, how one choreographic practice stacks up against another, then the instability of the dancing subject is of less relevance than the overall patterns, generated by processes of approximation and generalisation, which can be identified, compared, and used to differentiate one practice from another. This premise underlies the whole field of dance analysis. If, however, one is interested in how a particular choreographic practice functions and how it produces the kinds of dancing subjects that it does, then the nature of the particular dancing subject and the mechanisms by which it is produced become more important than fixing it in relation to codes and paradigms which allow it to be compared to other practices. This is the realm of dance theory, rather than analysis.

The production of subjectivity in both *Dances from Hell* and *Festival for a Quiet Life* is best discussed using theory rather than analysis because the dances are about revealing difference and instability in the dancing subject more than they are about producing a specific and genre-defined kind of dancing subject. In fact, the question of genre is in a large part irrelevant to the works, since they are situated overtly within the genre of modern dance, and do not really challenge the constitution or history of that genre. They are instead concerned with the variability and uniqueness of the dancing subject, which arises from physical difference in the gaps between the paradigms that define the conventions and symbolic meanings that constitute modern dance. The articulation of particular approaches to the production of subjectivity by the choreographer and performers in relation to these dances serves to highlight the presence of profound differences, and the complexity of the negotiation of these differences in the production of danced subjectivity, rather than to suggest a particular understanding of their resolution.
3.4 Kim’s Style Guide for the Kinaesthetic Boffin: Materiality

First section: I have a sense of beauty in these movements, which were originally conceived as a statement of my physical (disabled) difference. The long notes on the saxophone are enveloping, they feel like space around me within which I am supported and can move easily. I also feel the warmth of the light as space. I am aware of nothing beyond it. The movement is so old and familiar (I first made it in 1988, although much of it is reshaped in this version). I feel I can play with the nuance, with how well I can imbue these simple movements with care and presence. It is space/flow, the mobile state. It isn’t emotional in an overt sense, but its very connected, open, just me moving, allowing myself to be seen. It’s lyrical in feeling but austere in design, referring me back to the time in my choreographic history when pure movement seemed everything.

Second section: The expressionist section. I am aware of performing. There’s a slight wink and a smile as I do the Graham move for a split second. I never could do that hip-crunching technique but I was captivated by its spirituality. Then there’s the quote from Hexentanz, L which feels much more like me, clawing at the air, passion, frenzy, ugliness and transgression. I wonder if anyone gets the reference.

Third section: Should I really be telling you all this? I can feel the discomfort in the audience as the slides go up. They depict a small girl, who looks like me, standing, smiling, in her Sunday best, wearing an iron caliper that covers her legs. Then X-rays reveal the underlying differences in her bones and the diseases that caused them. The tension between me as storyteller, subject matter and performer is blurred. Even though I imply that the girl is not necessarily me, they know that it is.

The fact that it really is me grounds the work in an uncomfortable way. The audience can’t deconstruct it. They are not free to disassemble the material and put it back together any way they choose because I’ve laid claim to the history. It is mine. It really happened. They weren’t there so they can’t challenge me on it. But here am I suggesting that maybe they could.
Fourth section: Pure comedy. If Bob Dylan could sing with a voice like that, maybe I could dance with a body like this. The audience is laughing, relieved that the tension is gone.

Fifth section: The rest of the piece exists to allow this section to take place. This is my dance, flying, falling, expanding in the space. When I think of meaning in the work, I think of my head falling backwards through space, my pelvis flying in an arc through the air with arms and legs trailing, I think of the weight of my body flung into space. If there is an image, it is dancing. It contains all kinds of things, all kinds of references gathered for a split-second together into a movement, but then it moves on to the next thing. But the main thing is this is my dance, my time and space to move as I am, to assert myself, constantly shifting as that self may be, on the space (Vinze, Journal entry, 1997).

In Kim’s Style Guide for the Kinaesthetic Boffin, the primary process was to assemble a collage of the ways in which I have enjoyed moving over my dancing history. I made the movement material for the first section of the dance by gathering together a range of familiar phrases from a number of different times in my dancing history. The opening rocking movement, for example, comes from a work I first made in 1988, without a lot of things, which dealt with movement that came easily to me and which had an affinity with release and now dance techniques. The movement in which I drag my body forward by the arms comes from a dance that was choreographed on me by American choreographer, Katie Tetzlaff, in 1989. The movement refers to a painting entitled Christina’s World, by Andrew Wyeth (1948), which depicts a woman afflicted by polio dragging herself out into the middle of a cornfield. The floor section refers to the many dances I witnessed in the early 1980’s that incorporated uninflected, linear movement performed with release, and the regular use of constructive rest. Other parts of the floor section refer to Mary Wigman’s Hexentanz (1914), which I have never performed, but which is emblematic for me of a desire for emotional expression in movement.

The use of movement that was personally significant for me shifted the work into a more personalized and historically specific context. This was made more explicit for the audience in the following sections, in which I discussed slides of my own disability. In the final section of the dance, I used several phrases of material from
previous works, including *Festival for a Quiet Life*. I chose material that gave me the sense of movement that I most enjoy: fast, vigorous and air-borne.

Weaving this set of familiar movement material together gave the work a strong bias towards my most obvious and prevalent movement preferences. This was a means of foregrounding my specific and individual physicality as a performer.

Conflating the roles of performer and choreographer, that is, performing the piece myself, allowed continuity between the physical and psychical images. The construction of meaning and the construction of the physical dance product became simultaneous and indistinguishable events. Neither was privileged, neither precedes the other. They are not necessarily the same thing, some kind of Spinozan dance ‘essence’ that is manifested simultaneously in physical, psychical and intellectual forms. But they are at the very least inescapably implicated in each other’s production, and must negotiate whatever complexities and tensions they encompass into a mediated, danced truce.

This emphasized the physical specificity of the work. It could not have been performed by any other dancer in exactly the same physical and corporeal manner. It could also never have exactly the same psychical, conceptual or emotional meaning it performed by someone else. The text of the dance, the reference to autobiographical detail about my own unique physicality, made certain that the dance remained specific and historical. For me to dance, in the proximity of those references, meant something very specific in terms of how that history affected me and also how it hasn’t been allowed to define me.

The introduction of autobiographical material foregrounded difference in a more radical way than idiosyncratic movement on its own does. No one else can have had exactly the same history, exactly the same circumstances, and therefore no one else will have been subjected to the same set of physically inscriptive forces acting on the same set of biological raw material. The possibility of identical physicalities and identical modes of constituting the self corporeally is overtly refuted.

A further effect of the autobiographical references is that they make clear that the individual nature of the dancing subject produced does not represent an articulation of any ‘essential nature’ of the performer/choreographer in the way that the dancing
subject has been understood in modern dance. The references are historically specific, but they are chosen, selected to create the piece. They are not a comprehensive account of the performer’s medical history, and it is not clear in the piece whether they are all even completely true. This indicates the constructed nature of the pseudo-confessional revelations.

Given the highly specific subjectivity that arises in Kim’s Style Guide for the Kinaesthetic Boffin however, there is a subsequent wrestling with how to provide enough context or framing for the audience to be able to find a way in to these images. I do not understand or wish to prescribe my experience as in any way representative or privileged, and I cannot therefore assume that audiences will be able to enter into that experience without the aid of culturally shared and understood contexts. For this reason, specific situational contexts for the dancing are provided explicitly and implicitly in the work.

In a structural sense, the autobiographical material in Kim’s Style Guide for the Kinaesthetic Boffin can be understood as analogous to the overtly intertextual and narrative elements of the other two dances. In the case of Festival for a Quiet Life, the juxtapositions of bodies in space, sometimes appropriating gesture, such as hugging, carrying, supporting, and sometimes using more abstract juxtapositions of bodies as solitary, as flying past each other, or as in danger of colliding, are used as allusions to social and cultural relationships. These references form the basis of a signifying field within the work. In the case of Dances from Hell, the literary context of Dante’s text is used as a signifying frame that situates the work within themes of death, destruction of the self, physical and emotional, and divine punishment. In Kim’s Style Guide for the Kinaesthetic Boffin, the signifying framework is defined by autobiographical material concerning my history of physical disability and my relationship to particular historical genres of modern dance.

The literal, situational and cultural references in these works provide a context through which an audience can view the work, but they are not the whole work. The dances, particularly Kim’s Style Guide for the Kinaesthetic Boffin, also involve the production of specific and individual physicality embedded in these frameworks and those of the modern dance genre. Specific, idiosyncratic physicality is embedded in intertextual frameworks. These frameworks have different sources:
the juxtaposition and proximity of bodies in *Festival for a Quiet Life*, the text from Dante’s (1971) *The Divine Comedy: Inferno* in *Dances from Hell*, and a construction of autobiographical material in *Kim’s Style Guide for the Kinaesthetic Boffin*. The underlying structure of the works is the same, however, contextual references providing a framework that interacts with the unique physicality of the dancing to produce a sense of self.

This is why narrative retains such an ambiguous status in the work. Rather than being the primary organizing factor in the dances, it is one of several organizing principles that co-exist. This is not to negate its power or its importance in constructing subjectivity, but simply to put it in an unfamiliar position, that is, one of many threads that run through the work. In the gaps where intertextual or dramatic narrative fails, the dances’ momentum can still be carried forward by the sequential organization of the body within movement phrases, the negotiation between movement genre and specific individuals, and the sequential unfolding of the design of the movement for its own sake.

The key issue which emerges from this discussion is the tension between the distinctive subjectivities which are produced through physically unique dancing bodies, and the inscriptive processes through which dancer’s bodies are normalized, made to conform to extant conventions of meaning both dance-specific and of a general cultural nature. Revealing the physical uniqueness of the performer is the primary focus of my work, but this takes place in the context of conventions of physicality and choreographic genre normally present in dance. The effect is that these conventions are not overtly resisted, but their failure to completely account for the dancing subject is revealed.

In this context, references to the conventions of dance technique, physicality and choreographic paradigms, as well as references to texts and discourses encompassing non-dance specific fields of meaning such as literary, dramatic and gestural conventions, can be identified as an explicit system of intertextuality. That is, a process by which elements of other discourses are co-opted and transposed into the context of the dance creates a field of signification within the work. This field of signification exists in tension with the individual, physically mediated presence of the performer, which is unique and therefore unrepresentable in terms of intertextual translation.
Kim's Style Guide for the Kinaesthetic Boffin adds the further element of autobiography, which has the effect of making the dance even more specific, material and historical. The dance's connection to a subjective position that has a real, concrete and physical history cannot be denied, and the unique body must be read in terms of this history.

1 See section 4.5 for a consideration of Postscript, which was not part of the initial process of enquiry, but was made as the very last part of the research process, after most of the writing was completed. Postscript functions as a final statement, almost a danced conclusion to the thesis.

2 This passage refers to the cast that performed Festival for a Quiet Life at Rusden Dance Theatre in October 1996. Of the cast for the examination performance in August 2001, three dancers were Deakin University students, and the others were all professional dancers with varying degrees of experience.

3 See Barteneff (1980, p.51) and Dell (1993, pp.3–9), who define 'effort' in the context of Laban Movement Analysis as an intention that is manifest in physical action.

It would also be possible to draw a relationship between Godard's notion of corporeal poetic and the other Laban Movement Analysis concepts of spatial attitude and body attitude, since those constituents of movement style are always co-extant and co-implicated. A full discussion of the relationships between spatial and bodily attitude, in the Laban sense, and the degree and quality of release in the tonic musculature is, however, beyond the scope of this thesis.

4 It is important to note, however, that there is no reason why the 'resources' Godard relegates to the category of choreographic short cut, given long enough periods of work, cannot become the basis for precisely the kind of deep physical inscription he advocates. It is just that this kind of methodology produces a plethora of corporeal effects drawn from the specific histories and choices of the dancers. It cannot produce a mono-valent, cohesive and shared poetic of the kind that is clearly identifiable in dancers who have worked for choreographers such as Cunningham and Brown, for long periods of time.

5 Dumas and Innes refer specifically to ballet. Both writers identify ballet as the method of dance training in which the body is most clearly subdued and controlled. While this is no doubt true, both modern dance and new dance techniques also define and produce specific ways of moving, which might also be seen as systems of control.

6 Marianne Goldberg, for example, describes her practice as a literal, physical "coming into parts" in which "...potential openings in the way parts of the body join together, (through which) both the external gaze of the audience and the inner gaze of the performer (the way she images her own body) might be freed" (Goldberg 1995/96, p.55). Susan Foster theorizes this approach as part of a larger phenomenon of postmodem dance in which "...the body is allowed to develop a polyvalent significance, (and) dance likewise becomes a practice or activity rather than a contained object. It's dancing-ness comes to the foreground so that dance proliferates from a single phenomenon into countless different forms for making meaning. the body, no longer the stylus, the parchment, or the trace, becomes the process itself of signing..." (Foster 1996, p.227).

7 For example, dancers attending Chunky Move's recent (July/August, 2001) auditions were required to take a ballet class.

8 The contemporary dance courses Victorian College of the Arts, Western Australian Academy for the Arts, the Centre for Performing Arts (Adelaide) and Queensland University of Technology all maintain such programs. Dance courses at Deakin University, University of Western Sydney, Victoria University and University of New South Wales do not, however these programs also do not place such emphasis on the professional performance sector as outcomes for their students.
See course descriptions posted at http://www.vca.unimelb.edu.au/dance/courses_dance.html#hand,
http://www.wagga.wagga.edu.au/courses.html?DANCE,
http://www.academy.ou.edu.au/dance/OUTSite/AssoCdeg.html/BDArts.html,
http://www.deakin.edu.au/home/courses/2001/ug/courses/courses/performing_courses1.htm,
http://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/arts/undergrad/dance/courses.htm,

9 The original cast of *Festival for a Quiet Life* was made up of final year students at Deakin University. The final cast was made up predominantly of recent graduates of Deakin University. There was, however, a range in the level of experience in the cast, due to the inclusion of three extensively experienced performers.

10 As a further note to the context of increasing hybridisation of dance training, at Deakin University (and its predecessor, Rusden Teachers College), in the 1980’s, students trained in specific modern dance techniques including Graham and Cunningham. During the 1990’s a shift occurred in which students began to be trained less specifically in terms of codified techniques, and more broadly in relation to the experience and choreographic practices of their teachers. This trend has a snowball effect, in that as generations of students are trained in this way, there will be progressively fewer teachers in the future who are equipped to teach pure modern dance styles, and training in a more eclectic stylistic aesthetic will become more prevalent. I do not mean here to comment on the desirability or otherwise of this trend, nor to necessarily generalize it to other tertiary dance programs. A full analysis of the extent and causes of this trend (which no doubt have as much to do with the politics of specific Universities and the prevailing funding crisis in the Tertiary sector as they do with the aesthetic goals of dance departments) is beyond the scope of this thesis. It is relevant to this discussion, however, because the majority of the dancers in *Festival for a Quiet Life* are recent graduates of Deakin University, and have this kind of broadly based training.

11 It is also significant that all of the younger dancers trained at Deakin University, where the emphasis in training is placed precisely on this kind of corporeal uniqueness, within the context of modern dance. It is also, I think, significant that the training at Deakin University includes very little ballet. This means students are not negotiating the distinctive corporeal inscriptions of ballet technique while developing their own modern dance styles.

12 By this, I mean that it was not practicable to develop the movement material in conjunction with the dancers over a long workshop process. In two sections of the dance, I engaged the dancers’ input by setting them the task of manipulating set movement phrases to produce their own variations. I deliberately, however, did not give them long enough at the task to shift the movement radically (approximately 15 minutes was given in each case). The effect was a defocusing of my own corporeal style, which was built into the phrase material, rather than the insertion of the dancers’ own styles. This resulted in a negotiated blurring of styles and allowed me to shift the balance to some extent away from my own physical preferences.

13 In ballet technique, the primary directions are defined by the notion of en croix, that is, forward (devant), to the side (à la seconde) and back (derrière). In modern dance, the full extent of the dancer’s reach in all directions is acknowledged, as described in the Laban Movement Analysis concept of the kinesphere. In describing and naming the directional markers of movement, however, the twelve directions of the icosahedron, up, down, side to side, and the eight diagonals, tend to be privileged (Bartenieff 1980, pp.25–36).

14 This text is from *Kim’s Style Guide for the Kinaesthetic Baffin*.

15 I am drawing here on the concept of effort qualities. Godard’s (Godard in Dobbels & Rabant, 1996) work has also drawn on this framework. Effort qualities are most fully described in Bartenieff (1980) and Dell (1993). The system, however, is one that can only be fully communicated in movement, and my analysis draws as heavily on my experience in workshops with Laban teachers in Melbourne and San Francisco as it does on written accounts.
It also relates closely to Kim’s *Style Guide for the Kinaesthetic Boffin*, which was predicated on developing movement that was as ‘typical’ of my style as I could make it, to the extent that material is quoted from other dances, including *Festival for a Quiet Life*.

The directions that I insisted on tended to be concerned with the overall shaping of the work in terms of choreographic form. For example, I was very concerned that the energy should change dramatically and instantaneously at the end of the group unison jumping section to a slow, quiet and uninflected manner of execution. In relation to individual interpretations of phrases, I gave less specific instruction in terms of particular dynamics, because I wanted to foster the individuality of the dancing, and directed my comments in many instances towards affirming parts which were working well, and encouraging dancers to take more personal license with the movement where I felt it was necessary.

For example, the opening of the arms to side high position in the first phrase of the dance had shoulders raised in the original version.

For example, the arms were grotesquely bent and the hands were deliberately clawed (we called it ‘gnarled’) when turning out of the open arm position mentioned previously.

For example, the jump with elbow thrust down and back in the unison jumping section was originally made with an excess of effort in the throw of the elbow, as was the spiral turn in the same phrase.

*Festival for a Quiet Life* was first developed in prototypic form as a work for six dancers during a residency at the University of Minnesota, which was performed in Minneapolis in January 1996. It was later redeveloped into a more complex work for ten dancers, which was performed by Rusdon Dance Theatre in Melbourne in October, 1996. The final version of the work submitted for examination was developed during a six-week rehearsal period in 2001.

This is not to say that bodies cannot be understood as completely and comprehensively inscribed, but to argue that the codes by which we read bodies cannot accommodate the specificity of an individually produced body/self.

See also Kristeva (1986c, p.154), where she presents the idea that woman is “...a specialist in the unconscious, a witch, a bacchanalian, taking her *jouissance* in an anti-Apollonian, Dionysian orgy”. In Kristeva’s view, female subjectivity lies largely outside the realm of the symbolic, the patriarchal order of signs that determine meaning, and exists substantially in the realm of the semiotic, or unconscious. She wrestles with how women might ‘speak’ in such a situation when any speech immediately places within a patriarchal system in which women are objects and not subjects. She presents two alternatives; either women accept and adopt the male symbolic order in order to function in a patriarchal world, or remain silent, neither speaking or writing except in occasional outbursts “...a cry, a refusal, ‘hysteric symptoms’” *(Kristeva 1986c, p.155).*

Ballet need not be taught this way. My own training in ballet over the last decade with Beth Hoge in Oakland, California, was specifically directed towards a clarification of spatial and dynamic intent rather than a homogenized visual outcome. The point here, however, is that ballet is often taught from a more imitative strategy.

This discussion refers to my work with the original cast of *Festival for a Quiet Life*. It did not surface as an issue in rehearsal for the final, 2001 version, as I directed the process differently. My comments were far less specific in relation to spatial and dynamic detail, and I exchanged physical information with the performers primarily by dancing with them rather than by ‘directing’ them. I was, by this stage, aware of the effects of naming the movement experience in this way, and I took care only to name and ‘direct’ specific moments of the dance where I wanted to push the intention into the role of cognitive or affective marker in terms of the choreography.

Interviews with performers, December, 1997

The use of abstract dance phrases that were recognizably related to modern dance technique ensured this.

Each couple has a slight variation on the theme of getting up from the ground. Apart from this one instance, however, the couples move in unison.
In some instances the dancers share material, and in some instances some of them perform it together (for example, a unison quartet followed by two simultaneous duets are inserted into the form), but the overall impression is that the stage becomes progressively filled with dancing bodies juxtaposing complex, energetic material in a large collage.

See section 3.3.

There were eight women and three men in the final cast of Festival for a Quiet Life.

Although Paul Schembri, who was the original performer in Dances from Hell and also performed the work for examination, and I share a connection to the dance program at Deakin University (formerly Victoria College, Rusden), in that Paul was trained there and I have taught there for several years, we were never at Rusden at the same time. Paul’s training was taken with a different set of teachers and although the philosophy of a well-rounded choreographic approach to dance technique is shared, the actual physicality of the dance styles used for training is not. Most of the dancers in Festival for a Quiet Life, by contrast, are former Rusden students or co-teachers with whom I have shared dance experiences.

Although, as the discussion in section 1.2 elaborates, the practices of modern dance choreographers such as Duncan, Graham and Wigman were not necessarily unproblematically expressive. The work of these choreographers was concerned with the immediacy of the physical experience of dancing as well as with the abstraction and symbolic expression of interiority.

See Bartenieff (1980) and Dell (1993) for a discussion of the effort ‘drives’ which result in the predominant use of three effort qualities.

Rob Vincs composed and performed the music for Dances from Hell.

This strategy was, in fact, a refinement of the technique I used in Festival for a Quiet Life, which was to refrain from naming what, specifically, about the sound or movement, was working. Instead, I simply affirmed that particular sections were working without necessarily saying why, and focused my comments on making changes to sections that weren’t working.

I am referring here to Mary Wigman’s Hextentanz (1914).
PART 4

DELIRIUMS

4.1 Prologue to Deliriums

The aim of the last part of this exegesis, which I have called ‘deliriums’, is to begin to use a rhizomic framework to construct a final re-mapping of the dance works. In designing a methodology for this kind of writing, I have drawn largely upon three of Deleuze and Guattari’s ideas (one hesitates to call them central, or even influential, in the light of the nature of their thinking): the illocutionary nature of language/unciation, the structure of the rhizome, and the idea of the line of flight.

The illocutionary nature of language is an idea that Deleuze and Guattari argue in opposition to the notion that the sole, or at least main and proper, function of language is the transmission of information. They argue that language is never simply communicative, but always implicates action and the exertion of power.

Language is neither informational nor communicational. It is not the communication of information but something quite different: the transmission of order-words, either from one statement to another or within each statement, insofar as each statement accomplishes an act and the act is accomplished in the statement (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.79).

Their position is based on the argument that the idea of language as primarily communicative gives way when the performative and illocutionary aspects of language, i.e. that which is accomplished by saying it and that which is accomplished by the grammatical structure of what is said, are considered. Performative and illocutionary functions of language are actions. Something changes and this is not a result of the statement, but is actually brought about as the statement is articulated. For example, to say ‘I promise’ is to promise. This is a performative statement. To say ‘what are you doing?’ is to ask a question. This is an illocutionary statement that accomplishes something implicitly in the act of speaking. The existence of the performative and illocutionary functions of language makes possible, at least potentially, their involvement in any act of enunciation. This
makes it impossible to conceive of language as simply the transmission of information as there is always the possibility of a performative or illocutionary aspect to any utterance.

The theory of the performative sphere, and the broader sphere of the illocutionary, has ...made it impossible to conceive of language as a code, since a code is the condition of possibility for all explanation. It has also made it impossible to conceive of speech as the communication of information: to order, question, promise, or affirm is not to inform someone about a command, doubt, engagement, or assertion but to effectuate these specific, immanent, and necessarily implicit acts (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.77).

Deleuze and Guattari further argue that, since actions are immanent in language, pragmatics are not peripheral to language or isolated cases of specific uses of language, but are inevitably involved in defining meaning in language. They write,

Pragmatics ceases to be a “trash heap,” pragmatic determinations cease to be subject to the alternative: fall outside language, or answer to explicit conditions that syntactize and semanticize pragmatic determinations. Instead, pragmatics becomes the presupposition behind all of the other dimensions and insinuates itself into everything (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.77–78).

They argue that, rather than language being a tool that can be used to do things, language actually functions the other way around. Language itself is already an action, already an exercise in power, in defining and normalizing certain sets of relations and outlawing others, and only secondarily becomes a means of denoting and communicating. They propose that the structure of language, its grammar and syntax, is itself active and commanding before anybody says anything. They write,

When a schoolmistress instructs her students on a rule of grammar or arithmetic, she is not informing them, any more than she is informing herself when she questions a student. She does not so much instruct as “insign”, give orders or commands... The compulsory education machine does not communicate information; it imposes upon the child semiotic coordinates possessing all of the dual foundations of grammar (masculine–feminine, singular–plural, noun–verb, subject of statement–subject of enunciation, etc.) (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, pp.75–76).
In relation to writing about dance, the very structure of any of the words one might use to describe this process, ‘analysis’, ‘exegesis’, ‘discussion’ and especially ‘writing about dance’ function in this way. All of these terms position the dance as a primary source that the words elucidate or articulate. The relationship between the two things is hierarchical: the dance produces; the writing articulates that production. This state of affairs renders both the productive elements of the writing and the articulatory aspects of the dance work invisible. Ironically, the function of this linguistic structure is to mask its own active, productive nature; writing is allowed to masquerade as a passive ‘reporting’ of the dance.

Writing about dance however is not as simple as communicating what happened in the dance, what it is about or how it is made. Rather, writing about dance performs certain functions, classifying and positioning the dance in certain ways. As language itself is illocutionary, that is, actively does things by virtue of its structure, so too writing about dance is illocutionary. Rather than leaving this an unconscious, unacknowledged process, my strategy is to accept this illocutionary function of language and work consciously with it in discussing my dances.

What I have attempted to do is to usurp the ‘explanatory’ role of writing about dance by constructing my writing as a bringing together of a range of heterogeneous elements in a way which privileges none of them as prior or foundational. I have brought together on one level my dances and the ideas of Deleuze and Guattari, on another plane my dances and their own articulation through dance ‘analysis’, and on another plane my dances and their content which links them into such diverse fields of reference as theory about the body, intertextuality and representation, and the production of subjectivity.

Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of the rhizome as a structure in which any element can be connected to any other element, regardless of existing structural pathways or the ontological compatibility of the elements in question, forms the organizational basis for this project. I have attempted to create a rhizomic structure on the page, in which different connections with the dances are made, some descriptive, some interpretive, some theoretical and some philosophical, in an order that has its own internal flow but no external imperative. That is to say, the
rhizomes are machinic. They work, they connect a range of ideas, but they are pragmatic rather than definitive. They could have been otherwise.

Understanding both dance and writing as machinic gives rise to an acknowledgment that both dance and writing are heterogeneous enterprises. That is, there is not necessarily a coherent, homogenous point of view lying behind either one. Deleuze and Guattari consider that subjective machines are assembled in terms of desire as the organizing principle. Desire, as they understand it, is not limited to single fields of reference. It is not necessarily coherent in an ideological sense because it is heterogeneous, the linkage of a number of divergent elements. “What defines desiring machines is precisely their capacity for an unlimited number of connections, in every sense and in all directions” (Guattari 1995b, p.126). The machine, as Guattari describes it,

must be capable not of integrating, but of articulating singularities of the field under consideration to join absolutely heterogeneous components. It is not by absorption or eclectic borrowings that this can be achieved; it is by acquiring a certain power, which I call, precisely, “detrerritorialization”—a capacity to look onto deterritorialized fields. I’m not keen on an approximate interdisciplinarity. I’m interested in an “intradisciplinarity” that is capable of traversing heterogeneous fields and carrying the strongest charges of ‘transversality’ (Guattari 1995b, p.40).

Understanding desire as machinic in this sense separates conclusively desire from ideology. No one system of meaning or political perspective is able to contain desire entirely within its borders. In all contexts in which desire is activated, it is produced by a diverse range of not necessarily related factors including ideologies and systems of meaning together with a range of other factors such as personal histories, circumstances, biological and socio-economic factors. Guattari writes:

But, in my opinion, the analysis of the economy of desire implies a multivalent logic that legitimates the coexistence of discourses that cannot have an axiomatic homogeneity. If you object and say that this is not what I said ten years ago, I answer, ‘Too bad,’ or even, ‘So much the better.’ Perhaps this is a good sign! Expressions of desire can simultaneously signify formally contradictory things, because they refer to various universes of reference (Guattari 1995b, p.41).
The implication both for understanding dance which functions in this way, and
writing about it, is that no one point of view or system of reference will be able to
describe such a machinic construction. Consequently, writing about such a dance
must be done in such a way as to include multiple perspectives and frames of
references without privileging any as the dominant epistemological framework. I
have attempted to do this by constructing the writing as a process of sliding across
metaphors. Symbolic, stream of consciousness writing has been used along with
movement descriptions, personal narratives and intertextual references, interspersed
with commentary on the nature of the machinic structures involved and the
problems these create for fixing any of these narratives as ‘the meaning’ of the
work.

Through this process, various elements of dancing subjectivity are identified and
subjected to discussion. These include the way in which the dancing body is
produced, i.e. the corporeal poetics of the work, to borrow Godard’s (in Louppe
1996c) term, the ways in which intertextual references are constructed in relation to
written texts and other symbolic systems such as gestural language, dance
techniques and conventions of dance performance, and the materiality which arises
from the concrete histories of the bodies and narratives involved. The success of
this undertaking relies on the extent to which these elements can be woven together
on paper into a multifaceted, interrelated web of meaning. That is to say, the
successful creation of a functional dance-writing machine depends upon the ability
to relate these elements not causally or linearly, as if they were all underwritten by a
singular ideological formulation, but to create a cluster of interrelated meanings that
seems, like the dance, to hang in the air around you after you’ve read it.

These written desiring machines go beyond the bounds of any one activity, such as
analysis, philosophy or exegesis. I don’t claim that they are exhaustive or
comprehensive in any of these areas, but my aim is that they are productive. That is,
they generate connections between the dances and numerous other fields of
reference that produce ideas, concepts and notions of subjectivity in a symbiotic
space between the dancing and the writing.

More importantly, they attempt to situate the dancing on the same level as writing,
analysis and philosophy. The dances aren’t prior to these things, mute passive
objects to be interpreted, but are understood as active, if often subtle and ambiguous,
interventions in a wide range of discourses and debates. Neither, however, are the
dances privileged as the site of a mysterious, subjectivist and hence unquestionable
‘truth’. Like writing and analysis, they are positioned as partial and provisional,
situational, historical, and pragmatic.

I can perhaps best describe these written/danced deliriums by describing a certain
experience of moving. I’m lying down, so the habitual organization of standing is
subverted. Any part of my body can initiate. Any part can take over. My knee
might be moving diagonally across my body and up in a diagonal trajectory into
space. The opposite shoulder, part of the torso, followed by hip and then upper leg
might provide support into the ground for that action. Then my other elbow might
take over, then my opposite foot as I roll onto my stomach for support. Perhaps the
back of my head might then initiate, circumnavigating the space behind me. I might
soften and curl in through my spine to support my knee expanding into space. It all
happens smoothly and seamlessly. Suddenly something else has taken over but it
was never clear when the transition occurred. A foot could be working, or a hand or
a hip or a sternum, and it doesn’t matter which. As long as the movement happens
there are no demarcation disputes, and no territories to be contested between body
parts.

In the deliriums I’ve written, it doesn’t matter whether I’m using theory, philosophy
or analysis, descriptive terms or poetic ones. The point is the overall movement that
takes place. In my embodied analogy, the movement is driven by inner flows
between functional elements: muscle groups, neural pathways and skeletal
articulations, but these are not necessarily obvious. Likewise, in my deliriums, it is
not always clear why a certain pathway has been chosen. The mechanics of the
connections are not always exposed, but what matters is that they go somewhere.
This ‘going somewhere’ is not always direct, however, to borrow a Laban
Movement Analysis term’. It is often indirect, concerned with the territory it passes
through as much as with a final destination. The important thing is that it weaves a
set of connections that assemble a range of ideas in a danced/written machine.

The question in these ‘deliriums’ is not what should or what must go together, but,
in Deleuze and Guattari’s words, “...whether the pieces can fit together, and at what
price. Inevitably, there will be monstrous crossbreeds”(Deleuze and Guattari 1987,
p.157). The danger with constructing this kind of ‘analysis’ is that monstrous
crossbreeds will be produced. By this I mean that, in juxtaposing what Deleuze and Guattari call “…not only different regimes of signs” but also states of things of differing status” (Deleuze and Guattari 1997, p.7), the integrity of the interiority of each field of reference, including the individual dances and dancing itself, is constantly at risk of cross-contamination. The purity of each discourse, artistic or philosophical, is jeopardized.

Perhaps, however, the problem really lies with the term ‘analysis’. Analysis in the traditional sense implies dissecting an artwork in order to explain it, or to explain how it is the kind of dance it is, and the assumption that this is possible is exactly what I am undercutting in this approach to writing. I am instead positioning ‘analysis’ itself as also alive, growing and fuelled by desire. In a Deleuzian context, analysis itself has the potential to be nomadic, roaming beyond the borders of the artwork that set it in motion and ranging outside the parameters of art itself. While always a balance between the wildly productive and seemingly limitless trajectory of a line of flight, and the slow but inexorable forces of sedimentation and re-territorialisation which channel the flows back into the defined watercourses of ideology and theory, analysis, once understood in this context, can never again be understood as purely a representation or even exposition of something else, i.e. an artwork.

A further issue this work raises is to what degree a body of choreographic work must be cohesive in order to constitute a process of enquiry. In writing about the practice of individual choreographers, it is usual to emphasise similarity and continuity in the artist’s concerns and choreographic investigations of those concerns across a series of works. In this process, I have done the opposite in order to foreground the heterogenous nature of dance practice (or any practice) that becomes apparent when it is approached without the assumption that it must be fundamentally cohesive. While concerns about the production of dancing subjectivity through the uniqueness of particular dancing bodies is an issue which runs through all of the dances, each dance deals with this in a very different way, and each dance throws up a unique set of issues in the process. The written desiring machines I have constructed around each dance have therefore taken different paths and dealt with different areas of discourse to reflect and allow this diversity. The result is four diverse but overlapping desiring machines in terms of both the issues raised and of the organization and methods of writing used.
Deluze and Guattari describe the trajectory of a desiring machine that escapes the confines of a single ideological system as a 'line of flight'. The final thing to be said about constructing dance writing as a line of flight is that these particular deliriums have limits. Deleuze and Guattari posit the absolute line of flight as a state of complete deterritorialisation. That is, all boundaries are dissolved; everything is connected on what they call a 'plane of immanence'. The line of flight rips through sedimented, striated, organized space to create a seamless flow. Always, however, there are also forces of reterritorialisation at work. They describe 'sub-molecular flows', imperceptibly inching back towards micro-fascisms, sedimentations of categories and structures that fix relations (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, p.107).

The line of flight is an ideal limit, rather than a constant state in which one can expect to live. In the 'deliriums' I have written there are radical connections but there are also processes of re-territorialisation at work. Within sections, for example, I don't eschew the logic of the territories in which I am working. I don't deconstruct language itself, for example. I don't deconstruct feminist theory or theories about the body, but when I am working in those territories I respect, for the most part, their boundaries, rules and assumptions.

The focus is the connections between territories. In terms of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, these 'deliriums' are partial rather than the 'ideal limit', which they term an absolute plane of immanence or line of flight. This is an important point, both in situating my choreographic work, and in discussing and using the work of Deleuze and Guattari. My dance practice is eclectic and rhizomic, but it also has forces of re-territorialisation at work in it, micro-fascisms and areas of striation and sedimentation. My work does not deconstruct existing dance genres and it does not presume to have invented any new ones. I work knowingly, and I must confess, lovingly, within the framework of modern dance. Further, I do not work to deconstruct my own bodily organization in radical ways such as those used by Cunningham in his early work or those used by many new dance practitioners, but accept and welcome a certain degree of stability and even fascism in my own approach to movement.
In relation to Deleuze and Guattari's work, it is important to emphasise that they see the line of flight and its embodied equivalent, the body without organs, as ideal and not necessarily attainable limits. They warn that the true body without organs is the real schizophrenic, who has lost all sense of reality. In terms of the production of subjectivity, they do not advocate the dissolution of the subject or the corporeal self, and actively warn against it, but rather advocate the provisionality and actively productive nature of subjectivity. They advocate fluidity and multiplicity, but warn that:

You have to keep enough of the organism for it to reform each dawn; and you have to keep small supplies of significance and subjectification, if only to turn them against their own systems when the circumstances demand it, when things, persons, even situations, force you to; and you have to keep small rations of subjectivity in sufficient quantity to enable you to respond to the dominant reality. Mimic the strata. You don't reach the BwO, and its plane of consistency, by wildly destratifying (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.160).

In this context, the deliriums I have constructed represent a move towards the fluidity, provisionality and multivalency of dance as a mode of cultural productivity, without claiming any sense of utopian liberation. While it might be exciting to begin to unpack dance on the page from its captive status as the silent, passive, object to be ‘explained’, this must be done in the awareness that dance is no less subject to the boundaries of ideology and epistemology, arborescent structure and micro-fascism, than any other field of endeavour, and any liberation is bound to be partial and/or temporary in nature.
4.2 Festival for a Quiet Life Delirium

The big phrase in the dance starts by reaching out, out, out. I can go so far, a bit farther, as far as I can. Its expansive, outward looking, optimistic: an affirmation of possibility. When I first made this phrase it seemed to me a reaction to all the very careful, restrained dancing I kept seeing. It was me, breaking out of a certain heritage of technique: being straight, long, linear, lengthened, coolly detached. Not that that intense, serious training didn’t serve me well. It was just that I felt the intensity had to come out. Instead of an unrelenting, inner focus with no visible outlet apart from an elegant, linear, controlled style of movement that gave little hint of the ferocity of purpose underneath. I felt the need to show the effort, show the pleasure, show the joy.

The phrase was first used in an improvised dance. I did this phrase three times, in a question and answer structure with Rob on saxophone. Then that piece went somewhere else. When making Festival for a Quiet Life, I decided to start with this phrase, make it the core of something bigger. I felt I hadn’t really got to the heart of it, of what it meant to me to dance like this. So Festival for a Quiet Life became its exposition.

Later, when putting Style Guide together, it seemed appropriate to use it again because it encapsulated a certain joy in moving that was central to the last section of that work. And, having seen the other dancers work with it, I felt the need to make my mark on it.

Both arms extend wide in the space. It isn’t just the shape of the arms that is important, signifying as it does flight, openness, crucifixion, but the quality of the relationship between the arms and the space. My arms take me outwards. I am as expansive as I can possibly be. At the same time I’m on one leg, on half toe, and my right leg is turned in, the foot sickled and tucked in at the ankle like a reverse ballet position. I barely even register that this reversal is taking place because it feels so easy for me to do. It’s like a Freudian slip. I don’t even notice I do it (Vincs, Journal entry, 1997).

I started Festival for A Quiet Life with one man moving on his own. The music sets up a sense of quiet beauty. The underlying five count implies forward momentum.
The horn floats over the top, buoyed along, like a commentary, adding affect over the fundamental forward motion of the guitar. The horn is moved, literally and figuratively, by the gentle optimism of the guitar, its unwavering outward, onward motion.

I see myself as choreographer in a similar relationship to the dancer as the saxophone has to the guitar. I am moved by the quiet optimism of this dancing body. I understand it/him as quietly moving forward. He is the motor that moves the dance forward and I give him things to do by way of commentary, and as a way of indicating my respect for what he is/does.

I give him my movement phrase to do because I think it both allows him to reveal himself, and itself reveals him. He reveals himself through the distinctive way he performs the phrase: the way he tentatively puts his hand out in space, each time a little farther, the way he opens his whole body as his arms expand sideways, the way he sweeps through the turn, the way he lopes across the space in the stepping pattern, the way he smiles when he makes the double pirouette (and puts a good face on it when he doesn’t). My phrase reveals him in the still moments between movements; the moment at the fullest extent of the arms to the side, the moment when he falls out of the pirouette and is just down, awkwardly, for a millisecond, the moment when he’s just standing there in a reversed passé position. In these moments he’s still dancing but he’s not doing anything, and my hope is that his already inscribed non-dancing body/self is visible in those moments along with his paradigmatic dancer–self.

*Who am I talking about? Darren or my Father? Does it matter?*

The next two dancers, women, walk into their light upstage left and begin the same phrase Darren/Tim⁶ has just completed. The repetition of the phrase sets this up as a formal dance concerned with the manipulation of abstract material and who does what when. The fact that there are now two, where before there was one, starts to indicate that I’m talking about lots of people, not just one specific person. The change in gender further shifts the emphasis from the experiences of specific individuals. The fact that the two dancers repeat Darren’s (Tim’s) phrase and then continue it into a longer section carries the dance forward in time, giving it an evolutionary, unfolding, structure. When the third group, this time comprising three
dancers, two women and a man, come on and begin again, the formality of the dance is confirmed. Here, now, are more people doing the same thing, and now there is a spatial juxtaposition of two against three. Spatial, temporal and dynamic patterns become the focus.

Then I step to the right and draw my left leg across my body. It just falls outwards. I lean to the left, over the leg, and draw my arms and hands, one in front and one behind my body in a twisted, gnarled, exaggeration of a fourth position. I saw Molissa Fenley dance some years ago and the determined distortion with which she simultaneously eschewed conventional technique and asserted her own boundless energy and drive to move has always stayed with me. This movement is my response to her, my affirmation that distortion can be beautiful, exciting. There is too much energy, too much excitement brimming over, way beyond what is needed for the actual movement. This is because this is a celebration of the right to move how I want which goes way beyond the movement itself. It is a performative statement. I celebrate in the act of moving.

The dancers don’t all dance it this way. Most of them are far more fluid, far more interested in cohesion than I am. That is to say, they like the phrase to hang together, one movement blending seamlessly into the next. I like to blow it apart with sudden surges of energy that I generate by twisting through the upper torso. The twist is the initiator of movement, energy and locomotion in the phrase.

What is emancipatory for me is not necessarily so for them. The twist of the upper spine that propels me into action is for them something to be contended with, struggled with, until they ‘get it’. They have to work to understand its momentum, how and why it carries me into motion because it doesn’t do that automatically for them. Their movement is therefore marked with something different to mine: a sense of struggle and then of achievement.

In my role as choreographer, I work to try to keep those markers in the work, rather than covering them over. The dancers’ bodies, however, are fascist, in that each one fights back, trying to bring the movement under control, into familiar dynamic, rhythmic and spatial territory, and they succeed to a significant degree. My body is perhaps, however, even more fascist, urging everybody else to dance the way I do. I insisted on passion through the rehearsal process. I insisted that I had sought out
each of these particular dancers precisely because of their capacity for individualizing movement and for injecting it with kinetic elements above and beyond what is actually specified in a phrase. Yet each of us also brought to the rehearsal process our assumptions about what constitutes good dancing and good technique.

This set up a constant process of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. My use of my own idiosyncrasies in making the movement was an act of deterritorialisation, pushing the movement, if in subtle rather than overt ways, away from the norms of contemporary dance technique. For both the dancers and myself, however, the assumptions we brought with us, the dance conventions we were trained in, and our historical, personal reactions to them, came with us and pushed us constantly back towards the known. I didn’t insist that overall things went in one direction or the other. Rather, I cultivated the quiet tension, allowing some departures, curtailing others, in an attempt to let these two processes simply be in the dance.

My father wasn’t a radical. He didn’t run around wildly deconstructing things. But he knew who he was and he was happy. He took a quiet joy in things that erupted surreptitiously in largely unnoticed kinaesthetic pleasures. Sometimes, when driving his beloved Great Ocean Road, he took a corner just that little bit too fast. ‘Cliff’ my mother would say. with a sharp intake of breath. He was a surfer, a quiet achiever on a wooden long board from the early sixties, a founding member of the Surfriders Association.

I am his daughter. I wasn’t raised to destroy, to tear down the old to position the new, to deconstruct dance in a single work. I get mad, but I don’t destroy. I work from within. How can I find my body, my pleasure in moving, my ‘jouissance’ in this dance form? How can my dancers find theirs, confined as they are to my choreography, my movement and my body? These are the questions that motivate Festival for a Quiet Life.

The dance is an attempt to see whether there is a place for the quietly passionate dance. Is lyricism necessarily the enemy of individuality? Can beauty be interesting? Can a quiet, conventional modern dance allow space for unique statements of joy, transcendence and pain? To put my questions in context, this dance was made five years ago in 1996. At the time, I was struck by the
psychological focus of much of the contemporary dance I saw. Everywhere I looked I seemed to see people in various stages of undress dancing the success and failure of their personal relationships. People danced their heterosexuality, their homosexuality, their mothers, their fathers, their fights and abuses and above all the anathema of being trapped within societal and cultural norms. Everywhere the stereotypes seemed to me to be coming in for a beating, both in relation to sexuality and relationships, and in relation to the old fashioned idea that dance could be just about dancing. Everything seemed to be dancing about something.

For me this represented what Guattari calls "the eternal mommy-wail, the eternal daddy-debate" (Guattari 1995b, p.130). Everything had to represent, and it had to represent existing sets of social relations. Even the critique of these relations rested absolutely upon their power. If they weren't so powerful then there would be no need to produce these dances that represented the struggle against them. All the drama of years spent trying to overcome the effects of an abusive and repressive schema/society/family/spouse/significant other would be negated if these things were not so powerful. In that case there would be nothing to make a dance about, nothing to be angry about, nothing to destroy, to tear down, to endlessly bemoan and berate.

Dance that represents, under the guise of critiquing, stercotypical social relations, seems to me to run the danger of reinforcing and universalising the very systems it seeks to resist. To the precise degree that a dance protests against existing systems, those systems are automatically imbued with power. The larger the struggle, the more indignant and righteous the call for liberation, the more monolithic, repressive, and universal the construction of the structures being resisted becomes. In the world of the dance work the forces of repression become more powerful and more totalising the more they are resisted, like a shadow that grows inevitably with the object that casts it.

The work of Pina Bausch is an example of politically provocative choreography that is caught in this bind. Her work often depicts violent and abusive relationships between men and women. Her position with regard to these issues however remains ambiguous within the work. Some critics make the assumption that she must be presenting this bleak world as a critique of it, and that the dances therefore function as warnings about the dangers of letting these stercotypical relations go
unchecked in society. Others however see her work as voyeuristic and even suggest it functions as soft pornography carefully calculated to titillate an audience. In Arlene Croce’s words:

In Bausch theatre, men brutalize women and women humiliate men; the savage round goes on endlessly. The content of these bruising encounters is always minimal. Bausch doesn’t build psychodrama in which people come to understand something about themselves and their pain. She keeps referring us to the act of brutalisation and humiliation—to the pornography of pain (Croce 1986, p. 82).

While Croce’s comments must be read in the context of her formalism, Bausch’s work is left open to this harsh interpretation because she presents no way out of the existing situation in her dances. The fact that for many years Bausch herself refused to comment on her work to settle the debate either way further contributed to this reading.

In contrast, the work of Lloyd Newson, while also graphically representing violent relationships and in particular the violent repression of homosexuality, has not been criticized in this way. This is despite the fact that Newson’s work is every bit as violent and the worldview he presents every bit as bleak as Bausch’s. Newson, however, is publicly known to be gay and makes public statements as to the nature of his work as critical of societal norms, and as a result, his work is automatically read as a refusal rather than a reinforcement of such values.

The work of both choreographers however is still caught in a bind. What purports on the surface to be radical, resistant, politically motivated dance is rendered ineffectual to the degree that it reinforces the power structures it seeks to critique and positions them as dominating and hegemonic. This, in itself, is problematic enough. Underlying this, however, is a deeper problem that has to do with the dynamics of representation itself.

Systems of representation fix meaning within particular structures. Meanings, experiences or sensations that are not coded within the structure of representation one is using cannot be conveyed. They are funnelled out of the system because
they don't fit into the conduits (i.e. the set of signs or symbols) which link experience with language in that particular system.

The effect of this is that the system of representation, the way in which meaning is structured in a particular epistemological or ideological context, inevitably narrows and fixes the kinds of meaning that system can convey. Deleuze and Guattari explain this problem using the example of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis claims that the Oedipal complex is a universal template by which subjectivity is formed. Subjectivity is constructed as a tracing of a pre-existing template, a pre-ordained system of representation structured by the Oedipus complex which every person is destined to play out, albeit each in their own way and in their own familial circumstances (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.13-14; 1998, p.45).

Guattari describes how this results in a narrowing of possibilities, of meaning and of the experience of the subject. In psychoanalytic method things are never significant in and of themselves but are always subject to interpretation. As he puts it, "...a thing will always mean but only obliquely through a game of signifying clues..." (Guattari 1995b, p.177). Subjectivity is familiarized by reducing the signifying clues to representations of certain pre-defined family dynamics (the Oedipus complex). This is achieved by regression in which childhood is recaptured but in a powerless representation, devoid of present intensities. Then, in the process of transfer:

... desire is restored onto a wilted space, a small miserable world of identifications (namely the analyst’s couch, the look, the assumed attention). The rule of the game is that everything that comes up is to be reduced in terms of interpretation and daddy-mommy images... (Guattari 1995b, p.177).

Oedipus and the process of psychoanalysis, in Guattari's view, is a process by which meaning is fixed. The wildly productive realm of life is narrowed to an impoverished set of symbols that are completely inadequate to represent its rich diversity. The effect is to drain life and the subject of immediate sensation, affect and intensity.

The process of representation in dance, and in particular the process where specific, recognizable, social relations are represented and critiqued, is caught in this problem
in two ways. Firstly the representation of relationships is caught in the same problem that Deleuze and Guattari raise in relation to psychoanalysis. The range of relationships that can be portrayed and even the alternative models that might be suggested, are constrained within the structure by which relationships are defined culturally. The process of thinking relationships in a certain way immediately narrows the range of options and solutions that can be thought within the dominant social paradigm. For example, if one sets out to signify a heterosexual relationship in a dance, then the meaning of the dance immediately becomes narrowed around the extant notions of how heterosexual or indeed any sexual relationships are constructed ideologically and culturally.

At a more fundamental level, however, the process of representation in dance can be thought of as a similar process to psychoanalysis that, at the epistemological level, works to fix, totalise and imbue with power the structures that are represented. The implications of these two effects are profound. The process of representation, as illustrated by psychoanalysis, drains immediacy and richness from both the representation and that which is represented. The positioning of one system of representation as dominant prevents (represses) the emergence of other systems of representation which structure meaning in different ways, and the richness these alternative systems might have contributed tends to be filtered out.

Not everybody will necessarily see this as a problem. In the context of psychoanalysis, Guattari suggests that despite protests such as those mounted by himself and Deleuze, Oedipus isn't defunct, but still is and will continue to be used. In his words:

Too many forces and too many people depend upon Oedipus: there are too many interests at stake. To begin with, there would be no narcissism without Oedipus. Oedipus will prompt a great many moans and whimpers yet. It will inspire research projects that are more and more unreal. It will continue to nourish dreams and phantasies (Guattari 1995b, p.128).

If the goal of dance is understood to be the conveying of information, i.e. communication per se, then the dynamics of representation understood in this way are of no concern. What matters is simply that a clearly understood message, assembled out of the appropriate set of semiotic leggo, is produced and transmitted.
If, however, the immediacy of the danced moment, the specificity of the individual dancing body and the unrepeatability of a particular performance is of concern, then representation understood in these terms must be counterproductive.

Representative dance runs the risk of creating its own version of Oedipus by fixing the social structures it critiques and totalising them. The meaning of the dancing body is reduced to its relevance to particular social institutions and stereotypes. While this makes for more univocal, unambiguous communication, it also strips dance of the specificity of the individual, material dancing body. The more representative a dance work becomes the more it represses everything within it that doesn’t contribute to that particular representation. Errant body parts, movements, movement qualities, even whole bodies themselves, are excluded or hidden as completely as possible so that the representation will be made accurately. Likewise, such work invites audiences to read it in a similar manner, through a process of ‘suspension of disbelief’. Lapses in unison, the failure of bodies to completely represent a character (can that tall, svelte, exquisitely trained dancer really be representing a bag lady?)12, and the failure of movements to adequately stand in for verbal, pictorial, emotional or linguistic concepts are, in this context, disregarded as accidental irrelevancies in the quest to understand what the work ‘means’.

Then I’m turning again, focused only on moving fast. My arms and torso are distorted again, signaling simultaneously that I’m dancing and that the technique isn’t normal. My arms lead into a huge jump. For me the arms are crucial because my legs are weak, but the jump itself is so big, I go so high in the air, that you would never know that unless I told you. It’s explosive, it comes out of nowhere and it hangs and changes direction in the air. You can’t translate it because it is unique, not just every time I do it, but because of all the things that only I can bring to it.

Then I swing back to the left. My arms are extended wide again as I sail around. The right leg is trailing, of no importance compared to the sweep of the arms and the manic twist of my torso in the direction of the spin. I’m in motion again and enjoying it. There’s no transition. I just go straight to the next thing. There’s another sweep and a few fluid steps before “what’s wrong with this picture?” I stand on my right leg, rotated all the way in to 90 degrees, the left leg in passé, as if there was nothing to it. The references are simultaneously the ideal of the ballet.
position, the joke of reversing the rotation of the leg and the fact that this is so easy for me you barely notice I've done it. I'm smiling. Look what I can do (Vincs, Journal entry, 1999).

For me, this problem goes to the heart of how I understand the aesthetics of dance. I understand dance as fundamentally concerned with the production of an embodied subjectivity that is specific to particular dancers and particular choreographers. Of paramount importance to the aesthetic dimension of this is the sense of connection between a person and what they are doing, either performatively or choreographically. I am not especially fussy about the particular representative or communicative nature of the connection. Rather, I am concerned with its intensity. For me, the intensity with which an individual constructs either their own dancing body within a movement phrase or the choreographic structure of an entire work, and the particular assemblage of associations (of ideas, histories, events, bodies, training, narrative, politics, ideology, emotion) that intensity operates through, is what is significant about a dance.

Understood in terms of this intensity, dance becomes an expression of jouissance, that is, of the unnamed, unrepresentable productivity of the self that is particular, embodied and immediate. The subjective assemblage this gives rise to is too diverse, too heterogeneous in its elements to be clearly or unambiguously representative. It may hint at many things, but the sheer multiplicity of simultaneous references produced by the dancing body at once produces and sabotages communication.

The implicit sense, present in many choreographic conventions from ballet to modern dance, that a dance should somehow be about something other than itself, automatically begins to repress the jouissance of the moving self, or at least the parts of it that don’t contribute to the chosen ‘meaning’ of the work. By fixing dancing to representative systems of meaning, the richness and intensity of the subjective assemblage is impoverished, reduced to the danced equivalent of Guattari’s ‘small miserable world of identifications’. As he writes:

The work of the analyst, the revolutionary, and the artist meet to the extent that they must constantly tear down systems which reify desire, which submit the subject to the familial and social hierarchy. (I am a man, I am a woman, I am a
son, I am a brother, etc.) No sooner does someone say, "I am this or that" than desire is strangled (Guattari 1995b, p.222).

I must make it clear at this point that I am not arguing for an abandonment of representation on all levels, which would amount to a denial of any kind of intertextuality and indeed the production of any kind of text. This would be impossible as the process of representation is everywhere in our language, our perceptual systems, even our dancing. What I am suggesting however is that it is problematic in that it tends to fix and reduce experience, and that this problem becomes more pronounced the more one particular system of representation is allowed to dominate. I am arguing that perhaps representation is not omnipotent and perhaps, as Guattari suggests, glimpses beyond it may be possible. As Guattari writes about psychoanalysis:

This phallic power is certainly everywhere, it doesn't fall from the sky, it is the very structure of the sky, the air we breathe. And yet, another policy can be imagined where the despotism of the phallus is completely disarticulated: there would not be the phallus, but n dimensions, free from the hierarchy and binarism of the phallus: a tran-sexuality, a polycentrism of libidinal investments." (Guattari 1995b, pp.155–156).

Representation is the sky. Our conceptual world is made of it, and the project is not to deny that but to see whether any spaces are visible beyond it, or perhaps more accurately, to pursue a multiplicity that transcends fixed, binary, hierarchical systems of relating one thing to another.

An anti-representational stance is not new to dance. As Selma Jean Cohen points out, the understanding of dance as purely abstract in nature, in opposition to the idea that dance is specifically representative of situations and narratives, goes back several centuries. She quotes Gautier, who wrote in 1837 that

...dancing consists of nothing more than the art of displaying beautiful shapes in graceful positions and the development from them of lines agreeable to the eye; it is mute rhythm, music that is seen. Dancing is little adapted to render metaphysical themes; it only expresses the passions; love, desire with all its attendant coquetry (in Cohen 1982, p.25).
Resistance to the idea of dance as representational has been reasserted in various guises during this century (although not always accompanied by such a dualistic negation of dance's ability to contribute to philosophical discourses). As Randy Martin writes:

For choreographers as diverse as the late George Balanchine, Merce Cunningham, Trisha Brown, Alwyn Nikolaïs, movement is abstract not symbolic. A particular movement is not a sign because, while repeatable, it represents nothing in and of itself. It is not a signifier to any signified (Martin 1992, p.10).

As a result of the legacy and influence of these choreographers and others who have worked with similar paradigms, the Western cultural understanding of concert dance to some degree assumes and expects this approach. The conventions of choreographic practice allow us to experience and understand a dance that develops by formal means. These formal 'gestures', which include the design of dancers in space, the rhythmic and dynamic structures of a work, and the way in which these unfold, change and evolve in time, constitute a set of dance conventions that neatly sidesteps the whole problem of representation. The formal elements of dance are read in reference to formal conventions of dance: expectations about spatial and rhythmic form, arrangement of movement dynamics and the corporeal, somatic constructions of the dancers themselves. They do not primarily refer to things or ideas outside themselves.¹³

This formal aspect of dance is produced and reinforced within the practices of a widely divergent set of highly influential choreographers. Merce Cunningham is an obvious reference point for such conventions, given his absolute impatience with narcissistic self-revelation¹⁴ and his adoption of a philosophy akin to Cage’s statement:

Privilege of connecting two things remains privilege of each individual (e.g.: I: thirsty: drink a glass of water); but this privilege isn’t to be exercised publicly except in emergencies (there are no aesthetic emergencies) (Cage 1975, p.28).

In his work, movements refer to themes or ideas outside the dance only tangentially and accidentally. The structural organization of the work is made entirely on the
basis of the construction of unique and unusual spatial and rhythmic pathways and groupings, with even Cunningham’s own subjective preferences for those arrangements often deliberately overridden by the use of chance compositional procedures.\textsuperscript{15}

This paradigm was further extended in the radical genres of dance created by the Judson Church choreographers. In this work the primacy of representation, and particularly expressionistic representation, as a choreographic ideal was refuted by tactics that exposed the constructed nature of the performance and shifted the emphasis away from symbolism and towards the appreciation of real time ‘pedestrian’ or every day events as dance.

While these choreographers’ actions, along with the others on Randy Martin’s (1992, p.10) list, were overtly geared towards the refusal of representation, it is important to note that even in the work of such manifestly and self-avowedly expressionist choreographers as Martha Graham, elements of the work resist classification as expressive, revelatory or representative.

Mark Franko’s (1996b) discussion of John Martin’s criticism of Graham’s work articulates the problems that beset any attempt to designate even such an overtly expressive paradigm as Graham’s as purely representational. Martin demands that the subjectivist

\ldots transient and uncontrollable inspiration, out of the virtual possession and hysteria which often dominate them in primitive society ...(be) brought within the bounds of voluntary manipulation...(and) rendered subject to the response capacity of the spectator instead of being solely for the emission of the dancer’s own inner overcharge (in Franko 1996b, p.33).

For Martin, the indefinable, immediate subjective experience of both dancer/choreographer and audience must be subject to the rules of signification and meaning-making that both tacitly accept as authoritative.

This is at odds with the phenomenological claim that dance engenders a psychological immediacy of experience. Graham claimed that “Dance is an absolute...It is not knowledge about something, but is knowledge itself” (in Franko
1996b, p.33). In doing so, she distanced her dance from representation. Her dance is not a sign, or at least not completely a sign, but also its own content. As Franko puts it, by

Announcing that dance was its own cognitive activity “knowledge itself” – Graham severed practice from symbolization of behaviour as visible human intent, and conventional representations of emotions (Franko 1996b, p.35).

The contradiction between dance as sign and dance as experience creates a paradox. The call for clear representation in dance constitutes a demand that a dance “...encodes(s) its ambiguities unambiguously”(Franko 1996b, p.35). This demand is fundamentally contradictory in that it wants to designate in language or pre-existing sign systems a subjectivity that is pre-logical and complete, within the danced moment, in and of itself.

Deleuze and Guattari’s description of the novel, which literature, and in particular psychocriticism, sets up as Oedipal in origin, has an uncanny parallel to Graham’s work, which often made use of Freudian symbolism.16

But, just as these same writers appear to be up to their teeth in Oedipus, in the eternal mommy-wail, the eternal daddy-debate, in actual fact they are embarked upon a completely different venture, an orphan undertaking; they are assembling an infernal desiring-machine, putting desire in contact with a libidinal world of connections, and breaks, flows and schizses that constitute the sub-human element of sex, a world where each thing becomes a component of the “motor, desire,” of a “rubric wheelwork” crossing, mixing, overturning structures and orders—mineral, vegetable, animal, juvenile, social—each time shattering the ridiculous figures of Oedipus, always pushing forward a process of deterritorialisation (Guattari 1995b, p.130).

Despite the exquisitely clear and detailed arrangement of Freudian symbols in Graham’s choreographic structures (the soloist versus the group, the female protagonist confronting her desire symbolized as a powerful male, etc.) elements of the dancing escape this structure and remain incomprehensible in rationales such as Martin’s.
A man and a woman walk towards each other and meet in a hug. They don’t act. They don’t portray being in love or being happy or being sad; they just remain together softly letting their weight fall into each other’s skin. It’s tender, but it isn’t specific. It doesn’t say who, where or how, except that there is a particular quality of touch, a quietness and warmth that they each contribute. The hugs cut across the dancelry formula of the opening section, solo, duo and trio. Suddenly something more representative is happening. Sometimes I see the whole dance as a dialogue between this movement towards representation and a simultaneous retreat towards the sensation of moving couched in formal, abstract, and ultimately conventional contemporary dance terms (Vincs, Journal entry, 2001).

The danger in considering formalist choreographic conventions as a defence against representationalism however, is that perhaps what is being created is simply a new familial theatre of representation. One could posit the new modern dance ‘family’ with Cunningham as Daddy, the word, the signifier, which is absolute, abstract movement in a virtuosic, if non-ballistic, framework, and Graham as Mommy, the desired but impossible, unbearable lack; emotion, desire, Dionysian abandonment seeking articulation: fulfilment and transcendence which is suggested orgasmically in performance and then departs to the mysterious depths of the fathomless unconscious.

Is my dance simply situated in this new dance theatre? What, if anything, might escape these paradigms? The challenge is to imbue the movement with moments that take it outside both a formal modern dance sensibility and a representational (emotional/narrative) modern dance sensibility. I have tried to embed spaces for something different within the structure of movement phrases and gestural references. When I dance the material, these spaces are implicit and need no explanation. I inject moments of stillness, moments that aren’t contrived to mean anything either as a gesture, or within the paradigm of space, time and force as markers of a formal, structural, dance ‘language’. In these moments I sense an undercurrent of flow towards the next movement but you can’t see it until the next movement actually happens. The next movement makes sense of the pause that preceded it. In these moments of quiet, I sense that I drop out of ‘dancing’ or being a dancer, and I am present in a quieter, less dance coded (but still thoroughly coded in the sense that my body can always be read in cultural/historical/material
terms) manner and that in this state my uncodable physical and material difference as an individual becomes visible, if not exactly legible.

When I work with other dancers, however, these moments need to be structured into the fabric of the movement phrases and I need to find a way to make them an explicit part of the work. This is delicate territory as what I am trying to foster feels different for everybody and is often unconscious. Often when I identify something and say ‘yes, that’s a beautiful moment’, the exact quality of that moment dissolves under the weight of the focus and becomes like all the others. Sometimes, what I am trying to foster is a moment of calculated awkwardness, a glitch in the flow of a phrase, in which an individual is revealed as something other than a flawless dancing machine. These are the hardest moments to keep because they often feel uncomfortable for the dancer. They have only my word for it that, within the context of the dance, it works, and these moments often disappear with more rehearsal as the dancer ‘gets the material down’.

The very hardest sections to work in this way are the locomotor and jumping sequences. It is incredibly hard to foster anything outside the technical dance codes in the air because those codes take in most of the ways in which it is most efficient mechanically to achieve height and speed. There is an inherent sense of flow that comes with efficiency and momentum that is hard to subvert while retaining the energy necessary to move fast. It would have been easier to have deleted these sections, which are at constant risk of slipping into cliché (they sometimes remind me of what is called ‘bravura’ in ballet). I decided, however, to press forward with them. I aimed to retain what I find beautiful, in an immanently transcendent sense, about dancers exerting maximum energy, moving fast, jumping high for the sheer pleasure of it, while creating spaces for the unique, the original and to some degree, the awkward to show through so that the sense of spectacle was subverted.

Which are your lines of flight, where the fluxes add to one another, and where the thresholds attain a point of adjacency and rupture? Are they still viable, or have they been caught in a machine of destruction and self-destruction that would recompose a molar fascism (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, p.108)?

Deleuze and Guattari describe the constant flow between deterritorialisation, the line of flight into non-striated space, which may be explored in analogue fashion, free of
imposed routes or structures, and reterritorialisation in which things flow back towards ‘black holes’ of structure, microfascisms which recapture thought. They are careful, however, to warn that this arrangement is not simply a new dualism, but that deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation are part of the same fabric. They write:

...there is no dualism between the two planes, the plane of transcendent organization and the plane of immanent consistency; it is rather from the form and subjects of the first plane that the second ceaselessly tears away particles among which there are now only relationships of speed and slowness. It is also on the plane of immanence that the other rises up, working from within to block movements, fix affects, and organize forms and subjects (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, p.86).

While it is tempting to idealize dance as a completely deterritorialised, gloriously immanent line of flight, in the case of Festival for a Quiet Life this is patently not the case. The work of this dance is precisely to negotiate what Deleuze and Guattari (1987, pp.474–500) would call striated and non-striated space. Striated space is associated, in this instance, with dance ‘languages’ or paradigms concerned with the seemingly opposing systems of representation of formal, abstract choreographic forms and genres, and of emotional/narrative constructions. Non-striated space is the space of the individual, material, historical, body when it is exposed in the gaps and flaws of conventional ‘composition’ of both movement phrases and whole choreographic sections.

This is where my dance differs from what is called ‘new dance’ practice. In new dance there is a movement towards the extreme limits of deterritorialisation. The body becomes infinitely fluid in its organization, seeking to rip through conventional dance space in an immanent line of flight in which the instability and ephemerally of the body’s structure and function is cultivated and displayed. My work, in contrast, seeks to insert moments of instability into a range of pre-existing dance conventions.

The balance in Festival for a Quiet Life is tipped towards striated dance space. In answer to the question posed at the beginning of this section, how can I find my unique body, my pleasure in moving, my ‘jouissance’ in this dance form and how
can my dancers find theirs, confined as they are to working with my choreography, my movement and my body? It depends upon how effectively moments and sequences of non-striated dance space can be inserted into the fabric of the work. In non-striated, non-coded (in relation to the choreographic codes invoked by the rest of the dance) moments, a unique subjectivity is possible.\textsuperscript{12}

In relation to \textit{Festival for a Quiet Life}, the ultimate answer to this question can only be found in the dance itself, and even then only provisionally in every distinct performance of it. This is because it depends upon the organization of the dancers’ dancing bodies, which oscillates between poles of synthesis, either in terms of movement/conventional dance logic or in terms of emotional, narrative or gestural logic, and anti-synthesis in which the conventions of movement which say “I’m dancing” are circumvented, sometimes for brief moments and sometimes, very occasionally, for whole sequences. Opportunities for this modest deterritorialisation are woven into the choreographic structure and cultivated in rehearsal, but the moment of performance is different again, and the work represents an opportunity for such quiet mischief rather than an insistence on it.

\textit{Cliff often took that bend just that little bit too fast. Most people wouldn’t notice, but my mother always did.}
4.3 Dances from Hell Delirium

Blond Daddy's smiling like an angel. He's a little boy dressed in shorts with straight blond hair like my own. Paul, sitting in the sun at Danceworks, reminds me. He's angelic. The sun shines around his head and lights the wooden floor in patches from high celestial windows. It's the line of his head and neck, mainly, that conjures the image. Paul looks nothing like my father. Where my father was short, muscular and wiry with a quick, strong physique. Paul is tall, an elegant, fluid mover, elongated and statuesque. He looks heroic in the traditional sense, as Dante is in my imagination as he traverses his perilous path through the underworld (except that I don't know what Dante looked like).

Dante and Daddy are conflated into one image, identified with Paul. The image is one of beauty, light, sun, angelic countenance, goodness. The high windows of the Wesleyan hall, sun pouring through them, lend a religious reference. There's a connection into the ground and immanence. The sun pours onto a dusty, wooden floor, the dancer's earth. Each time Paul lengthens his body out in space, each time he pauses, balanced on one leg, asserting the vertical line through his spine and adding an extra lengthening twist through his neck, that angelic image is reiterated and strengthened. Within the various movement phrases, the one that begins with him breathing with hands across his chest, the one that begins with the limp holding one hip, the one that begins with him lengthening his body through the heel of one leg into the top of the head and looking behind himself until he falls off balance, something of that elegance, the line of the head and neck reaching up into space, reappears.

It's about my father. It's also about conventions of beauty in Western classical dance, which privilege the vertical, the elongation of the body and the extension of the extremities of the body out into space. It's also about the immanent conventions of modern dance, in which verticality is about reaching down as much as about reaching up. There is also the ingrained convention that the heroic should be beautiful, and that a dancer should also be in some sense beautiful. There is the history of Paul's dance training inscribed in his body, reinforcing the concepts of length, fluidity, control and line. There is also the ambivalence of my encounters with 'goodness' defined in those terms, my implicit acceptance of the physical
conventions of length and expansion along with my desire to subvert them with the twisting, spiralling, angularity that I enjoy.

There is also Rob, whose long, sustained notes on the saxophone reference notions of sonorous pleasure in the beauty of aural timbre, revealing his pleasure in activating and responding to the reflected overtones (resonance) of the huge cavernous space at Danceworks, even while they assert dissonance and discord on a more immediate level. There is Ben Cobram's lighting, which consists of a single follow spot operated from rigging above the performer. The beam of light is tightly contained to illuminate Paul but to reveal as little of the rest of the space as possible. The beam looks like light streaming through a high church window, contained, focused on the individual. It is also as dull as possible, suggesting Paul's presence rather than emphasizing it, in a dark, cavernous space lit occasionally by rod flares around the edge.

_Bad dancing, eisteddfod Saturdays and cold evenings in lights. Pot of Gold, solid rock and the girl from Ipanema goes walking. As she's walking each time she's walking she goes ahhhhh, keep looking at me._

I put this section in to change the atmosphere. The gorgeous, heroic, dancing Dante/Daddy is turned on his head and telling sick jokes. The first time I saw it in rehearsal it made me feel queasy in the stomach. When I felt that, I decided it should stay. It's meant to make you feel a bit sick. It's inappropriate. But once we got past that it was also fun. Rob tried playing 'The Girl from Ipanema' over it, and we all liked it. Then Rob got into the act by playing when Paul wasn't ready. It made Paul mad, so they kept it in, and Paul never really knew when Rob was going to play, or if he was going to play. He usually timed it so that he started just as Paul was going to start something, either speaking or dancing.

_They all had both soles on fire, because of which their joints were twitching so hard that they would have snapped ropes and withes. As flame on oily things is wont to move only on their outer surface, so it did there, from the heels to the toes (Dante 1971, p.195)_

_Dances from Hell_ connects a number of diverse subjective elements to Dante's text rather than mapping or representing the text. Images from the book saturate the
work, but the dance can never be reduced to those images because there are always a number of other representations going on simultaneously. The image of the soles of the feet on fire became a means of constructing a divergent set of physical meanings to do with instability, a need for energy to flow quickly or explosively through the body, and a reorganization of the body so that the feet touch the floor as seldom as possible. Simultaneously, this material referenced a number of emotional contexts including fear, excitement, danger and pain, all arising from the idea of disrupting or debilitating the feet as means of support for the body. The physicality of this movement at once referenced and embodied a range of emotions and physical situations. These references are synthesized physically within a single dance phrase that has no single epistemological or semiotic basis.

Inherent in this process is a failure to present a straightforward representation of the image of soles of feet on fire. The representation, in its translation into physical movement, becomes ambiguous, as other, previously unrelated references, meanings and even systems of meanings are generated. The representation of the original literary image becomes not the meaning of the work, but simply one part in a growing network of associations that are integrated corporeally.

Similarly, the construction of the dance as machinic or rhizomic problematises other kinds of intertextual references in the work. The machinic function of the dance is constantly asserted over the possibility of stable modes of representation. The titular reference to Hell, for example, despite its deep and powerful semiotic associations does not enjoy the status of the ‘meaning’ of the work nor does it enjoy a position of autonomous metaphoric authority throughout the work. It suggests a literal representation of dances that might be performed in Hell, but it also suggests dances that are difficult or hard to deal with, or a very bad dance. The reference is immediately plural, immediately a point of divergence rather than coherence.

You can’t pin a good dancer down.

The dance begins with what seems to be a fairly straightforward enactment of someone, perhaps even Dante himself, traversing the domain of the Inferno. This references a dance that might be made about being sentenced to Dante’s Hell. Then suddenly, Paul is addressing the audience directly, informing them that this is the
dance from Hell (with a smile, aren’t these the worst dances you can imagine?). It’s a joke, and people usually laugh at the clichéd show dancing references, sometimes because they genuinely think they’re funny, and sometimes because Paul’s tongue-in-cheek delivery gives an ironic metanarrative (I can’t believe I have to do this corny material and try and make you think its funny ... but you’re laughing, I’ve got you, haven’t I). Hell, cliché, the horror of making a bad dance, mass culture, one’s own dance training, fracturing the frame of representation of the work, the possibility of ruining the work are all implicated. Then, suddenly, Paul dances away from all of these contexts, as if totally concerned with the pleasure of moving, remembering a past dance experience that was saturated with kinaesthetic pleasure. The organizing metaphor of the work has shifted to Paul’s body, his pleasure in movement, and my presence as choreographer, my pleasure in constantly breaking the flow of the movement and the frame of representation.

"You have to love dancing to stick to it. It gives you nothing back... nothing but that single fleeting moment when you feel alive" (Cunningham in Brown 1980, p.90).

The quote is from Merce Cunningham. In my younger days I found that quote inspiring. It made clear for me, affirmed what I had felt, which was that the rewards in dance were constituted in terms of a collection of moments of moving in which I felt I knew who I was. Dancing was always a quest to articulate the self. Upsetting the context of that statement so that it became sarcastic, indicating that feeling alive was poor reward, was a way of profaning that sense of lived experience and self-awareness. That is one conception of hell for me: the sudden, unanticipated dissolution of self and meaning, like the ground suddenly opening up.

But, as I ask in Kim’s Style Guide for the Kinaesthetic Boffin, do you really need to know all that? Are the choreographer’s personal narratives relevant to the discussion of meaning in the dance? This question arises from a notion of intertextuality in which all texts constantly refer to other systems of reference, and are framed as representations of elements outside the dance. In this context, the question could be reformulated to ask whether, or to what extent, Dances from Hell represents personal experiences of the choreographer?
In relation to *Dances from Hell*, the answer is that the status of these narratives is ambiguous. References to personal experiences were an essential part of the construction of the dance, and of the machinic subjectivity produced, but they are not necessarily made explicit or even tacit in the finished work. Some of them (the recent death of my father is the most obvious example) may add levels of meaning to the work to those who know me and can guess at my reasoning in making the work. They don’t necessarily however influence readings of the work constructed by people who don’t know me. Strangers can guess at, attempt to infer, some of my personal history from the work. The historical validity of that inferred history however is always made ambiguous by the fact that the work is constructed for performance.

If I were trying to make a work that communicated subjectivity as if it were information, then one would have to say I had failed because the status of the personal narratives in the work is ambiguous. They are buried, discernible to those who are part of their history and obscured for those who aren’t. But I am not trying to communicate information. I want to produce a subjective machine that connects diverse elements of meaning rather than reducing them to a single paradigm. Guattari’s understanding of subjectivity as production rather than replication and transmission is relevant here. The point is not what singularity, what subjective ‘position’ that creates, or what particular history might be being narrated, but what subjective possibilities it opens up, both for me as choreographer and for audiences. As Guattari writes in describing the machinic nature of subjectivity:

> Imagine that someone offers you a little calculator to perform arithmetical operations. Is there communication there? A potential usage is transmitted to you. The performances it allows are established as soon as a certain competence relating to its use is acquired. In my view, the same thing happens with theoretical expressions that should function as tools, as machines, with reference neither to an ideology nor to the communication of a particular form of ideology (Guattari 1995b, p.38).

> “Sighs, laments, and loud wailings, resounding through the starless air, so that at first they made me weep. Strange tongues, horrible outcries, utterances of woe, accents of anger, voices shrill and faint, and the beating of hands among them, were making a tumult that swirls unceasingly in that dark and timeless air. Such is
the miserable condition of the sorry souls of those who lived without infamy and without praise.\textsuperscript{20}

This text plugs the dance into Dante. He ascribes a level of hell to those who have eschewed passion. The description takes one out of time and place. The air is unnatural, outside the normal passage of time and the cycles of day and night. Immanent pleasure, fleshy, earthy, moving, human experience is negated, nullified, numbed. This is the opposite of lived experience and subjectivity, 'that one fleeting moment when you feel alive'. It is the forcible imposition of the condition of death, and the abduction of life from those who are left to grieve.

Dante implies that this condition is a choice, self-imposed in life and punished eternally, but I dispute that. 'Hell is getting old, getting sick and dying before your time.'\textsuperscript{21} These are not choices. These things are imposed from without, part of the contract of life but not apportioned to people with any sense of equity or fairness. Some of us die sooner than others, some after a long life, some before they have barely begun. My father died at the age of 61. Not bad by some standards, appalling by others.

'And wondering if you're damned for too much passion or too little?'\textsuperscript{22} Dante is so damned self righteous. He thinks he knows who's good and who's bad and has the right to tell the rest of us. He thinks he knows which actions are good and which are bad. But that's exactly the hell of it. You don't always know. Too much passion or too little? To have done something badly or not to have done it at all? To have gone after something or to have settled for what was available? To take a risk or, as JeanetteWinter put it, to "...refuse the passion as one would sensibly refuse a leopard in the house." (Winter 1987, p.145).

Dante says:

A man may lay violent hand upon himself: and upon his own property: and therefore in the second ring must every one repent in vain who deprives himself of your world, gambles away and dissipates his substance, and weeps there where he should be joyous (Dante 1971, p.111).
That's the worst part. The call to life, to 'that one fleeting moment when you feel alive' to what Deleuze and Guattari call desire, is so resolutely embedded in my psyche and in my body, I find the denial of it appalling, horrific, immoral. To sense that one might have done that, might not even have realized it at the time....

These last paragraphs have an implicitly confessional tone. Identifying the historical, personal and intertextual sources of the work seems to imply that this is an articulation of what the dance is about. The further implication is that these 'confessions' reveal 'what I really think' about these issues. While at first glance this may seem self-evident, it is in fact quite problematic.

The problem with assuming that the meaning or meanings in the work somehow represent 'what I think', or my subjective position, is that there is not necessarily any coherent, homogeneous subjective 'position' at the basis of the work to be represented. This is an illusion created by the writing, an illocutionary effect of its structure. Following Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of desire and the production of subjectivity, the self is also produced by the linking of a number of disparate elements that don't necessarily have a single ontological basis. Even if I were able to subdue the multiplicity of voices into a single frame of reference and embed it in a dance, it would only be for an instant. The production of the self is a dynamic process and the construction of the 'I' would be out of date, with no real relevance to myself, the moment it was produced.

Just as desire organizes the dance, so it organizes the production of the self. This self is not prior to the dance, lying 'behind' the dance to be represented by the dance. To the contrary, the dance is complicit in the production of the self, of subjectivity itself. 'Self' becomes another element connected by the dance/dancer/choreographer machine into the production of an emergent, provisional and ephemeral subjectivity that only exists in real time, as the dance unfolds.

Making a dance is like trying on different subjective formulations for size. Maybe they fit, maybe they don't. There is some attraction in them, but that doesn't necessarily mean I'm buying shares in the company. I don't 'inhabit' my dances in the sense that the 'I' can be identified as the source of my dances. 'The 'I' is in
fact produced in the process of making a dance as it is in the process of any other kind of praxis. In Guattari’s words:

Subject and object are no longer face to face with a means of expression in a third position; there is no longer a tripartite division between the realm of reality, the realm of representation or representativity, and the realm of subjectivity. You have a collective set-up which is, at once, subject, object, and expression. The individual is no longer the universal guarantor of the dominant meanings. Here, everything can participate in enunciation, individuals, as well as zones of the body, semiotic trajectories, or machines that are plugged in on all horizons. The collective disposition of enunciation thus unites semiotic flows, material flows, and social flows, well short of its possible recuperation with a theoretical corpus (Guattari 1995b, p.232).

*Breathing, grey, angelic in the mist of not wanting anything but that starless air just to see Dad again. White, like hospital sheets raspings in the breath, rattling like a sabre holed up in his chest. Leaving him there with tranquilizers in our blood.*

*Echo in the space bounces back and forth as if the walls were solid but they’re not. They’re porous. They buzz and vibrate and rattle, sitting on an earthquake zone. Truck rumbles by boom in gun words fire factory of sonic allowance of luggage. Down, boom, deep in depths crash into sick and thud skin white dripping saliva smiling at my sister, thanking my mother in his last moments.*

*White angelic light, sun, Ben’s light through the plastic mask glinting as he looks back quietly. It was always better when he just held the mask quietly to his face. There was no drama, just the possibility of illness, grey wards, death.*

To say that the dance is about my father’s death is nonsense. To make that statement is to trivialize the event of my father’s death in the most appalling way. How can anything ever seek to represent the profundity of that event? How dare you ask me to say that my father’s death is significant on the same level as a dance performance? And yet that is exactly what most approaches to dance criticism would ask of me. What is it about? What is the subject matter? Is it about
something or is it just about the movement (as if the latter were a fall back position to get one out of trouble)? Oh, it’s about my father’s death.

But the fact that my father died is significant to the work. References to illness and death such as the sound of rasping breathing Rob produces, the gestures Paul makes as he places his hands over his lungs as if entirely focussed on the difficulty of breathing, the word Hell in the title, the references to Dante’s (1971) Inferno in program notes and spoken quotes from the work, the oxygen cylinder and breathing mask he uses at the end, plug the Dances from Hell machine into the historical fact that my father died recently. This is significant to the people who know that that happened, and significant to people who have also experienced recent bereavement. It influences how they see the work and what they perceive the work to be.

This is not, however, the same as saying that the work in some way represents this event. Rather than representing the event, the work references it. In this process, elements of the emotional landscape surrounding illness and bereavement are called to mind, but the specific event remains ambiguous. This referenced, perhaps cited might even be a better word, event then becomes one element in an array of elements, which together enable the dance to connect a unique collection of subjective factors. Death is connected with beauty, with nobility, with sickness, with meaninglessness, with bad jokes and bad dancing, with nonsense, with overwhelming sound, with sarcasm and profanity, with religion, with Dante, with guilt, with passion... In Deleuze and Guattari’s terms, the dance is a machine. Their description of the book-machine might equally describe the dance-machine:

We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier: we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed, and with what other bodies without organs it makes its own converge (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.4).

The dance is not about death, but plugs into death, and in particular to the specificity of my experience of my father’s death. It dances away again to plug simultaneously into other things: pleasure in dancing, pleasure in composing an unusual phrase, the struggle to keep the movement specific and to prevent it

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becoming normalized in terms of dynamics and line into the conventions of modern dance technique. Even in writing about the dance, new images of the dance and images of my father's death are connected, intermingled. They cannot be considered isomorphic sets of events, one mapping onto the other, the dance representing the history or the writing representing the dance. Rather, all three are interconnected, irrevocably associated one with the other in the machinic production of desire.
4.4 Kim’s Style Guide for the Kinaesthetic Boffin Delirium

4.4.1 An Exegetic Desiring Machine

The delirium of my body is caught up in an ambivalence towards plasticity. On the one hand there is the belief in the malleability of the body. The body one has can always be changed, and the fantasy is that it can be changed to whatever you want it to be. This is the whole premise of dance technique: that the body can be reinscribed by a combination of the technology of the technique and the will to apply it. On the other hand however, is the material, lived body: the genetically, historically and culturally influenced starting place which any change must negotiate.

Kim’s Style Guide for the Kinaesthetic Boffin brings together a set of subjective elements (my dancing body, a particular medical history, a set of assumptions about dance techniques, a set of movement material), which creates a delirium in which the potential malleability and materiality of the body are in constant tension.

The dance offers no answers, no definable position on the extent to which physical change is possible. The written discussion arising from the dance cannot therefore be an explication of the dance because there is no definable position to explicate. These very questions, in fact arise only in the analysis of the dance, after the fact. They are present in the dance, but they are not articulated as a duality in that context. Rather, the body is situated as both malleable and materially resistant to change and in the context of the dance, the one property does not necessarily negate the other.

Rather than suggesting a position, the dance particularizes the discussion. Nowhere else, in no other discourse, are these particular elements, these particular histories and this particular material body brought together and plugged into the same machine. The effect of this is to guard against two different but equally problematic ways of situating the dance in relation to theory.

The first is to allow the dance to be understood as a demonstration of particular theoretical positions about the plasticity of the body. This stance is rendered problematic by the inclusion of material in the dance that suggests conflicting interpretations of the body’s plasticity to change. The dance could be read as supportive of either the idea that the body is plastic (the material history of a
A degenerative hip condition is subverted by my transformation of my body to become a dancer, or the idea that the material history of the body is resistant to change (despite becoming a dancer, I have continuing degeneration in my hip and constant limitations on my range of movement). Both interpretations are clearly suggested in the dance, but no resolution of the ambiguity and tension between them is provided. The implicit suggestion that this material is autobiographical adds to the ambiguity because both interpretations are framed as ‘true’.

The second problematic paradigm is to position the dance as the authoritative source of a new theory about the body. The elevation of the dance to the status of a theory would imply that it has a broader application than my own particular situation. This is problematised by the autobiographical particularity of the dance that grounds the discussion explicitly within a specific personal and historical context. This works against the tendency to universalise any theory about the plasticity of the body. My body has proved malleable, perhaps surprisingly so in some ways, and resistant to change in others. The specific history of my hip condition precludes a broader application of the specific ways in which my body has and has not been open to change. Further, the positioning of this discourse within an autobiographical context raises the issue of choice and agency. The ways in which my body has been moulded over the years have been determined not only by externally imposed circumstances and opportunities, but also by how I have chosen to respond to those influences, and, more fundamentally, how I have conceptually and phenomenologically constructed and understood those influences as positive and negative, desirable and undesirable.

The use of autobiographical material in the dance grounds the discussion within a particular personal and historical context. The specificity of this context does not, however, completely determine the written discussion, just as the dance itself does not completely determine the discussion. This is because the dance is not ontologically or even temporally prior to or causative of the discussion.

Ontologically speaking, the dance generates the discussion but the discussion is not limited to the experience of watching, making or performing the dance. When the discussion is understood as a desiring machine, other subjective elements, cultural tropes and histories impinge upon the discussion. The writing is then always impure, always a hybrid. The writing, as desire, is always in Deleuze’s terms “...a
constructivism, constructing an assemblage, 'agencement', an aggregate: “aggregate of the skirt, of the sunray, of a street, of a woman, of a vista, of a colour... constructing a region.” He said, “...in desiring an object, a dress for example, the desire is not for the object, but for the whole context, the aggregate...” (in Parnet 1996). In this context, the dance is the object. Writing about, or constructing a desiring machine about, the dance is never just concerned with the dance itself, but rather about the whole aggregate of subjective factors associated with the dance. The project of this written desiring machine is to plug these elements into a new working aggregate.

Temporally speaking, the dance cannot be seen to precede and cause the writing. The temporal relationship between the writing and the dance is constantly changing. At the current time of writing the dance is in the past for me. I have already made it and I write in that knowledge. By the time you read this however, the dance will have been changed, re-worked and re-performed. This new dance, in the future for me, will be in the past for you. Its relationship with this discussion will have changed fundamentally. The dance, as I perform it, on the night you see it, may no longer agree with the line of flight I produce as I write.

The role of the exegetic desiring machine is not, therefore cannot, be to explicate the dance. What it must rather do is gather up the functional elements of the dance, the subjective cogs that make the machine work, the numbers on Deleuze and Guattari’s pocket calculator. It in fact does more than that however, as it combines these elements with new ones originating outside the frame of the dance. The particular line of flight produced by this dance-writing desiring machine is to combine elements of the dance with particular ways of theorizing the body as both plastic and material.

The machine is not a simple collating machine however, stapling dance ideas to sociological or philosophical ones. Rather, the interaction of dance and theory serves to cut various flows. The seemingly smooth flow of theory about the body into the physicality of dance is cut, breaking off the assumed contiguity of these associations. Theory is cut precisely at the point where it breaks with the materiality of dance. Conversely however, the dance is also cut, its seemingly organic, revelatory relationship to meaning severed as its elements break apart and reveal their inherent heterogeneity. The apparently seamless, cohesive subjectivity
produced on the surface of the dance is cut and the subjectivist question, ‘who am I when I dance’ is replaced with the more fundamental ‘what do I produce when I dance’?

As I write then, I do not reveal or explain the dance, so much as weave together elements of the dance, elements of my personal history in dance training, and elements of the ways in which dancing and non-dancing bodies have been theorized. The relationships between these elements are not simple, however. The flows within this particular machine are not always direct, not always linear. The image of fluid mechanics is relevant here. The movement of fluid through a conduit looks straightforward on the surface but underneath, turbulence at the molecular level belies that simplicity and the most complex of linear equations can’t fully explain the behaviour of the liquid. There is dirt in any machine, small impurities that further complicate the flows, so that the pathways implied in the engineering do not completely determine the workings of the machine in action.

This is the whole problem in dance analysis. We have been seduced by the ideal of the general, the lure of the perfect machine that turns dances into cultural tropes, aesthetic positions and cohesive theory. Particularities, particular bodies, particular choreographers and particular performances have been seen as the dirt in the theoretical machine that must be continually cleaned out so that the machine functions without compromise. (Graham’s body, for example, is rarely discussed. Her vision for making abstract dance symbols is seen as the driving force behind her work. The shape of her pelvis rarely comes into it.) Ironically, these particularities are integral to the functioning of any given dance machine. You can’t make dances without bodies and you can’t have bodies that aren’t particular, historical and material.

As in science and mathematics, there are two possible approaches. Either you use approximations and build machines which deal only with situations which closely approximate the ideal, or you build machines that will work, i.e. produce what you want to produce, but only in certain particular situations. In relation to dance, it seems perverse to cling to the notion of purity and homogenisation when the whole rhetoric of modern and contemporary dance practice for most of this century has had to do with innovation, individual vision and the specific practices of particular choreographers. Aesthetic movements and trends, while always lurking in the
rhetorical background, have taken second place both philosophically and historically to the work of particular choreographers.\textsuperscript{23}

In terms of building dance-theory machines, this implies embracing the particular as integral to any theoretical machine. This approach has been criticized in other contexts. Susan Bordo, in her discussion of postmodernism played out in the arena of popular culture, uses the Jerry Springer show to exemplify what she sees as a trend towards the use of the ubiquitous destabilizing example (Bordo 1998, pp.47–53). Whatever the issue under discussion, someone can always be found whose experience bucks the trend. Generalizations are impossible to make because there is always a destabilizing example. All difference then becomes univalent, of equal value. In the interests of valuing difference, images and experiences are endlessly displaced from their contexts in order to refute generalizations in unrelated areas of social or cultural discourses.\textsuperscript{24}

Those who insist on an orienting context (and who therefore do not permit particulars to reign in all their absolute ‘difference’) are seen as ‘totalising,’ that is, as constructing a falsely coherent and morally coercive universe that marginalizes and effaces the experiences and values of others (Bordo 1998, p.50).

The problem is, however, that in this endlessly destabilized and decontextualized landscapes no generalizations, no theories and ultimately no meaning can be constructed.

The implication of the approach I am suggesting is that the destabilizing example is always an integral part of choreographic work. In the context of dance, this means that we are always dealing with particular bodies and particular ways of moving which destabilize conventions and categories of bodies.

This is not to say, however, that the result is necessarily as amorphous and as meaningless as Susan Bordo fears. Taken in the context of Deleuze and Guattari’s project, the particular is always part of a bigger assemblage. The particular body and the particular choreographic vision are always assembled on the surface of the work along with a myriad of other voices, other subjective elements. The destabilizing particular is itself destabilized and recontextualised, within a larger
machine. Far from isolating the particular body within an illusion of self-determination as Bordo fears, or romanticizing it as a fundamental or prior cause for subjectivity, the machinic assemblage embeds the particular body in a cultural subjectivity.

This is the essence of Deleuze and Guattari's project. They reject the pre-formed template, which assumes it can predict how things will work, in favour of pragmatic assemblages which assume that machines incorporate the impure, the dirty, and the particular. Subjectivity itself is produced machinically and incorporates in a working apparatus cultural tropes, personal histories, and the particularity of what they term 'a-signifying semiological dimensions' which lie outside linguistic structures and which, from a dancer's perspective, might describe aspects of the specifics of a particular material body.

Guattari describes this conception of subjectivity in the following terms:

Recognition of these machinic dimensions of subjectivity leads us to insist, in our attempt at redefinition, on the heterogeneity of components leading to the production of subjectivity. Thus one finds in it 1. Signifying semiological components which appear in the family, education and the environment, religion, art, sport...2. Elements constructed by the media industry, cinema, etc... 3. A-signifying semiological dimensions that trigger informational sign machines, and that function in parallel or independently of the fact that they produce and convey signification and denotations, and thus escape from strictly linguistic axiomatics (Guattari 1995a, p.4).

Applied to the discussion of dance practice, this allows the solution of a paradox; how can particular bodies be integral to dance practice when any theorization of dance practice immediately categorizes and hence homogenizes those bodies? Deleuze and Guattari's model offers a way out of this dilemma in that the particular history, the particular body, and the particular choreographer can be situated in a larger assemblage. The specificity of a particular dance event can then be meaningful without destabilizing or refusing the cultural and historical embeddedness of that event.
Applied to the problem of discussing Kim’s *Style Guide to the Kinaesthetic Boffin*, this understanding of the dance as an assemblage demands that the plurality and heterogeneity of its elements be addressed. The cultural locatedness of the work in relation to dance conventions, and the theorizations of those conventions and related areas of cultural theory to do with the body must be examined. Simultaneously, the particular, personal histories incorporated within the machine must be exposed, along with the particular ‘a-signifying semiological dimensions’ that may arise from the specificity of my body.

The challenge is to do this in such a way as to preserve the heterogeneity and non-hierarchical nature of these elements. Their connectedness and the ways in which they function must be indicated without subsuming them into a new fixed, hierarchical organization, for example, personal history produces body which interacts with dance training then produces choreography. As Guattari writes:

Subjectivity is in fact plural and polyphonic – to use Mikhail Bakhtin’s expression. It recognizes no dominant or determinant instance guiding all other forms according to a univocal causality (Guattari 1995a, p.1).

The construction of a pragmatic, functioning machine-with-dirt, must both make space for the particular and negotiate the generalizing nature of theorization.

4.4.2 The Material History of My Body

It is unbearable to write this—unbearable to write the history of my body. The dreams I had, the fantasies that if I just worked harder I could overcome my difference. The dream, in relation to my hips was a kind of pelvic gender scepticism. By working hard enough, diligently enough, smart enough, with enough kinaesthetic awareness, enough anatomical awareness, the right technique, the right teacher, and the right kind of determination, perhaps I could transcend medical history, reinvent the functionality of my pelvis, free its restrictions, and realize an as yet undemonstrated potential.

The delirium of my body during my training was caught up with the desire for transcendence. The dream, the fantasy, was that my body was endlessly malleable, containing endless as yet unrealised potential. It is essentially an adolescent dream. It cannot be sustained beyond a certain innocence, beyond the passage of a certain
number of years during which it gradually becomes apparent that some things are not going to change, or at least not as much as one might have hoped. A plateau may be sustained for a time, where potential lines of flight are still delineated, but subterranean molecular flows simultaneously creep back to the materially defined body in a process of sedimentation. Still later, a new awareness begins to be superimposed over the old dream wherein, rather than promising increased freedom of movement, it gradually becomes apparent that the future, in fact, holds less. During my dance training however, all this was still in the future. The task at hand, the dream, the possibility, was to transcend a medical history of congenitally dislocated hips\(^{26}\), Perthes disease\(^{27}\), and subsequent medical interventions.

The structure of my hips is not static, not unmalleable. Beyond a certain point, however, it is non-negotiable. The history of the response of my hips to the moulding influences of medical intervention, dance training and my own desire to move is real, historical and material. This history is embedded, has become realized, in the bones, muscles and connective tissue itself. The metal plate, for example, introduces a completely different quality into the substance of the bone of my left femur. Bones normally have some give, a subtle sense of play that allows them some malleability so that they don’t break with every impact. The metal in my left femur adds a different consistency altogether and I can feel it. It’s strong. I can stand on that leg all day if I want to. It’s solid. It has a support that the other leg doesn’t. I can feel that support even when I’m not moving. Before the move, in Merleau Ponty’s terms, I sense a potentiality\(^{28}\).

The muscles know what it will feel like to balance on that leg. They know the density of the metal enhanced bone. They know the lines of force, what will be required, what resistances will be met, and how to overcome them. The physical world is differently understood when I stand on that leg. It is stable; I am stable.

The challenges for this femur are twofold. The first is mobility. The density of the leg makes it resistant to movement. It is in permanent bound flow. The metal in the bone will not be otherwise. I can’t change the periodic table, give metallic elements lower specific gravities. I must work within the limits that metal imposes.

The second challenge is the altered lines of force across the hip joint that were created by the surgery. The leg was broken at the top of the femur, rotated
outwards, and pinned permanently in that position. Working from the back to the front, the gluteals have a shorter line of action. Origin and insertion are closer together. There is less torque, but a quicker, more direct action. There is no slack to be taken up. The deep lateral rotators are permanently contracted. They kick in the blink of an eye. The quadriceps are displaced laterally. They abduct as well as flex the hip.

The surgery was effected in order to correct a more gross eccentricity. The neck of the femur was antverted, the greater trochanter pointing posteriorly, causing an overeffective psoas muscle to dislocate the hip joint anteriorly. The surgery was an attempt to correct the lines of action of the hip muscles, to make them act more centrally, less eccentrically. But the result has still been that the muscles pull around an origin of rotation that is not at the centre of the ball and socket joint of the hip. Instead of rotating the head of the femur around its own centre, every action is deferred and ectopic, tending to pull the hip unevenly.

I am acutely and continually aware of the intervention. It is not a temporal awareness, that on that day, in that year, my leg was broken and re-set. Rather, it is a spatial, kinesthetic and functional awareness. There is a discontinuity in the functional lines of the leg that exists for all time because of that surgical event.

I am not implying here any romantic nostalgia for the ‘natural’ state of my leg that has been lost. The ‘natural’, or perhaps genetic or biological, state of my leg, was dysfunctional and ultimately degenerative. Bone was wearing on bone and severe degenerative change was the expected scenario in the absence of treatment.

Further problematising the ‘natural’ is the fact that a new ‘natural’, or ‘point of origin,’ has since been produced. The proprioceptive mechanisms of the neuromuscular systems involved have been reorganized so that I sense the current state of the bones and muscles of that leg as ‘natural’ or ‘normal’. I know exactly how much force, where, when, through which neuromuscular pathways, to exert to move my left leg. I do not over or under compensate for the changes as the changes have become the new materiality of my leg.

The fact that I sense this leg as texturally, functionally different from my other leg is not due to the fact that I remember a discontinuity, an intervention into how the leg
functions. It is rather due to the material effects of that intervention. What I sense that is different is the way in which the leg exists in the gravitational field. The lines of force, transmitted through the leg to the ground, pass outside the centre of the hip joint. Unless I rotate my pelvis to the left, which I normally do, they pass significantly wide of the centre of both knee and ankle joints. These lines of force, and the compensations necessary to accommodate them in movement, are non-negotiable.

This is not to say that the compensations are fully determined by this history as they are uniquely made. No one else would necessarily make them in exactly the same way, with exactly the same tension in the muscles, exactly the same pressure for flexibility in the scar tissue, with exactly the same, what Godard would call corporeal poetic, as I do. But the forces they respond to are not malleable, not open to suggestion, and cannot be thought otherwise. They are material.

This is how I understand what Susan Bordo calls the materiality of the body (Hekmen 1998, p.65). The so-called ‘memory’ of the body is not a temporal memory of an event or a specific, immediate response to that event. It is rather an ongoing material effect of a specific history that is continually responded to. The response is simultaneously and co-extantly neuromuscular and conceptual. The neuromuscular is continually interpreted as conceptual (strong, solid, immovable, rigid, inflexible, safe, hard, muscular) and the conceptual is continually interpreted as neuromuscular (bound flow, strong weight, spatially fixed, indirectly aligned, using muscular force to overcome that).

This response is not static, a one off event which changes the body for all time, but a continual process of negotiation with the consequences of an event, such that both the historical events themselves and my continued corporeal and conceptual response to the conditions imposed by those events, together shape the materiality of the body.
4.4.3 New Dance and the Malleability of the Body

We were always thinking about the bones, sensing the weight dropping through the body, feeling the natural alignment of the bones.

This reference in Kim’s Style Guide for the Kinaesthetic Boffin relates to my training in new dance techniques. These practices constitute a heterogeneous grouping of dance work sharing in common an interest in breaking down the hegemony of conventional western dance codes (ballet and modern dance) in the way dancing bodies are organized functionally and neuromuscularly. In Sally Gardner’s words, this project has been an attempt to

...explore the possibilities of loosening the connections between bodies and their significations, to play havoc with the ways in which bodies were conventionally patterned in order to suggest other possibilities (Gardner 1999, p.185).

This has been a means of freeing the dancing subject from the conventional representations associated with particular corporeal codes. In particular, the conventional understanding of the dancer as primarily identified through virtuoso muscularity, through verticality, and through discreetly shaped gestures of the torso and limbs, is refused in these practices in favour of a more fluid, democratic organization of body parts in which initiation for movement can arise in any part of the body and traverse any functional route through the body. Elizabeth Dempster describes the conventional construction of the dancer in the Western tradition as “... dominated by the representation of mastery, the display of authority and command over a unified, muscular body subject” (Dempster 1994/95, p.50). The new dance project has involved disrupting this muscarily achieved control of the body to allow a more fluid, more dynamic corporeal organization.

This involves an implicit and explicit rejection of the idea that the dancing body is purely representative, with no significance of its own. By disrupting conventional representative codes, the significance of the body as a text in and of itself is revealed. As Gardner describes it, the aim of this work has been to “...allow the body a significance of its own, to free it from a subordination to dramatic, literary, visual and other orders” (Gardner 1999, p.193). This is not to posit that the body is in any way natural or essential, but rather to expose the already culturally inscribed body and the meanings it suggests.
The approach of new dance to differences between bodies has its roots in the radical disavowal of conventional dance technique undertaken by the Judson Church generation. In a critique of the hegemony of particular dance genres, untrained dancers were recruited to appear in works organized around functional scores rather than predetermined movement phrases. Implicit in this interest in the untrained ‘dancing’ body was a critique of the idea that a dancer had to look a certain way or possess certain virtuosic skills, and in its place was posited a fascination with the cultural coding and significance of a range of different bodies. As Gardner writes,

Post-modern dancers wanted dancing to be understood and experienced as a property of bodies per se not just of bodies specifically trained to do it. At the same time, however, they were under no illusions regarding the cultural status of bodies: they did not subscribe like some of their forerunners to the idea of a natural body, a more truthful body, a body before or ‘other’ to language. Instead, they seemed to understand that wit, intelligence and agility were necessary to subvert an economy of representation in which bodies are always already inscribed as not dancing (Gardner 1999, p.193).

The new dance project then, was not to simply create and then impose a new set of corporal norms for dance, but to open up a space in which a multiplicity of corporeal and subjective formulations might be possible. Implicit in this ideology is the acceptance of a range of body types and styles and a diversity of movement practices.

In my training in new dance however, my body was marked not by the way in which this work has subsequently come to be understood, but by the desiring machine I created out of my particular, historical experiences of that work. A delirium is history, events, facts, signifying codes and discourses all commandeered by desire, hence a delirium need not actually, factually, realistically, obey the tenants of its constituent ideologies. The delirium, by definition, creates its own contexts for how things (ideas, ideologies, and discourses) function.

What is important to this writing is therefore how the discourse of new dance practice functioned historically, materially in my dance training: the historical reality of the particular teachers I studied with and the ways in which I interpreted that
teaching. That this desiring machine does not necessarily match the understanding of new dance developed subsequently in the literature is significant only in that it illustrates the mutability of ideology in the face of the specific and the historical. As Guattari wrote about psychoanalysis:

According to traditional psychoanalysts, it's always the same father and always the same mother—always the same triangle. But who can deny that the Oedipal situation differs greatly, depending on whether the father is an Algerian revolutionary or a well-to-do executive? It isn't the same death which awaits your father in an African shanty town as in a German industrial town; it isn't the same Oedipus complex or the same homosexuality. It may seem stupid to have to make such obvious statements, and yet such swindles must be denounced tirelessly; there is no universal structure of the human mind (Guattari 1995b, pp. 219–20).

In this instance theory does not flow smoothly into dance practice, even when that theory is derived from the practice. Instead, the smooth, predictable flow of new dance theory is interrupted by the specificity of my historical perspective and my material body. This is in no way a critique of that theory, which in and of itself bears witness to many other historicities, other particular bodies in engagement with particular practices. It is merely to point out that the theory-machine does not always operate under ideal conditions, with ideal bodies, and that when it doesn't, the outcomes are not necessarily as expected.

In my engagement with new dance, tensions arose from the way in which the body was implicitly understood and presented in the classes I attended. I was aware from the beginning that the acceptance of a wide range of diverse bodies was an ideological starting point for much of the work. Given that many of the training techniques were adapted from practices such as Ideokinesis, Feldenkrais and Mind-Body Centering that were originally therapeutic techniques, this was logical. The aim was to care for the body, specifically the injured body, and bring it to health, not to deny its pain and its disability.

Many of the techniques focused on the cultivation of an 'inner awareness'. The tactile, kinaesthetic and proprioceptive senses were privileged over the more conventional visual body image. Many workshops I attended used the suggestion of
‘sensing’ the body, of ‘tuning in’ to how muscles, bones, connective tissue, and organs ‘felt’ internally. Anatomical information was used as a catalyst for unlocking different potential organizations of the body and to develop new phenomenological, ontological associations between joints and muscles, and their potential ranges of movement and dynamic. Anatomical information provided conceptual images that functioned as metaphors disrupting privileged associations of strength, power, initiation and mobility with particular anatomical sites, and allowing others their potential.

Along with this cultivation of awareness of movement from the interior came an implicit sense that if one could only successfully access this awareness, whole new areas of movement would be opened up. This promise of change was often couched in terms of undoing previously acquired habits, which limited one’s range of choices, to reveal a less limited and more mobile underlying physicality. Eva Karczarg’s description of her work as a process of “...undoing—undoing habit, undoing preconceived ideas of body and mind—to recover a natural freedom of movement and thought” (Karczarg, 1995/96, p.41) is an example of this kind of understanding of the body as ‘natural’ and ‘free’ underneath the cultural encumbrances of training.

The irony of new dance for me was that I was drawn to its privileging of the material body as a way of validating my obvious difference and disability, and yet I was simultaneously striving to change that materiality. The paradox was that acceptance of a wide range of diverse bodies was a foundational assumption in these techniques, and yet there was also a rhetoric of change, improvement through further states of release. There seemed to be the promise that less restricted, wider ranges of movement would be possible once the imposed codes of physical structure embedded in traditional ballet and modern dance technique where undone, and an implicit valuing of this new kind of movement over the old.

I am not suggesting that all new dance practice espouses this rhetoric, nor even necessarily that the teachers I worked with did. This rhetoric of change, of improving oneself by finding new abilities to release and reconfigure the neuromuscular patterns of the body, arose for me from a combination of the contexts in which I learnt ‘new dance’ and the way in which I constructed the discourse those classes opened up.

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The effect of this rhetoric as I experienced and constructed it however, was the production of a profound tension. When I tried to sense my interior, the rhetoric of release was displaced by the material discourse of restriction, injury, disease and compensation constructed through my history of surgical intervention. I understood myself, my material, bony and neuromuscular structure as abnormal and, albeit subtly rather than profoundly, disabled. The direction to take the internally sensed self as a starting place was in a profound sense anathema to me. I danced to change, to wrestle with, and to see how far I could transcend my medical history and the material body it left me with, not to look to that body as the authority, the origin of my movement.

The paradox was that on the one hand, new dance practices provided a space for me where my physical difference might be embraced, perhaps even valued, given its ideology of the production of an array of corporeal alternatives. I was encouraged, within the context of my training in new dance, to embrace my difference. The rhetoric was often there, and often directed at me personally; we are all different and that’s a good thing.

What I found, however, in practice, was that the materiality of my difference was not welcome within this paradigm. I was stiff, caught in bound flow, my movement often laboured and indirectly aligned. Implicitly, the class exercises seemed always to value the fluidity, free flow, easy effort and linear alignment I saw around me in class. I therefore needed to change. The irony was that the methodology of change presented, the attention to ‘inner awareness’, the inner sensations of the body, actually produced and reinforced my unacceptable differences.

Change wasn’t a process of undoing for me, of uncovering what had been there all along but masked by years of outmoded dance training. That unmasking was possible for me as well of course, but for me to change so that I too could move with fluidity, release and ease I had to create spaces and material qualities in my body that had never been there before. Paradoxically, I had to renounce what made me different in order to embrace this new dance discourse of difference and multivocality.
4.4.4 The Corporo-Real

"I'm here, I'm me. I do not apologize for my limitations" (Hawthorn, in Hawthorn and Klein, 2000).

Feminist theorist and performer, Susan Hawthorn, pleads with us to inhabit difference, to refuse the extension of ourselves into globalised cyberspace where we are flattened, homogenized, extended beyond ourselves into a boundless, anonymous sameness. Her discussion of globalisation in this context contains an ironic paradox. Globalisation conjures up the myth of the global village, a kind of sisterly and brotherly oneness, the dream of global unity. The reality however is the reverse. Globalisation means loss of identity, merging into the void. Presence, production, subjectivity require difference and the push to global sameness crushes difference (Hawthorn 1999, p.123–126).

In Guattari's terms, subjectification arises from pockets of resistance. Subjectification relies on the drawing down of certain voices, certain elements from the circulating subjective capital to produce revolutionary machines (Guattari 1995a, p.4). Guattari argues for difference at all costs, even if the machines created are warped, monstrous, or barbaric, because difference is the absolute condition of subjectivity.\textsuperscript{33}

Hawthorn calls for a new category of existence, the 'corporo-real'. The self is material, historical, real, and different. All mediation, all production, must proceed from this point. But then, that is the point: it need not. Difference is constantly attacked and eroded by the forces of inscription, socialization, and globalisation. Nowhere is this more evident than in dance where the whole process of becoming a dancer involves processes of physical inscription so that the body is ultimately coded 'dancer'. Skeletal alignment, functional organization of muscle groups, and pathways of movement initiation must all be reconfigured to reproduce the recognizable templates of dance genres. As I have argued, this is not purely the domain of conventional, prescriptive dance genres. In my dance training this became a factor even in the context of dance techniques that aim to validate difference.

Further to this point, and perhaps of relevance to my experience of new dance, is Elizabeth Dempster's argument that the resistance to prescriptive physical
inscription attempted in various dance practices since the 1960's has not been as influential as one might have hoped. New dance practices, rather than the norm in dance training, have been absorbed, appended to more traditional forms of ballet and modern dance training and in this process have become simply another corporeal style a dancer must have in their repertoire (Dempster 1994/95, pp.49–50).

The result of this has been that the physical differences new dance techniques sought to privilege have become commodified in two ways. Firstly, they have become generalized into a particular and recognizable set of movement dynamics in which free flow, interior initiation and disruption of verticality are prominent. Difference has become secondary in relation to the broad set of movement dynamics produced by this kind of work, which could themselves be understood as simply a new kind of corporeal style which choreographers can ask from dancers as the occasion suits.

Secondly, difference has become relegated to a secondary by product arising when dancers work in this 'style'. Difference in this context becomes a value added commodity, an 'extra something' which a good dancer is able to add over the top of a recognizable dance technique or genre. Such difference is not valued on its own, but is allowed to exist only insofar as it relates to predetermined dance styles.

_If Bob Dylan can sing with a voice like that, I can probably dance with a body like this._

I danced my dilemma. In the late 1980's I made a work in which I vowed only to do things that felt good to my body, and, as far as possible, to do things that only I, with my wildly variant ranges of motion, could do. It was called _without a lot of things_. I meant without technique, in the conventional sense, without technique in the new dance sense, and without the body that normally went with either. I was embracing my difference, but also the tenets of new dance, as I understood them. I only did things that felt easy, fluid, released, and aligned, to me. I returned to this movement for _Kim's Style Guide for the Kinaesthetic Boffin_ because I felt it embodied a dialogue with a whole area of dance: one pact with one style. This forms the beginning section of the work.
Then I embroidered it, got cheeky with it, and started showing off. I did things that probably only I can do in the whole world—that formed the movement phrase I do in between discussing the projected images. The challenge is that I have to pull it off because it's my whole justification for daring to be a dancer with this body.

Just as I was born too late to be a real hippy, I was also born too late to be caught up in the great democratisation of bodies in dance that took place in the 1960’s. By the time I came to contemporary dance the pedestrian body in dance was a historical rarity and the implicit acceptance of the validity of any body as a dancing body (at least a professionally dancing body) had been replaced by a newly developing desire for virtuosity. This first took place subtly, and without excluding a range of body types, through the work of postmodern dance artists such as Steve Paxton and Trisha Brown, who developed distinctive virtuosic techniques based on principles of release.

New dance practices have since, however, become dominated and in some cases subsumed by a more generalized, perhaps the dance equivalent of globalized, dance culture in which dancers are expected to be able to move within a wide range of divergent and even contradictory movement practices as choreographers demand. In this new, more homogenized, marketplace, Ballet meets Release Technique, Butoh meets Graham, any combination is valid.34 This has meant that dancing bodies have again become defined and valued in relation to particular codes of practice rather than in relation to their uniqueness or difference.

The songs of Bob Dylan and Joni Mitchell in Kim’s Style Guide for the Kinaesthetic Boffin are a deliberate reference to the 1960’s. They refer simultaneously to the celebration of difference embedded in the sound of Bob Dylan’s voice, to the valorization of individual self-discovery associated with that era, and to the set of dance paradigms which took the idea of valuing every body to their logical conclusion. That these paradigms are hopelessly out of date and yet integral to my particular dance desiring machine is the point. These anachronisms serve to cut the flow between paradigms of contemporary dance involving expectations of various kinds of virtuosity, including that which is derived from new dance practices, and my dance. I am not seeking to transform this problematic body so much as to see what I can dance with it, although, paradoxically, this necessitates an involvement with change that implicates the possibility of transformation.
4.4.5 Sources/Inspiration/Reactions: A Line of Flight from Bordo/Butler/Klein/Derrida/Nietzsche to Deleuze and Guattari

Theory flows very imperfectly or partially into this dancing machine, and I need to tease out why. There has been a concern on the part of some feminist theorists to articulate feminine subjectivity in corporeal terms, because it is only in these terms that the feminine becomes different from, and hence visible in relation to, the masculine (Grosz 1994, 1995). The ensuing examination of the possibility of changing the self through changing the body feeds into a debate about the ways in which the historically marginalized and oppressed status of women can be changed.

At first glance, it would seem that these theories would have much to offer in the context of my discussion of the malleability of the body in dance. On closer examination, however, it becomes apparent that there are large areas of disjunction between the two discourses. In discussing a range of feminist theory about the body, my strategy will be to examine points of connection but also to develop a philosophical line of flight, from Nietzsche to Deleuze and Guattari, which provides a framework for understanding their divergences.

The allure and promise of physical change can be understood as an idea that permeates western cultural theory and practice. The idea that the self, and particularly the corporeal self, is not fixed but endlessly malleable has been taken up by postmodern and feminist theorists in the process of denouncing biological determinism and the notion of an 'essential' (biological, genetic, pre-cultural) self.

The flight from essentialism, the belief that there is a pre-cultural self that determines both physical and psychic identity, has led to what Susan Bordo describes as “...a new, postmodern imagination of human freedom from bodily determination” (Bordo 1998, p.45). This freedom is enacted on a concrete, physical level: people go on diets, dye their hair, go to the gym, and have plastic surgery. It is also enacted at the level of cultural theory. If there is no fixed, pre-existing self either prior to or outside culture and the self is understood to be merely an effect of surface signifying practices that create the illusion of an underlying inferiority, then those surface practices can be manipulated to produce change in an endlessly plastic self in order to resist and defy particular cultural conventions.
The postmodern and/or feminist version of this dream is termed 'gender scepticism' (Bordo, 1990). It is the dream that gender, body, and self are infinitely malleable. The fantasy is that you can be whoever you want. One simply needs to 'perform' change—repeat, rehearse the dream often enough and it becomes real. This dream arises out of a disavowal of essentialism. If there is no essential, pre-cultural, genetic, interior 'self' as a prior cause of identity or subjectivity, or, put another way, if the self is always and completely culturally defined, then the self can always be changed.

Judith Butler puts forward the notion of 'performativity' as the means by which the 'self' is produced and therefore can also be changed. The argument is that the way in which the body is produced creates the illusion of an interior core identity. There is no essential, pre-cultural self, but the illusion of such a self is created by the play of signifying representations produced 'performatively' on the surface of the body.

In other words, acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence of identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality. This also suggests that if that reality is fabricated as an interior essence, that very interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse, the public regulation of fantasy through the surface politics of the body, the gender border control that differentiates inner from outer, and so institutes the "integrity" of the subject (Butler 1998b, p.41).

In this view, interiority itself is signified on the surface of the body. It is a fiction, an assumed cause. The illusion is created in order to regulate, in this case sexuality and gender, by naturalizing it, i.e. by ascribing its ontology to a prediscursive, 'natural' cause, the interior or 'soul' of the human being. The disciplinary role of societal forces is then hidden. In this scenario, even such a supposedly fundamental aspect of identity as gender becomes
...the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that conceal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a highly natural sort of being (Butler 1998b, p.36).

If there is no essential, pre-cultural self, then the self is open to endless manipulation. Change is possible if one performatively changes the significations at the surface of the body. Change the surface so that it confuses the very notion of a stable consistent interior gender identity, as in drag performance, and you challenge at once the notion of a core gendered identity and the hegemony of dominant gender norms.

The critical question arising from this however, is the extent to which this malleability of identity is possible in practical terms and both Butler and Bordo suggest limits to which this plasticity may be subject. For Butler the limits of choice are defined by the regulatory effect of cultural norms. One doesn’t just assume a position, one is forcibly compelled into choosing between certain positions. One cannot get outside one’s thinking that is shaped by one’s culture. One can only challenge the categories within which one is defined by making visible the whole arbitrariness of the ‘core’ self, and so open up the possibility for change.36

She suggests that performativity is an inherently political process rather than one that emerges from a ‘core self’. Performative change produces an ‘emergent coalition’ of identities in which

...identities can come into being and dissolve depending on the concrete practices that constituted them. Certain political practices institute identities on a contingent basis in order to accomplish whatever aims are in view (Butler 1998b, p.36).

Identity is never total, never all of what it is suggesting, and not necessarily "... an internally multiplicable self that offer its complexity at once"(Butler 1998b, p.36). Identity is rather practical and strategic, aimed at challenging whatever categories marginalize or disadvantage particular groups. The malleability of identity is measured by the degree to which it is able to challenge dominant norms.
Bordo also identifies cultural norms as the limits of change. She says that not all change is possible because not all change is presented as desirable by the cultural matrix in which we find ourselves. As she writes:

... despite the claims of the Evian ad, one cannot have any body that one wants - for not every body will do. The very advertisement whose copy speaks of choice and self-determination visually legislate the effacement of individual and cultural difference and circumscribe our choices (Bordo 1998, p.47).

Bordo further defines the limits of change in terms of what she calls ‘materiality’. What she means by this is a combination of history and circumstance, that is, what socio-economic, familial, personal, biological and genetic histories, and our responses to them, have shaped us. This cultural and specific history defines how one thinks, how one moves and the physical and conceptual frameworks that define what one thinks is possible. Bordo’s materiality is

...neither biological nor physical, although it impinges on both of these realms.
It is a cultural construction but, importantly, a construction that structures what counts as “material” and “real” within a culture (Hekmen 1998, p.65).

Her concept of materiality extends to the concrete specificity of a person’s social and economic situation. She points out that in the concrete, ‘material’ world, technologies for change such as cosmetic surgery, weight loss programs, gymnasium memberships, cosmetics, and fashion accessories are only effective means of change for people who have access to them and can afford them. The possibility of change is limited by what kinds of change are possible and available given a person’s socio-economic and cultural situation. For Bordo, who we are, our social and economic situations along with the cultural norms to which we are subject, determine the limits of our choice.

Bordo challenges the degree to which dominant norms can be considered to be destabilized by single instances of aberrant practice. She further argues that simply creating a surface text offering the opportunity for creative and dissenting readings is not enough. Change, in this context, needs to be measured by the degree to which the material practices of significant numbers of people actually alter. The plasticity of the self needs to be measured by how far people are actually able to
resist and defy cultural norms in their day-to-day lives, and this needs to be considered in terms of the number of people who are able to make such changes to their bodies and identities. She critiques both “... a construction of life as plastic possibility and weightless choice, undetermined by history, social location, or even individual biography” (Bordo 1998, p.47), and what she terms a

...disdain for material limits and the concomitant intoxication with freedom, change, and self-determination ... enacted not only on the level of the contemporary technology of the body but in a wide range of contexts, including much of contemporary discourse on the body, both popular and academic (Bordo 1998, p.45).

The limits Bordo and Butler suggest are inherently culturally determined limits. While these arguments propose the kinds of cultural limits that might apply to the process of physical change, they do not directly address the limits imposed by physical structure itself. Butler’s change is always potential, always in the future, and always in the eye of the beholder should they choose to read a given, performative body that way. Bordo’s change is always retrospective. Whether it is effected through surgery, anorexia or exercise, it is always a black box process evidenced only after the fact through the emergence of a newly fashioned body. While Bordo goes further towards dealing with the physical substance of the body than Butler, for both theorists the emphasis is on the ways in which bodies reveal and represent cultural forces rather than the physical substance of the body in and of itself.

Dance on the other hand is concerned directly with the process of interface between culture and flesh/bone/muscle/fascia, rather than its effects. In comparison, theories about the body such as Butler’s and Bordo’s seem strangely disembodied. In the flight from essentialism it is as if the body itself dissipates into a range of cultural products. Matter, even located, material, concrete matter, seems to have been (again) transmogrified into words, its cultural materiality infinitely more important than its physical historicity (or its physical historicity only important in relation to how it reveals its cultural materiality).

Of particular relevance to dance is the reaction that has occurred among some feminist theorists against a postmodern sensibility that focuses on the cultural
significance of the body while glossing over its material physicality. Taking further
Bordo’s insistence that the extent to which people’s concrete practices and activities
actually change be considered the barometer of choice, rather than the potential for
creative re-reading of cultural texts, some feminists have pursued a concern that an
over emphasis on the potential for change allows women’s real, material
experiences of marginalisation and discrimination to be ignored.

Renate Klein, for example, criticizes what she sees as the postmodern paradigm that

...it is up to the individual to be whatever s/he desires—including donning the
body/ies s/he wishes to appear in, at a give time—some sort of eternal fancy dress
ball, one might think (Klein 1999, p.202).

Klein articulates limits to the physical changes people are able to make to their
bodies that are biological rather than cultural (although she is concerned with
cultural limitations as well). A consideration of the effects of pain, disease and
disability on the structure of the body reveals the fallacy in suggesting that one can
change one’s physicality at will. Using the context of illness, she questions the
assumed link between physicality and identity and argues for the existence of a core
self that does not necessarily change every time the body does. She asks:

...has a woman ridden with arthritis and suffering from continuous pain a
different identity from her “Self” before the illness manifested itself? What
happens in cases of remission? Does she revert to her former Self? Has she
been permanently changed? (Klein 1999, p.201).

This line of thought involves a concern with the physical processes of change, and
the structural limits of change imposed by the physicality of the body, that resonates
with the concerns of dance training. Klein’s argument, however, raises a further
problem. Her discussion of disease questions the close, coexistent, connection
between body and self that is often taken for granted in the context of dance, and
especially in the theorization of postmodern and new dance.\textsuperscript{37}

Conflict between the materiality of the body and the desire to change that materiality
present a disjuncture between body and self that is evident when the self wishes to
go where the material body can’t take it. Even in the context of postmodern dance,
where both material diversity and the belief in the possibility of change are valued, this tension exists because the engine of change is the individual, interior, sensation of the body, but that sensation arises from a materially, historically produced body which, when looked to as the source of movement, can be expected to simply reproduce itself. Some way of thinking/moving beyond the present structural and functional configurations of the body is required to produce change, which implies that some aspect of the self, or what the self can potentially become, lies beyond the determination of the body.

A philosophical framework that enables analysis of the confluences and disjunctions between these theoretical discourses and the Style Guide Delirium needs to begin with an examination of the relationships between texts. Elizabeth Grosz, in her discussion of alternative approaches to architecture, identifies a philosophical shift from the Derridean understanding of textuality to the nomad philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari that provides a way of constructing such a line of flight (Grosz 1995, pp.125–137).

Grosz suggests that Derrida’s understanding of the relationship between texts as a dense interweaving of references which produces “... a closed, striated space of intense overcodings, a fully semiotised model of textuality” (Grosz 1995, p.126), leads to a complex but irrevocable co-implication between texts and what they exclude. In this framework, texts constantly bleed into each other. Traces of what is excluded are always implicated in what is articulated. Everything refers constantly to something else, always deferring the definitive statement and always pointing to something beyond itself in an endless chain of referral.

This model would imply that the apparent disjunctures between the discourses of dance and theory are in fact connected by a densely woven set of references. They are, in fact, at some level, coherent and ultimately part of the same logocentric framework of meaning. There is no ‘outside’ in the sense that both discourses allude to each other through a complex system of references, the production of each retaining a trace of the other.

Deleuze’s appropriation of the Nietzsche’s four errors of knowledge leads to an alternative paradigm. Nietzsche’s four errors of knowledge have to do with privileging ‘noble’ aspects of humanity and denying other qualities deemed base or
undesirable. Nietzsche saw these errors as necessary elements of the will to power that drives humans to conquer their raw, base, undifferentiated nature.

Nietzsche suggests a set of illusions that have educated humankind and been the means of producing and maintaining dignity and humaneness. These involve the knowledge of the self only incompletely, endowing only those attributes one thinks one should have (assimilation to ideals and ideologies), making differences between human beings and the rest of nature dependent on exclusion, i.e., nature has what humans lack and vice versa, rather than making all difference positive and productive, and subordinating oneself to privileged ideologies which legislate which differences can be tolerated.

Man has been educated by his errors. First, he always saw himself only incompletely; second, he endowed himself with fictitious attributes; third he placed himself in a false order of rank in relation to animals and nature; fourth, he invented ever new tables of goods and always accepted them for a time as eternal and unconditional; as a result of this, now one and now another human impulse and state held first place and was ennobled because it was esteemed so highly. If we removed the effects of these four errors, we should also remove humanity, humanness, and human dignity (Nietzsche 1974, p.174).

Deleuze’s reading of this is that:

The first illusion consists in thinking difference in terms of the identity of the concept or the subject, the illusion of identity; the second illusion is the subordination of difference to resemblance (which is linked by Deleuze to various strategies of equalization and assimilation); the third is the strategy of tying difference to negation (which has the effect of reducing difference to separateness); and the fourth, the subordination of difference to the analogy of judgment (which disseminates difference according to the rules of distribution) (in Grosz 1995, endnote to p.130).

The four illusions have to do with the exclusion of some elements of meaning, subjectivity and possibility on the basis of an arbitrary order of cultural priorities. Presumptions are made about what, in human nature or humanity, is good and desirable and what is not. In the process, difference is subjugated to the demands of ideologies and disciplines through which what may be thought and/or embodied
is policed and regulated. Deleuze follows Nietzsche’s line of thought in challenging
the hegemony of these regimes of knowledge. Deleuze argues instead for the
understanding of thought as a productive, nomadic force, which traverses
ideological and disciplinary boundaries and which is capable of producing concepts
beyond the scope of those territorialized spaces. Elizabeth Grosz describes this in
the following terms:

The four illusions of representation veil the genesis and functioning of thought,
for they separate a force from what it can do and thus function as modes of
reaction, the conversion of active into reactive force, in the terminology of
Nietzsche and Philosophy. This veiling of thought is identified with a refusal of
difference. Through these various tactics, pervasive in the history of Western
philosophy, thought loses its force of difference, its positive productivity and is
subordinated to sameness and becomes reactive (Grosz 1995, p.130).

Deleuze argues that thought is provoked by an encounter with the ‘outside’.
Fascist regimes, which Deleuze and Guattari associate with an ‘unholy trinity’ of
subj ectification, signification and representation, seek to insulate thought from
everything outside themselves. The nature of disciplines is to resist thought, to
resist encounters with what is outside the discipline. The role of the line of flight, or
the radical thinker, is to challenge disciplines with what is outside.

Deleuze’s perspective offers an alternative means of understanding the disjunctions
between various theoretical formulations about the body’s malleability and its
relationship to identity and the context of Kim’s Style Guide for the Kinaesthetic
Boffin. Instead of irrevocably woven together, the different discourses can be
understood as functioning as the outside in relation to each other, the danced
perspective challenging the theory with a physicality which is often viewed as
outside, and the theoretical perspectives challenging dance with a cultural imperative,
and with a potential disjunction between body and self that often remains unthought
within dance. Further, this can be done without sacrificing the materiality of any of
the discourses involved or positioning them as sets of oppositional dyads.

Deleuze’s own perspective on the body provides the starting point for this
trajectory.
The body is no longer the obstacle that separates thought from itself, that which it has to overcome to reach thinking. It is on the contrary that which it plunges into or must plunge into, in order to reach the unthought, that is life. Not that the body thinks, but, obstinate and stubborn, it forces us to think, and forces us to think what is concealed from thought, life. Life will no longer be made to appear before the categories of thought; thought will be thrown into the categories of life. The categories of life are precisely the attitudes of the body, its postures. 'we do not even know what a body can do': in its sleep, in its drunkenness, in its efforts and resistances. To think is to learn what a non-thinking body is capable of, its capacity, its postures (in Grosz 1995, endnote to p.134).

This at first glance seems problematic in relation to dance, particularly dance which has been informed by postmodern and new dance practices, in which the concept of 'the thinking body' is axiomatic. When, however, one considers that Deleuze does not completely differentiate between life and thought in other contexts and even suggests, at different times, that life and thought each constitute the 'outside' which is the generator of thought, the picture looks a little more hopeful.

Deleuze positions the body as outside in relation to thought, i.e. the body is that which provokes thought into action, the outside with which thought must deal. When one considers Deleuze’s notion of inside and outside being created by the movement, and in particular, the invagination of surfaces to create folds of ‘inside’, it becomes evident that Deleuze means no disrespect to the body when he writes this. He is not categorizing it as fundamentally different in substance or nature to thought, simply as something that has generally been thought outside thought, since thought has largely been determined as a category opposed to the body in western philosophy. Both the body and thought are produced by and co-implicated with, what he calls ‘life’. As Elizabeth Grosz writes:

What is truly radical in Deleuze’s understanding is his claim that this outside must be thought itself, or perhaps even life itself. The series are themselves the folds of an outside, constituted out of the same stuff. Thought is projected, captured, pinned down insofar as it caught up in the networks of power, knowledge, and subjectification (Grosz 1995, p.134)
Considered in this way, Deleuze's description of the body is not unlike the experience of the materiality of the body in dance. When one thinks one could possibly do this or do that, conform to this or that paradigm of good technique, the body intersects from outside the system of thought which defines what one can, can't, or might, want to do. Answers come back from the body, either in motion, or in the contemplation of motion, about the physical, spatial, temporal and gravitational feasibility of the project in the light of the inscribed structural, functional and phenomenological corporeal paradigms available to that particular, material, body.

These answers appear to come from outside the realm of what is normally understood as 'thought'. Deleuze situates the body outside of the regimes of power in western thought. The body can then provoke thought into action, stir it up, destroy its complacency and make it move. This is a reasonable position from certain perspectives. Indeed much of the dance literature bemoans this very outsidedness of the body compared to thought, as it is commonly understood in western culture. The body has, in these contexts, often been understood as a kind of bedrock of truth, something that is capable of speaking from outside the hegemonies of language, culture and society.

This position is also, however, problematic. In the context of postmodern and new dance practice and theory, the body is understood to be produced by, or at least co-extant with, other culturally defined discourses. The outsidedness of the body has already been folded into the interior of thought and the two, body and thought, are no longer distinguished as fundamentally opposed.

This is the rhetoric of many dance practices. Both the modernist claim that the body is so commensurate with thought and self that it can never lie, and the postmodernist counterclaim that the body has no claim to truth as it is simply another discourse in an endless intertextual web of culturally constructed discourses, share the premise that body and thought are not essentially different kinds of things.

It is here that the understanding of bodies as individually material cleaves the debate. Individual, material bodies are 'thought', in that they are fundamentally conceptualised by, and do not exist apart from, the phenomenological construction
which they both produce and are produced by. They are also however 'non-
thought' in that their materiality often contradicts the thought discourses by which
ideals, values and demands are imposed upon the body's structure and movement.
In this way, the individual material body functions as something outside the
discourses of dance technique and convention, even though it is formed by those
discourses.

From a Deleuzian perspective, the material body and 'thought' discourses function
as heterogeneous fields of reference that may productively be connected. The
respective interiorities of thought discourses and of the material body, as categories,
are of less interest than their connections and intersections. As Grosz writes:

... for Deleuze, the middle is always the privileged point to begin, why thought is
perhaps best captured in-between. Thought starts in the middle, at the point of
intersection of two series, events or processes that, however temporarily, share a
milieu. The interiority of these series is of less interest than the way they are
capable of being aligned to connect, creating their plan of consistence or
coexistence, which is made possible only through the operations of the outside
(Grosz 1995, p.134).

A similar relationship may be postulated between the culturocentric theo-ries of
Butler and Bordo, and the corporeal focus of Klein's consideration of disability and
my own understanding of danced materiality. In a very real sense, although these
discourses are all concerned with the materiality and malleability of the body, they
function epistemologically as the outside to each other.

Materiality for Butler and Bordo is thought from the perspective of its property of
reflecting and revealing cultural discourses. Butler's position is that the culturally
produced surface is all there is. There are no alternatives other than to expose the
whole fiction of interiority as a prior cause of identity, and to thereby open the
formulation of identity to endless manipulation within the territory defined by
culturally determined discourses. While Bordo acknowledges, radically in the
context of the field of cultural theory in which she works, the inclusion of biological
and genetic factors in her concept of the materiality of the body, she only
acknowledges those factors as they are constituted as 'real' within a culture. For
Bordo also, there is no outside to the cultural constructs in which we move. There
is no recalcitrant, mute, body, not even Derridean trace of one, outside the culturally
determined ‘real’, let alone a body outside in relation to thought, roaming Deleuze’s
wildly productive ‘life’.

Klein’s position is fundamentally different in that she argues for a core self that
doesn’t necessarily change with every alteration to the body. In this sense, the body
is to some degree outside in relation to the self. While she would be the first to
argue that cultural discourses constantly inform and form the body, she prises
open the seal between self and body in the context of disease and disability, arguing
concurrently that the body does not completely determine the self, even though the
self is situated firmly in and limited in a material, concrete way by, the body.

My own understanding of the material body formed through dancing is closer to
Klein than to Butler or Bordo, in that I acknowledge a disjunction between the
conscious and unconscious desires of the self and the concrete materiality of the
body. The body, at least my body, cannot always take me where I want to go. It is
not completely determined by cultural discourses, either paradigms of dance
technique or medical discourses of disease and intervention, otherwise, it would
always be where and how I think it is. The fact that it is not, that its uniqueness and
specificity doom it to always incompletely and partially fulfil the criteria of these
categories, indicates the partial power of each of these discourses in the face of the
diversity of historical circumstances, cultural discourses and personal agency which
have produced my body.

In this way, my body, taken as a whole, functions as an outside to the cultural
discourses that inscribe it. To a large extent, in line with Butler and Bordo’s
insistence on the cultural limits of change, I can’t do what I can’t think (and I’m
using an extended version of the term ‘think’ here which encompasses conscious
and unconscious thought as well as the kinaesthetic rehearsal and sensation of
movement). The functionalities and potentialities in my body that are outside these
discourses however, give rise to the possibility that sometimes, and in some ways, I
can and do move outside what I can think.

Butler and Bordo provide a reinforcement of the range of possibilities for physical
change and a reminder of culturally determined limits to change. Klein’s
materiality of the diseased body provides a Deleuzian outside to those possibilities
by questioning the link between identity and body. She suggests a materiality of
the body that is to some degree outside the sphere of influence of the self, even if it
is not outside the sphere of influence of the cultural production of bodies.

My theorization of my dance practice also functions as a Deleuzian outside to these
discourses, by suggesting that my concrete material body is at least partially
transcendent of the cultural discourses that form it. I understand both my dance
and my body as at least partially outside the paradigms of contemporary and new
dance and of the medical construction of CDH. The changes I have made in my
body in response to those inscriptive paradigms, and my desire to transcend and
subvert them, have made my body, in its individuality and uniqueness, more like
Deleuze's nomad, traversing diverse landscapes, than a captive of any one, definitive
discourse. This does not make me outside discourse, culture, or language per se,
but allows me to move beyond and in-between what distinct and defined discourses
are able to say about me. This is my experience of the materiality of my body. It is
indebted to many circumstances and ideologies but consistently beholden to none.
4.5 Postscript Delirium

"The eternal mommy-wail, the endless daddy-debate"—"It is the image or the representation slipped into the machine, the stereotype that stops the connections, exhausts the flows, puts death in desire, and substitutes a kind of plaster for the cracks..." (Guattari 1995b, p.30; 1995b, p.129).

We are the Borg. You will be assimilated. Your artistic and intellectual distinctiveness will be added to our own. We come to you in the name of Economics. Resistance is futile.

This is not what I want for my daughter. I want her unfettered, strong of bone.

_Bitter soft blows to the body slowing as years mark sprocket holes on film. Who is she writing? Why should I write her still, and couldn’t we now switch it around, let me write her body for you as the pen leaks away from the flesh, dancing, gathering together a gracious end for a crumbling body._

This is not what I want for my daughter.
1 See Dell, (1993, pp.28–30) for an explanation of the use of the terms direct and indirect space in Laban Movement Analysis. These terms do not refer to shapes, but to attitudes towards space. Direct space is the attitude of focusing on a particular location or object in space. Indirect space is the attitude of focusing attention on multiple and shifting spatial locations.

2 See Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p.111) for a definition of ‘regimes of signs’ as formalized, semiotic systems.

3 See Cunningham (1985, p.80–81) where he describes his use of chance procedures to create movement material, as a strategy for subverting his habitual movement pathways.

4 See, for example, Goldberg’s (1995/96, p.55) discussion of using Alexander technique to deconstruct the effects of conventional dance training.

5 See Deleuze and Guattari (1987, pp. 160–161). They warn that the Body without Organs (BwO) can be botched.

...the BwO is always swinging between the surfaces that stratify it and the plane that sets it free. If you free it with too violent an action, if you blow apart the strata without taking precautions, then instead of drawing the plane one will be killed, plunged into a black hole, or even dragged towards catastrophe (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.161).

This description was originally written about Darren Green, who performed this role in the original Rusden Dance Theatre cast. It refers equally, if differently, to Tim Harvey, who performed the role in the examination performance.

I am referring here to my own historical experience, that is, the particular dance I happened to see. I am not claiming that this trend was universal or represents any kind of norm for Australian dance of that period.

6 See, for example, Müller and Servos (1984, pp.12–13) who understand Bausch’s work as a process of unmasking the destructive social effects of media stereotypes.

7 Croce is a formalist dance critic (See Theodores (1996). Implicit in her analysis, therefore, is a valuing of the formal elements of movement invention and choreographic form over the import or otherwise of the dance. Her judgement about Bausch’s work, while valid, must be read in the context of Croce’s unwillingness to view content alone as sufficient cause for a dance. Elsewhere in the same review, Croce reveals this bias when she writes “...there’s nothing between us and her—no mediating dramatic rationale, no technique to transfigure and validate raw emotion” (Croce 1986, p.82). Even if Croce were able to read Bausch’s work as a warning against violence, she would probably still critique the work for its perceived lack of artistic form.

The disagreement between critics of Bausch’s works can also be understood as a reluctance on the part of formalist critics such as Croce (see also Siegal, 1986), to acknowledge as a form, the presentation of what Servos (1998) calls physical theatre, in which abstraction is eschewed in favour of revealing actual physical responses of performers to situations (such as wearing high heeled shoes, dancing in water, dancing in dirt, etc.)

8 See Daly (2000) for a revisionist approach to the disagreement over Bausch’s work. Daly originally joined in the critique of Bausch’s work on the basis that it provided no mediating framework through which to view the violent images presented. She argued in her later article that it should be possible to rely on the viewer’s humanity to provide this framework, suggesting that “...(this schema may sound naïve, but was it any less naïve to expect to transform/enlighen/politicise/convert that same spectator in a single bound)” (Daly 2000, p.41).

While I agree with Daly that the spectator will interpret the images in their own way, the representation of violent images is also a means by which those images are maintained in currency and continue to circulate in a society.

9 See, for example, Winter (1989, p.12), who describes Newson’s project as a revelation and implicit critique of the repression of homosexuality.

10 The reference here is to Katherine Dunn’s role as a bag lady in Gideon Oberzanek’s Bone Head, (1997).
They do, of course, refer constantly to a diverse range of languages and sign systems outside themselves at the level of spatial, rhythmic and dynamic relationships between dancers, between and within movement phrases and even at the level of the dancing bodies themselves which are inevitably inscribed and encoded with a plethora of cultural meanings. The point is that they do so implicitly and that this intertextuality is relegated to the background by the formal organization of the dance which itself situates the dance as ‘dance about dance’.

Cunningham (1968), where he describes his choreographic approach as the dance “...taking its own shape and life, from now on my job is to avoid interfering with it.” (This quote comes from an excerpt from an article by Calvin Tomkins. There are no page numbers in the book.) Chance compositional procedures dominated Cunningham’s earlier work, but he often worked without them later in his career. One could argue that he became adept at creating unexpected and unusual juxtapositions without having to use chance procedures later in his career. This does however raise the question of whether he could still be said to have a commitment to masking his subjective aesthetic preferences, or whether his aesthetic had simply changed to correspond to the kind of work he made by chance? In either case the issue of masking a subjective aesthetic is problematic at a more fundamental level because it must have been his aesthetic preference that caused him to use chance arrangements of movement in the first instance.

Diva (1977, pp.188–189) who traces the Oedipal theme of ‘killing the Father’ through several of Graham’s dances. While the presence of a distinct Freudian influence in many of Graham’s dances of the 1940’s is hard to dispute, Diva argues that Graham’s work is not limited to the Oedipal story, but is rather a metaphorical representation of a larger struggle against conventional conscience. See also, Thomas (1995, p.127) and Jowitt (1988, p.206), who suggest that Graham was more influenced by Jungian thought than by Freud.

The relationship between Graham’s work and psychoanalysis is complex. Although Graham used the overt symbols of Freudian analysis (the phallus, the Oedipal story), it could also be argued that his movement: her distinctive use of the contraction, the hollowing out of the centre of the body, for example, embodied a more ambiguous and perhaps a more feminine imaginary. A detailed examination of this point is beyond the scope of this exegesis.

The point in the context of this discussion is that Graham’s work can be considered symbolic in a way that is similar to Freud’s use of the Oedipal story to symbolize the formation of the subject, and that identifiable Freudian imagery is prominent in her work. That the two systems may not exactly correspond does not negate this point.

This is not a subjectivist position. Deleuze and Guattari’s project is about de-mythologizing and deconstructing the individualist, modernist sense of self. The production of a unique danced subjectivity is not meant to imply a subjectivist sense of essential self, which would rely on invoking the very codes of representation these moments of ‘uncoding’ circumvent.

The Westyan Hall was Danceworks’ rehearsal studio, where most of Dances from Hell was made.

Cobham designed the lighting for the original performance of Dances from Hell, which took place as part of Danceworks’ Fresh Start season in October, 1996.

This text was used in the performance of Dances from Hell, and is a paraphrase of Dante (1971).

This text is from Dances from Hell.

This text is from Dances from Hell.

It should be noted that the relationship between the paradigms of the individually rebellious and visionary artist and of the choreographer who is always inescapably a product of her historical and cultural location is fundamentally problematic. Innovative and avant garde choreographic practice is energetically championed and valorized almost universally in the writing of the history of dance in the West. The commonly held view that choreographers are always products of their social, economic and cultural situations (see, for example, Jowitt 1988, pp.7–8) is in direct tension with the understanding of choreographer as visionary, however this contradiction is rarely problematised.
in dance writing. See Thomas (1995, pp.18–19), who articulates this tension in terms of intrinsic (self-reflexive and specific to an individual artist) and extrinsic (socially generated) factors that can both be understood as integral to an artist's work.

24 See Bordo’s further argument (1998, p.53), that, ironically, what appears to be a radical privileging of difference, actually serves to negate difference as the material differences in people’s social, cultural and economic situations are effaced.

22 This term is used by Susan Bordo (1990, pp.135–149) in relation to feminist theory. It refers to the idea (which Bordo critiques) that the cultural construction of one’s body as male or female is plastic to the degree that gender identity can be subverted altogether.

20 See Somerville (1982) and Wilkinson (1985) for detailed accounts of Congenital Dislocated Hip (CDH), which is usually the result of abnormal formation of the hip joint.

21 See Somerville (1982) for a detailed discussion of Perthes disease, a disease of unknown cause, which affects a transient ischaemia to the ossific nucleus of the head of the femur. The condition is self-limiting, and treatment is by means of a calliper that prevents weight bearing on the affected hip until the disease has run its course, and the danger of deformation of the softened head of the femur is past. Perthes disease is not normally associated with CDH.

26 See Leder’s (1998, p.123–124) discussion of Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) idea that the meaning of space and of objects and our potential for movement are interwoven. Leder gives the following examples.

A chair invites my weary bones to rest. A hammer, shaped to my grip, allows me to build. The things amidst which I dwell are charged with a practical significance based upon my lived body’s needs and capacities (Leder 1998, p.124).

The suggestion I am making is that movement can function like an object in this regard. Before I move, I understand the movement in terms of what I can do with it. Before I move, I know how fast, how high, how well balanced, how badly balanced, the movement, in my body, has the potential to be, and I am able to sense this. For example, in a class, I know before I move whether I really understand a movement combination, and I can sense in my body whether it is likely to go well or with difficulty.


30 Although terminology such as ‘freie’; ‘shift’; ‘allowing change’ was commonly used in the classics I attended, and this kind of terminology does tend to impart a subtle suggestion that ‘free’ might somehow be better both in the literally physical and the semiotic sense.

31 It is important to note that I did not study any one particular body therapy or new dance technique, such as Alexander, Feldenkrais, Release Technique, etc. Had I done so, the outcomes may have been more explicitly defined and my understanding of them may have been less concerned with the notion of improvement. I studied with a number of teachers who had themselves been influenced by a variety of such techniques. I also undertook a number of one off workshops with a number of different visiting artists. The effect of this was to lay onto my pre-existing notion of a general philosophy of new dance (which was not, incidently, identified by that title at the time) the input from teachers of various backgrounds. I incorporated their work essentially into my own project, which was to re-configure myself as a mover according to the kinds of corporeal organization I associated with new dance.

32 I am defining the word ‘disabled’ here in relation to being able to accomplish particular functions. In relation to dance, and in particular the techniques of ballet and modern dance, I am disabled as I have abnormal and limited ranges of movement in my hip joints which prevent me from making many of the movements considered fundamental to those techniques. I am not, however, disabled in relation to everyday activities of living.

33 See also Deleuze and Guattari’s discussion of the Body without Organs (BwO). “The question...is whether the pieces can fit together, and at what price? Inevitably, there will be monstrous crossbreeds” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.157).
See Louppe (1996a, pp.65-67) where he suggests that increasing hybridity of style, which in his opinion produces "...not so much polysemia as a strange sliding movement between incompatible corporeities", characterizes European dance of the 1980's.

See Grosz (1994, pp.17-19), where she gives an overview of this concern, as adopted by a diverse group of writers, amongst whom she identifies Irigaray, Cixous, Spivak, Gallop, Gatens, Kirby, Butler, Schor and Wittig.

See Butler (1998b, pp.41-42), where she argues that practices such as drag parody the existence of an interior, real gender. Drag mocks gender as an expression of 'real' identity and the notion that there is an underlying gender to be expressed.

For example, see Laurence Louppe and Hubert Godard's (in Loupe, 1998c) discussion of the constitution of the self through the way in which foundational gestures are configured.

See Klein (1999, p.196-197) where she discusses the power medical discourse has over women’s bodies in the context of IVF technology.
CONCLUSION

Danced Subjectivity as a Plane of Consistency

This study began as a search for a means of understanding and articulating the production of subjectivity in dance. In particular, the nature and role of the unique body in producing the ‘self’ in dance was problematized and examined. My own unique body, with its unusual and specific medial history of CDH and Perthes disease, and with its unique history of dance training and experience, was taken as a starting point for constructing a series of dances that explored the ways in which a particular and unique subjectivity might be produced.

The main outcome of this work is, of course, the dances themselves. The work of this exegesis has, however, extended the ways in which the dances can be understood to produce a unique subjectivity in the context of modern dance. Specifically, by examining the ways in which the dancing subject has been constructed in the contexts of modern, postmodern and new dance, I have been able to show how these definitions of danced subjectivity are unable to completely define the dancing subject as I produce it in my dances.

The examination of a Deleuze and Guattarian understanding of subjectivity as a rhizomic structure constituted a significant methodological shift in dance analysis that has allowed me to articulate the nature of the subjectivity produced in my dances. When subjectivity is understood as rhizome, the structure of danced subjectivity can be thought of as one of interconnecting points. Any element, whether it be a reference to a literary text, a recognisable modern dance movement, or a unique movement initiation, dynamic, or spatial pathway, can be understood as potentially connecting to another.
This structure of constant interweaving has the crucially significant effect of flattening out all hierarchies in the understanding of meaning in dance. In Deleuze and Guattari’s words,

In contrast to centred (even polycentric) systems with hierarchical modes of communication and preestablished paths, the rhizome is an acentred, non-hierarchical, nonsignifying system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.21).

Everything is laid out on ‘a plane of consistency’. In this plane of consistency, nothing is prior to anything else and nothing precedes anything else. Meaning is produced by function. Biology, genetics and interiority do not precede subjectivity in dance, in the sense that they do not determine it. Rather, they function as part of a machine, which produces subjectivity as I dance.

This means that the subjectivity produced in my dances need not be understood to be produced from something. There need be no ‘General’: no General of psychic interiority, no General of the genetically or biologically determined body, no General of hip disease, and no General of dance training. Subjectivity in my dances is not produced as an image of an interior ‘self’. It is not produced by my biological or genetic body. It is not produced by the social inscriptions of my body or by the inscriptions of dance training.

The methodological shift of this thesis is to assert that subjectivity in my dances is produced by an assemblage of these elements. In my dances elements of subjectivity arise from my socially inscribed ‘lived’ interiority, from my dancing body as it has been produced by training, and from unique aspects of my corporeal organization that I can produce in movement, enjoy, but not name. There are also elements of subjectivity drawn from other texts, which I have woven into the dances. I have borrowed, for example, from Dante’s (1971) The Divine Comedy: Inferno, from Mary Wigman’s Hexentanz (1914), from the songs of Bob Dylan and Joni Mitchell, and from the terminology of Star Trek, Voyager.
None of these elements are ‘me’. They cannot represent ‘me’, because I produce myself as I dance, through weaving them together on a plane of consistency. Self is a product of an active assemblage of elements, none of which can define anything in and of itself.

This is not a return to structuralism, however, in which meaning is coded in the relationships between elements. In a structuralist text there is always a deep structure, a generative axis. That is, there is a pre-existing, socially determined set of rules that governs how elements may be put together. Dance as a plane of consistency is not governed by such ‘game rules’ because not all of the elements come from the same game. “What defines desiring machines is precisely their capacity for an unlimited number of connections, in every sense and in all directions” (Guattari 1995b, p.126).

Dance Analysis as a Plane of Consistency

In this thesis, I have extended the concept of the ‘plane of consistency’ to apply to the action of dance analysis itself. Instead of analysis being the project of translating a stable, pre-existing artefact, I have situated analysis on the same plane of consistency as the dances themselves. That is, I have refused to allow the dances to become the passive object of examination, a mute ‘object’ to analysis’ articulate ‘subject’.

Instead, I have constructed the act of analysis as something that functions as a process of continual re-mapping. Analysis is not, in this system, a linear activity. That is, I do not start with the finished dances (or even the processes of making the dances) as a prior cause of analysis. I understand analysis as an active and ongoing process of cartography that functions with and alongside the dances.

Godard (in Louppe 1996c, p.15) talks about giving directions to a particular place in the city. Indicating a route, i.e. “...turn right, then after the post office turn left and so on...” produces a set of instructions that is linear and time-dependent. You have to do things in
order. The post office is prior to turning left. Turning right is prior to the post office.
The other option is to produce a map. In a map, everything is laid out on the same plane, on the page. The map is not time-dependent. It doesn’t tell you what to read first, or in what order to put things together. It is an instrument for someone to use as they will. It doesn’t dictate how one should use it. It is like Guattari’s (1995b, p.38) pocket calculator.

When I construct dance analysis as a plane of consistency, I am making a map, not a set of directions. I connect elements, but I do not indicate causal relationships. I do not, for example, say, ‘I dance the way I do because it used to be painful to put weight on my right leg when I was four years old’. Rather, I place an image of myself in an iron calliper at age four alongside a discourse about dance training, a dance phrase, and stories about wanting to be a hippy. The connections are not prescribed, but laid out as a map for the reader to make use of.

Similarly, this exegesis is laid out along a plane of consistency. My discussion of the production of subjectivity in dance in modern, postmodern and new dance, for example, is not positioned as a cause of my own dancing subjectivity. These paradigms are instead positioned as elements my dances function with. In the same way, the processes I used to create the dances are not positioned as the single cause of the ways in which my dances are subjective. The actual dancing of the dances, in real time by different people, also contributes to their meaning.

Consequently, the entire exegesis, not just the Deliriums, needs to be read in this light. The chapters function with each other, but do not cause or represent each other. There is no fundamental chain of causality that can be traced through to reveal the mechanism of my production of subjectivity in my dances. Process does not produce product in any simple way. Rather, process functions with performance to produce a line of flight.
Significance and Implications for Dance Theory

This work grapples with one of the most difficult problems in dance theory, that of the untranslatability of dance. This has been blamed on dance’s ephemerality (Sheets-Johnstone 1979), on its non-verbal nature (Levinson 1980), on its corporeal nature (Foster 1996), and on its multiplicitious nature (Adshead-Lansdale 1999). Modern dance theorists such as Martin, Langer and Sheets-Johnstone saw dance as untranslatable because it was a symbolic, structural copy of a gestalt experience. Dance theorists working in more intertextual approaches have considered that dance is untranslatable because of its complexity.

What I have argued in this thesis goes a step further. Dance is untranslatable because there is nothing prior to it. It is not a representation of something pre-existing, be that a self, a psychic interiority, a concept, a technique or even a personal history. Dance is rather an assemblage of elements. On its plane of exteriority it assembles bodies, with their heavy imprints of social coding, their inscriptions of dance techniques and choreographic genres, and their unique and unnamed spaces that are illuminated in performance. It also assembles texts, conventions of meaning in dance, histories and events.

These elements continue to produce, to function as a machine, in connection with the thoughts long after the dance is finished. This is why the process of reflection on the dances, which I have resisted calling ‘analysis’ because analysis carries the connotations of definition and of systematisation, in this thesis, has become a process of cartography. The elements of the dances are continually re-mapped to produce different machines with different functions. Dances from Hell, for example, is originally mapped as a negotiation between my desire for discontinuity in a dance, and Paul’s desire for continuous narrative. Later in the exegesis, in the Dances from Hell Delirium, I re-mapped the dance as a narrative about my Father’s death.
These elements function together, as a machine, to produce subjectivity in the act of dancing. It is impossible to translate a machine. One cannot translate a machine except by replacing it with a different machine that does the same thing: an expresso machine for a coffee plunger, for example. Both make coffee, but they have no internal relationship beyond that. All the parts are different.

For the machine possesses two characteristics or powers: the power of the continuum, the machinic phylum in which a given component connects with another, the cylinder and the piston in the steam engine, or even, tracing a more distant lineage, the pulley wheel in the locomotive; but also the rupture in direction, the mutation such that each machine is an absolute break in relation to the one it replaces, as for example, the internal combustion engine in relation to the steam engine (Guattari 1995b, p126).

Significance and Implications for Dance Practice

The significance of this work for dance practice is twofold. The first implication of this study is that the dancing body and the dancing self cannot be completely defined by existing formulations of subjectivity in dance. It is possible to move outside the accepted definitions of a dancer, and of how the self is constructed or represented in different genres of dance. This can be done not so much by eschewing those conventions, but by working with them. The particular body and the particular history can be inserted into the conventions of dance genres, and specifically the genre of modern dance to which my work bears its closest allegiance, by the construction of a plane of consistency. Known and accepted dance conventions can be subtly subverted by forcing them to work with atypical bodies and atypical histories.

The second implication is that dance practice and dance theory have been fundamentally resituated in relation to each other in this thesis. Rather than dance theory following, articulating, and ultimately predicting and defining dance practice, dance theory is made to function with dance practice.
There are, you see, two ways of reading a book: you either see it as a box with something inside it and start looking for what signifies, and then if you’re even more perverse or depraved you set off after signifiers. And you treat the next book like a box contained in the first or containing it … Or there’s another way: you see the book as a little non-signifying machine, and the only question is ‘Does it work, and how does it work?’ (Deleuze in Buchanan 2000, p.35).

The effect of my work has been to break the causal relationship between theory and practice. Practice is no longer a box with something inside it to be ‘read’ (theory, self, the subject). Dance practice is situated as its own machine, generating its own functions, with theory functioning with, meshing in with the mechanics of, this machine, and not translating it.

In functioning as a machine, my dance practice has been made to produce the subjective. A place for the uniquely subjective dancing body, mind and voice has been produced in the combination of dancing and writing. This subjectivity is poignant and meaningful, yet it is not prescriptive or restrictive. It is constantly shifting, and always provisional. It can not, therefore, be used to constrain me to any one category (dancer, choreographer, theorist). It is not a representation of the self, which Deleuze suggests “…amounts to thinking one can read the book of the soul in the book written in ink, which cannot be done…” (Deleuze in Buchanan 2000, p.3). It is the production of self.


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