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DANCE, HISTORY AND DECONSTRUCTION:
GISELLE AND BEACH BIRDS FOR CAMERA AS CONTRASTING
SITES FOR A DISCUSSION OF ISSUES OF MEANING IN DANCE

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SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

CITY UNIVERSITY

LABAN CENTRE FOR MOVEMENT AND DANCE, LONDON

OCTOBER 1998

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This study is intended to contribute to the current concern in dance scholarship to reassess the ways in which dance can be defined, analysed, and interpreted. (Morris 1996: 3) It argues that traditional accounts of meaning have restricted the languages of dance works within discourses of history and literary hermeneutics.

The consequence of this position is that dance history and criticism are identified as privileged carriers of truth which subject the signifying capacities of dance to essentialising accounts of origin with the effect that the structures and processes that produce meaning are reduced to determining details of biography, intention, and reconstruction. Using Derridean deconstruction, this thesis argues for a critical theoretical engagement with dance that discusses its continuous productivity as a system of signification The dance works on which this reading will be based are <u>Giselle</u> and <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u>.

The two dance works are analysed in detail initially, using the methods of structuralist linguistic theory, to reveal the process of language in each of them. The critical account of <u>Giselle</u> explores the relation between ballet and Romanticism by focusing on the fundamental Romantic differentiation between symbolic and the allegorical language which is treated as articulating at the general level of language a structural differentiation between signs. <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> is examined in terms of Jakobson's structural linguistics, which extends and defines Saussure's treatment of the linguistic sign. It uses metaphor and metonymy as organising principles of language to provide a theoretical framework from which to engage with Cunningham's concern with the irreducibility of dancing. By engaging reflexively with these dance works as signifying practices, both analyses provide the means to construct an interpretative position which questions traditional approaches to the issues of meaning in dance history and criticism.

This thesis applies the strategies of deconstruction to the detailed structuralist analyses of <u>Giselle</u> and <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> using them as a context from which to explore the act of reading in order to understand the ways in which they engage the phenomena of textuality. Derridean deconstruction emphasises the irreducible play of meaning of the sign, and thus focuses on the conventions which boundarise meaning treating the latter as transitory cultural products that produce systems of representation in an attempt to limit the play of language to a version of origin. A deconstructive reading of <u>Giselle</u> and <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> leads to a consideration of the processes of legitimation and authorisation that produce differences among readings. This is used to ground a critical consideration of the relations between structuralist and post-structuralist theory as a way of articulating and demonstrating reflexively a critical engagement with the act of reading.

INTRODUCTION

Although recognising the changing condition, constitution and character of dance practice traditional accounts of meaning in dance studies set aside the need to explore this theoretically as a complex network of ideas that are the product of theories generated and sustained in practice by the actions of individuals and groups. (Shutz 1971) This has two significant effects. The first is a denial of the rhetoricity that structures historical and critical writing. This denial enables the historian/critic to produce their own story which sets aside the issue of language in the search for the retrieval of knowledge as the truth of meaning. Secondly, by producing a story that is dependent on setting language aside unproblematically discussions of meaning that engage with the dance work as a textualised construct are treated as secondary to, or disruptive of the traditional programme in dance studies: (Copeland 1993, Siegel 1996, Morris 1996) a programme that has been largely committed to a series of essentialising and historical determinations.

Within this context theory has been treated conventionally as a derivative of practice and thus is set aside as a supplement to dancing *per se* by critical accounts that evaluate dance works in terms of the way in which they conform to explications of authenticity. The setting aside of theory has implications which it becomes the task of this study to examine. Dance historical writing evidences the validity of the claims of research and inquiry with details from a dance work. This confirms and conforms to the empiricist-idealist position which accepts the possibility of a transcendent signified that pre-exists and can be accessed through the work. Implicit in this belief is the idea that the empirical details culled from the work can be used unproblematically to legitimate the objectivity of historical research and inquiry as well as authorising meaning as a form of truth. The effect is that the process of signification is set aside and dance is legitimated as a medium of communication and expression whose materiality erases itself before thought.

However all theory implies speculative thought (Filmer 1998) and in this respect all accounts of dance are stories of reading because dance practice exists, like all aesthetic practice, as an intersubjective phenomenon that invites a response. Culler (1994) argues that to articulate a story of reading is to reinstate the work as an organisation of rhetorical and referential modes as an agent with definitive qualities or properties. Thus all readings place a framework around the work that become a place from which it can be interpreted. Furthermore the process of framing a dance text as an aesthetic structure with an intrinsic content or structure produces a situation whereby the possibility of determining what belongs to the work is conditional on the categorical framework developed. Consequently, a story of reading can be conceived of as an interpretative imposition that is constituted by the establishment of boundaries that contextualise accounts of meaning. (Culler 1994: 196) As is the case with most stories of reading the text becomes a source of insight, and in order to prevent insight from degenerating into a form of reductive solipsism there is a need for the dance scholar to concern themselves with the philosophical and logical questions which underlie the application of theory in its relation to practice. This involves producing methodological grounds from within which further debate can be generated that enable theory to move beyond description and explanation. Consequently, in order to move beyond the boundaries of historical determinism and to engage with the complexities of dance as an aesthetic practice a reflexive critique of the engagement between theory and practice as it is articulated in specific works is necessary.

For this study Giselle (1983) and Beach Birds for Camera (1991) have been selected as contrasting sites for discussions of how meaning is generated within and about dance texts. They both raise in differing ways, from historically specific contexts, issues about the constitution of the aesthetic dance object and dance language. Inevitably in both works the body and its movement are separable only analytically therefore, in this thesis, the role, function and placing of the body are explicitly addressed in terms of their relation to the interpretative meaningfulness of movement because they topicalise the defining separation between what is intrinsic and what is extrinsic in the dance expression.

Both dance performance and the dance film are texts that are performative in that they "are heterogeneous constructs organising and organised by a variety of discursive forces." (Culler 1994: 182) In this thesis Giselle is examined in terms of the ways in which its *mise en scene* operates as content and the signifying systems which structure that content are then discussed and the fact that this work is produced as a filmed representation of a ballet is only discussed summarily. Whereas Beach Birds for Camera, which was produced in 1991 as a dance film, is discussed in terms of the relation between structure and content at the level of the dancing and in respect of the engagement between the two mediums. The decision to approach the respective analyses in this way is based on the organisation of the relation between dance and film in each work. Although both works are dance films the filming of Giselle is used to represent a narrative work in performance. Thus the mainstream conventions of film that drive towards verisimilitude are used to legitimate and perpetuate the structure of narrative. This takes place at the level of content where the editing within and between shots is used to stress characterisation and the relation between the characters and the world in which they are placed. But it also takes place at the level of structure where dance is the main 'character' of the dance film and the role given to film is predominantly that of a recording eye. The problems raised in relation to this, such as questions about the experience of dance, what it can include, and what elements and structures can be identified as significant, are discussed subsequently in Chapters Four and Five of the thesis in respect of Beach Birds for Camera.

However the aim of this thesis is not to demonstrate the superiority of one form of dance over another, for example, dance performance over film, but to question the ways in which each work identifies what it wants to say and in that process describes what it doesn't want to say. Dance is the privileged category in each work, both in the thesis and in the works themselves, but the concern in relation to this is not whether dance can be given a special, authoritative epistemological status. Rather it is to explore the rhetoricity of language, thus entailing an examination of the ways in which the forces of signification interact within each

work. In the discussion of <u>Giselle</u> in Chapter Three, this is restricted to the differentiation between different forms of dance language. Whereas the discussion in Chapters Four and Five necessarily includes the interrelation between the forms of both dancing and film.

In the first chapter of the thesis the methodological grounds that underpin the investigation into dance history and the structures of language are set out and developed. Both works can be analysed in terms of the way in which they construct a version of what constitutes dance and the critical concepts that enable these definitions are then explicated from the perspective of structural linguistics. Shifting the focus of critical thinking from content to structures and systems, structural linguistics enables meaning in dance works to be considered as the product of the rules and conventions of their signifying systems. Thus it dispenses first with the claim that meaning is an external expression of interiority and second, that the dance language can be set aside unproblematically as merely a transparent instrument of transportation between interiority and exteriority.

The practices of deconstruction attempt to show how the description and elucidation of a reading from the perspective of structural linguistics is undermined by the theory on which it relies. Thus what is demonstrated in the engagement between structural linguistics and the strategies of deconstruction is that given meanings are necessary points of departure for the reading process to which all critical analysis is inevitably committed. But in confronting the movement of ambiguity, irony and dissemination in the dance work a deconstructive analysis attempts to grapple with the phenomena of textuality and to open up the reading process by focusing on each work's textual logic as it is created by "repetitions, deviations, disfiguration." (Culler 1994: 228) Consequently rather than restricting the play of language to accounts that are naturalised as being outside of or beyond the rhetorical play of signification, such as historical objectivity or a general science of signs, a deconstructive reading of these dance works insists on a series of differences that can be charted on various axes of reference.

Chapter Two addresses the ways in which dance historical writing calls on the traditions of hermeneutics and scientific objectivity to strategically enact an ordering which privileges some versions of meaning as historically accurate and authentic, and other interpretations as inappropriate and inaccurate. This enables dance historical accounts to provide the true source of meaning by bestowing on works of the past an ultimate reality which is revealed in the process of historical retrieval. By locating meaning in this way, dance historians ignore both the structures and codes responsible for producing meaning within the works themselves, and the ways in which meanings within the work can be located within specific discourses. Consequently, within an overarching framework of historical narrative each dance work is treated as a significant moment in a chain which is on its way towards a circumscribed end. The effect of this positioning is that meaning is explained unproblematically in terms of what can be demonstrated as a set of truths. This means that although all dance texts are available as semiological and rhetorical constructions, structures of meaning in relation to dance works of the past are accounted for predominantly by a series of *a priori* established facts, with the effect that meaning is then paraphrased unreflexively in terms of what is anterior or exterior to the dance work itself.

Chapters Three and Four offer an account of each dance work from the perspective of structural linguistics. Under the impact of Romanticism a relation between aesthetic value and truth was "asserted and given an emotive privatised content." (Buci-Glucksmann 1994: 3) Highlighting the spontaneous relation between interiority and exteriority the Romantics topicalised the language of individual expression as the proper concern of art whilst simultaneously formulating a critique of imitation. (Todorov 1982: 286) Aligning themselves with prejudice against the imitative perspective of Classicism, (Buci-Glucksmann 1994) the Romantics formulated an opposition between the symbolic and the allegorical use of language. Distinguishing the symbol as a manifestation of an idea in which the infinite becomes finite, they set the allegorical use of language aside as impoverished on the grounds that it was a functional, conventionally directed form of signification. Thus the Romantics draw attention to the

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boundless and open character of the work of art by claiming that it exists as a self-enclosed inner finality which demonstrates in its form a higher order of existence which can be accessed in the effects of symbolic language.

Giselle, which is the focus of Chapter Three, is a Romantic ballet that is structured as two acts. The division between them embodies a differentiation between two types of dance language. The first act topicalises dance gestural language as the medium of communication and expression whereas the second act is distinguished by a more poetic, expressive use of dance language. Todorov (1982) identifies the structural differentiation between the symbolic and the allegorical use of language as a predominant and distinguishing feature of Romanticism, and in this study the differentiation in the style and use of dance language as it is articulated in the structural organisation of Giselle is used as the basis from which to examine the way in which realities of Romanticism are encoded in the material of the dance medium.

In Chapter Four Cunningham's dance film Beach Birds for Camera is analysed from the perspective of Jakobsonian linguistics. Jakobson's work lays the foundations from which description is offered as a form of knowledge about aesthetic phenomena. His work is concerned with the transformation of everyday language into poetic or aesthetic language and consequently he identifies systems and codes as mechanisms that can describe the ways in which a work of art achieves its meaningfulness as art.

In his analysis of the interplay between the metaphoric and metonymic axes of language Jakobson (1956) argues that the former is a function of the code of the language system and has the appearance of existing outside of time. Whereas the metonymic axis, which combines in a process which is both linear and progressive, is a function of context - the context of the discourse as it is actually produced. This leads Jakobson to conclude that every sign used in discourse has two sets of interpretants - the code and the context - which fluctuate in a relation of equivalence and therefore, importance. In its modernist stance Cunningham's work rejects the metaphoric poetics of Romanticism by stressing the importance

of the metonymic mode of language as a means to contextualise and emphasise the present moment of dancing. Jakobson's focus on metaphor and metonymy provides a means to consider both Cunningham's work as modernist, and a framework to consider the ways in which he decodes a stress on the message for its own sake into a visual form.

Chomsky, (1966) building on the differentiation between the form of a language, and the internal character of language, distinguishes between surface structure and deep structure. (Lemaire 1982: 26) The form of a language refers to the rules and codes which systematise and govern the arrangement and combination of the parts or elements that constitute a signifying practice, whereas the internal character of language is the creative aspect of language in use which cannot be reduced simply to a learned, functional apparatus. The difference between them, Chomsky (1966) argues, is that language is "an instrument of thought" (Lemaire 1982: 26) expressing consciousness and reflection. Therefore, without modifying the form of a language, new ideas, new stylistic devices and new modes of expression give to language qualities that it did not previously have. Thus for Chomsky, the creative aspect of the human mind underpins any analysis of language because the statements, or ordered representation of the objects - in the case of dance the ordered representation of materiality - do not take into consideration the processes of abstraction that underpin and inform the physical organisation of the signifying elements within a work. This allows him to describe the systematic organisation of language use in terms of two systems of rules. The first is that which generates the deep structures, and the transformational system which allows them to pass into surface structures. The consequence of this position, which is similar to the Romantic position, is that to study language in terms of a hierarchical organisation between base, or deep structures, and surface structures, provides for a universal grammar to be founded on the basis that deep structures are reflections of forms of thought which, in their universality, are common to all languages. Secondly, the form of language does not refer to mechanical form, but to an organic conception of language in which form is a generative system of rules and principles which restrict the potentiality of the play of signification to a finite relation between sign and

referent. The link with Romanticism can be made in two ways. First, that the form of the language of the work, which the Romantics discuss in terms of inner finality, is ordered by universal principles that are reflections of consciousness and thought. This is reminiscent of the Romantic position which describes the artist as someone who creates like nature does, and who is able to apprehend the design or pattern in nature which is expressive of a universal absolute, through the faculty of the creative imagination. Secondly, the Romantic claim which distinguishes between language that is functionally directed towards an end outside itself, and symbolic language which expresses the infinite in the finite, is similar to Chomsky's claim for the transformational aspect of language which is occasioned by the system of rules which transforms deep structures into surface structures.

For Jakobson, the way in which language is used is governed by an interrelation between the operations of selection and combination. The former implies the possibility of substitution of one term or element for another which is based on similarity. The latter refers to the idea of a link or connection between terms, or elements. The combination of signs finds its support in the fact that spoken language unfolds in time, that no two elements can be pronounced simultaneously, and that each element finds its value in relation to what precedes and follows it. This becomes an issue in <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> because the dancing does not unfold in a linear manner. Cunningham choreographs movement to subvert consciously the hierarchisations that dominate the conventional use of stage space and when the frame is held for any length of time, then the eye of the viewer is free to move across and over the screen as they like. In this respect the choreography is organised by a reflexive strategy of openess which encourages the reader to engage with a range of free interpretative choices. (Eco 1985: 3-40)

However, calling on the conventional use of film in mainstream situations, the filming of the work does imply a linear reading between edits, and in the use of long shots and close ups, which move the work from its beginning to its end. Consequently it is in the combination between mediums, and the selection and

combination of elements within and between frames that one can argue for a reading that acknowledges the aesthetic dialectic between the open and closed character of this work. Jakobson's ideas about the constitution of the work of art provide a means to analyse Cunningham's work as an aesthetic event, that is as a body of work that consciously focuses on the self referentiality of dance language making the dancing body an undisputed focus of critical attention. Also Jakobson's formulation of the differential relation between metaphor and metonymy provides a method for focusing on issues of syntax, allowing an engagement with the issue of representation as it is undertaken by both Cunningham and Caplan.

The methods of structural linguistics provide a number of concepts with which to identify various kinds of relationships within both Giselle and Beach Birds for Camera which are responsible for the production of meaning. However, Culler (1975: 256) argues that applying the linguistic model directly or indirectly to an area of study raises a number of questions that need addressing. The first is that, when applied to literature directly, the linguistic model could help to explain levels of structure and meaning, but Culler questions whether linguistics alone can account adequately for the plurality of meanings. If not, then linguistics must be applied indirectly in conjunction with other disciplines analogous to linguistics. This is an issue that will be explored in detail in Chapter Five using the practices of deconstruction.

Secondly, Culler (1975: 256) asks whether linguistics can provide a discovery procedure which leads to a precise and exhaustive account of meaning, or whether it offers merely a general framework for semiotic and structural investigation "which specifies the nature of its objects, the status of its hypotheses, and its modes of evaluation." Jakobson's work can be used as an example of the former since it treats the methods of linguistics as a discovery procedure that can be applied directly to the language of a work to reveal poetic structures. However, Culler (1975: 55-74) argues that poetic structures do not produce literary effects. The reader of a work experiences its effects and these are used to give shape and direction to an inquiry into the poetic structures that

produce these effects. Jakobson, and Barthes in his early writings, assume that structural linguistics can account for meaning of all kinds but this confuses the object of the investigation. What emerges in their work is a model which offers a set of terms that can both create coherence when used as the primary metalanguage in analytic translation, and provide a source of metaphors with which to organise and codify the work.

Within this thesis structural linguistics has been adopted to provide a general model for examining the language of the dance work and in this respect it provides a means of engaging with the play of meaning by isolating a set of facts and using them to explain how sequences of movement have form and meaning. The work of Jakobson and Todorov is used thus to constitute shared points of departure between critical inquiry and reader in order that both can participate in the play of the text.

In Chapter Five the strategies and practices of Derridean deconstruction are used to examine the ways in which Giselle and Beach Birds for Camera differently engage with the experience of movement, space and time as a resistance to or compliance with the philosophical authority of logocentrism and presence. This entails a critique of structural linguistics as it has been developed in the preceding two chapters.

A predominant feature of structural linguistics as it has been developed in Chapters Three and Four is that it is dependent on privileging one term at the expense of another. For example the discussion of Giselle from this perspective privileges the symbolic use of language whilst setting the allegorical use of language aside as derivative and secondary. And the discussion of Beach Birds for Camera privileges the metonymic axis of language whilst setting aside the metaphorical. However the act of differentiating a pure and unmediated form of expression from a form of expression that is impure and mediated is one that Derrida (1976) identifies as fundamental to the history of Western thought. Arguing that Western thought has always been structured in terms of hierarchical oppositions which privilege the first term and treat the second as a derivative or a

corruption of it, Derrida's critique focuses on the privileging of the spoken word over the written word. The former within Western metaphysics is taken as the guarantee of Being as presence (Johnson 1981: viii) and is dependent for this positioning on the possibility of being able to claim that speech is able to offer an unmediated immediacy between thought and its spoken expression. Truth in Western thought has always been linked with the spoken word because as Derrida (1976) demonstrates in his formulation of the system of *s'entendre parler,* the speaking subject preserves the illusion of a transparent relation between thought and expression because both emanate from the same source - the head - and are transported through the circle of the mouth. The mouth marks the boundary between interiority and exteriority whilst preserving the illusion that thought can be transported via the spoken word in an unmediated way. The gap between signifier and signified is thus collapsed in favour of the illusion of representing self-presence unproblematically. This illusion is further reinforced in the directness of spoken communication between speaker and receiver. Thus the body, and in the case of dance its movements, act as evidence of unmediated access to an origin which exists *a priori* to language. What Derrida argues is that to identify certain forms of expression and communication as pure, serious, or literal is to confine language to a model that is based on the illusory ideal of self-presence. Furthermore, to set aside certain uses of language as impure, non-serious or figural, is to condemn them to the place of writing and treat them as supplementary, and derived.

Within a logocentric framework writing is seen as an indirect representation of speech to be used when speech is not possible. All writing then becomes contaminated by distance and time and its signifiers corrupt the self-presence of meaning by threatening to contaminate or interfere in the expression of thought. Using the speech/writing opposition as a model for the operations of logocentrism, Derrida (1976) argues that writing becomes the model for all signifying operations and thus stands metaphorically for otherness in general.

This inevitably causes a break with the ideal of self presence which is a "source whose truth continuously resources itself." (Derrida 1982: 291) Therefore the

privileged account of meaning that the dance historical text asserts when claiming an absolutist belief in the possibility of accessing the truth of meaning is challenged when both the dance historical text and the dance work itself are treated as a form of writing. The commitment to uncovering or revealing meaning depends on appropriating the work as one source amongst many, which when collated with other sources, allows the historian to "dream of virgin continuity" (Derrida 1982: 291) that will lead to the reconstitution of an ideal of presence. This allows the historian to maintain a belief in the strategies of logocentric thought whilst reconstituting those strategies in order to make good the absence that writing marks. To treat dance as a form of writing has two consequences. The first is that as a form of writing dance demands to be studied in its specificity as a rhetorically structured and organised text. This would include "the space of its stagings (*mise en scenes*)...the articulation of its signifieds and its references...also the disposition of its procedures and of everything invested in them." (Derrida 1982: 293) Secondly, discontinuity, heterogeneity and alterity all produce writing as a system of differential traces which threatens the possibility of positing an unmediated relationship between thought and its expression, and thus disrupts the process of making thought speak. For, as Derrida (1982) argues, thought, ideas, emotions are always represented in a formal structure that is characterised by the irreducible play of meaning. To attempt to master this play through a binary logic that appropriates and formalizes some forms of language as more natural than others is to deny the structure of difference and deferral that is constitutive of all language.

From a deconstructive perspective all art is textualised. In respect of this each dance work will constitute a certain experience of body, movement, space and time and it is in relation to this experience that questions are put about the way in which it represents its force of resistance to a logocentric authority. When dance is treated traditionally as characterised by spontaneity and liveness, it can be argued that it is being treated like all language: its movements, like spoken words, disappear as they are apprehended by the audience. From this perspective movement is given a position of primacy in that it is treated as pre-verbal and therefore as a natural language of the body. In claiming a plenitude for the danced

expression what is being set to one side is that the body and its movements are inscribed within the domain of the textual. And thus that the movements of the body and between bodies are a type of writing which functions to demarcate, signify and communicate. Therefore, despite appearances to the contrary, all arts are constituted by discourse because although they are treated as nondiscursive, or foreign to discourse, they are all caught within "a network of differences and references that give them a textual structure." (Derrida 1994: 15)

Writers about dance who attempt to identify as serious, approaches to meaning that claim the fullness of presence, are placing a frame around the dance object/work/topic discussed in order to make it signify whilst repressing the problematics of this position. By disrupting the critical concepts and methods on which Giselle and Beach Birds for Camera depends, a deconstructive reading raises these issues as problems that can be explored in the interrelation between text and concept. This opens up, rather than limits, questions about the "rhetorical organisation, the specificity and diversity of ..textual types….(and)…models of exposition and production." (Culler 1994: 182)

CHAPTER ONE

ISSUES OF METHOD

Introduction: Dance History and the Structures of Language

Traditionally, the narrow and prioritising programme of dance history has demanded that works are evaluated in terms of the way in which they conform to explications of authenticity. As a consequence discussions of meaning which foreground a work's textuality have been viewed suspiciously and treated as misreadings. A common complaint within contemporary dance studies is that concepts are being used from other disciplines, such as deconstruction, psychoanalysis, and linguistics to discuss dance, and that this intertwining of disciplinary areas threatens the art form. (Adshead-Lansdale 1994 13-25) An example of this position is Copeland's (1993: 29) location of the fundamental problem between dance and theoretical reflection within the parameters of searching for a new type of dance writing which would "possess a theoretical dimension ....(without) bury (ing) dance beneath ready-made notions purchased from the mail order catalogues of Derrida, Foucault and company." This view, which enacts a displacement of one form of rhetoric with another, is committed to the empiricist-idealist position which places information about the world (in this case the world of dance) as a legitimated perception of a form of experience which will "reveal the sensuous surface of the dance without mucking about in it." (Copeland 1993: 30) This suggests a fractiousness at the heart of current dance studies (Morris 1996: 11) which acknowledges the need for different ways to think systematically and methodologically about dance (Morris 1996; Foster 1996; Franko: 1995) and thus engage with the kinds of questions that are asked by contemporary critical theory. But it also questions "the efficacy of so cerebral an element....as cultural theory in the analysis and interpretation of dance." (Morris 1996: 4)

Developing critically from within the context of a traditional programme in dance studies which is committed to a "kind of nostalgic primitivizing," (Morris 1996: 11) this thesis argues that critical theory is necessary to explore the rhetorical strategies by which dance works produce meaning. For without this the way is left open for a prejudicial privileging of accounts of dance works and their meaning which acknowledge the need for new analyses whilst simultaneously operating from an unreflexive position that implicitly supports the reduction of explanations of meaning to a form of historical essentialism.

The failure to make explicit the theoretical frameworks which underpin traditional dance historical investigations or analyses creates a number of problems. First, dance historians assert what they consider to be the important causal agencies of meaning and in doing so imply that inquiry into meaning is both historical, and directed towards an idealised end - the search for truth which can be empirically demonstrated in the components and elements of specific works. Making claims in respect of the historical process as a whole, the search for truth imputes to the system of history an organic relation between parts which can be logically and naturally related in terms of explanation, and as such transcend the particularities of interpretation.

> "…the work has become, thanks to the keepers of the true flame of the ballet tradition, sacrosanct. It is the hereditary property of whatever ballerina can claim legitimate descent from the first 'romantic' ballerinas. …but it is also true that the ikons of the great ones of the past are very much alive in the minds and imaginations of reigning stars, and in those of the critics who prepare their images." (Kirstein 1983: 391)

Secondly, if historians do not identify the parameters of their research or produce an explicit methodological framework to context their undertaking, they are free to focus on any phenomenon that interests them or provides evidence for their investigation. Thus by avoiding formulating their assertions specifically dance historians can avoid having to acknowledge the inadequacy of the claims that they are making. And by failing to produce the conditions on which an

unmediated claim to truth can be assessed the difficulties associated with interpretation are subsumed unproblematically by historical explanations which are treated as an extension of the reading process.

Discussing the "writing-and-written body" Foster (1995: 16) argues:

> "The act of translating such physical endeavours into verbal descriptions of them entails, first, a recognition of their distinctiveness, and then a series of tactical decisions that draw the moved and the written into interdisciplinary parlance. Utilising this parlance, the descriptive text can be fashioned so as to adhere to the moved example. The organisation of the descriptive narrative can trace out the patterns and shapes that the moving bodies make. The narrative voice can take on not only a positionality and a character but also a quality of engagement with and in the moving subject matter, the authorial presence, thereby exuding both physicality and motionality."

In this example Foster identifies the work of the dance historian. The complexity of the relation between authorial presence, moving subject and the written through a 'series of tactical decisions' can reproduce or 'draw' in descriptive detail what she calls the distinctiveness of the work, its 'physicality and motionality'. By making the historian an instance of the reader she combines criticism and history unreflexively and issues relating to the structure and form of dance historical writing are set aside as merely 'a series of tactical decisions' which enable the reader's thoughts about the work to be legitimated as representative of its meaning. Therefore, the issue that is raised, albeit implicitly, is that of language. To read the historical text as a source of knowledge about the dance is on the one hand to admit that the historical text achieves its validity in language. But, on the other hand, to treat language as a transparent message carrying medium in which the critic/historian can reveal the meaning is to subvert its rhetoricity as a form of writing.

All accounts of meaning are interpretative and traditional dance historical accounts of meaning are no exception. Thus to offer explanations of meaning in terms of technical and reconstructive information is in effect telling two stories.

The first is a story of causality which selects certain events unreflexively and essentialises them without stating the considerations which produce certain sequences of events as meaningful. In this case the historian operates from an absolutist view which claims privilege unquestioningly. The second is a story of writing which enables the story of causality by setting aside the issue of language. This means that the structure of the process of historical inquiry, the background and constitution of the historical-social object and the position and place of the historian are denied and the false ideal of an apriori, eternal realm of truth which exists independently from other realms and which can ideally be recovered through excavation and research remains intact. Consequently, history as a situationally detached form of knowledge is treated as a special case against which all other forms of knowledge can be experienced and judged.

However, it is only by understanding the methodological principles that each system of inquiry adopts that one can understand how and why what is treated as if it were the same object appears nevertheless from different perspectives. This then opens up the grounds for debate by showing that difference, as the location of a situationally determined view that is representing one perspective among many, provides a basis for discussion and growth thereby creating a more serviceable basis for interpretation.

To do otherwise actively creates the situation to which I was subject when commencing this research. In order to produce a reading of Giselle and Beach Birds for Camera using the practices of deconstruction I first needed to produce an account which explored the ways in which each work produced strategies for making the text intelligible to the reader as a condition of its autonomy, rather than attempting to reduce its multi-dimensionality to a series of essentialising, historical determinations. In order to begin the work of deconstruction it was necessary to dismantle the claims of dance historical inquiry which treat both the language of the historical text and the language of the work being discussed as a message carrying medium. Having accomplished this, it was then necessary to

produce an account of the ways in which the specific texts that are critically analysed function as signifying practices.

Using the concepts and methods of structural linguistics I was able to analyse Giselle and Beach Birds for Camera as dance representations whose signifying systems are both organised and organising. Effectively this allowed each work to be re-examined as an intertexual construct that in its structure and organisation offered a multiplicity of possible meanings. Having produced what Culler (1994) calls "stories of reading" these were used as a basis from which a deconstructive reading of both works could be undertaken.

Thinking about language in the twentieth century has been dominated by two positions. (Kristeva, 1989) The first is that language was treated as a linguistic system whose functioning was governed by identifiable laws which were amenable to a scientific approach. The second, is that the scientific knowledge of language was projected onto all human practices. The effect was that all human practices were conceived of as kinds of language because they function to demarcate, signify and communicate. A consequence of this projection was that art and its explanatory discourses were perceived as forming a secondary linguistic system with respect to language which had its own particularities that invested its languages with subjects, meaning and signification. Thus linguistics "laid the bases of a scientific approach to the vast realm of human actions" (Kristeva 1989: 4) by emphasising the position that meaning is produced within a set of structural relations.

In this thesis structural linguistics provides one way of producing an account of meaning which both emphasises the primacy of the language of a work and shows that meaning is securely contained within the work and not in meanings and intentions which existed prior to it. This means firstly, that the body, movement and gesture, as a set of signifiers that are ordered by structuring principles and conventions - for example, the classical ballet vocabulary - must

be treated as the intersubjective communicative medium of the works discussed. And secondly, that any a priori condition that is given as the point of departure for interpretation must be seen as a strategy of organisation.

In the case of dance historical inquiry, the strategy of organisation is usually made in an appeal to other scientific, and by implication, objective forms of inquiry. However this identity proves, in the light of the structuralist project, merely to point to the difficulties of trying to authorise the pursuit of an objective truth as a recoverable reality, and the impossibility of finding a full set of essential and sufficient conditions as the absolute or ideal basis of meaning. Dance historical explanations of meaning which legitimate some forms of knowledge as a straightforward response to the historical task, whilst dismissing others as a distortion or contamination of the objective pursuit of truth, are making false claims and are quite unable to be reflexive about their subject matter. But in order to prevent explanations of meaning from being constrained by a simple reductionism it is necessary to acknowledge the parameters of such inquiries.

Dance as signifying practice has a material character. It consists of a series of performed bodily movements, which are drawn from and form a system of relations. This performed materiality then becomes the means by which the choreographic idea is presenced. How this is achieved will be discussed in detail throughout this thesis but for the moment the concern is to identify the different orders of signification that are interwoven in the signifying act of dancing.

Dance, like language, is a form of social communication. It functions as an intersubjective phenomenon belonging to both the individual and to society and as such is a means by which and in which thought is produced and communicated. Dance therefore has a material reality that can articulate, in the constitution of its signifiers, a relationship between itself and the world, and between the speaking subject (whether choreographer, performer, or character)

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and the world. As a social practice it engages with and produces particular versions of reality, using the specificities of its language to do this. Another characteristic which dance language shares with all languages is that it develops diachronically. It is transformed through different eras - classical ballet, contemporary technique, improvisation - and takes different forms amongst different peoples - theatre dance, butoh, rave. It therefore can be treated synchronically as a system that has its own operational codes and conventions, and as containing structures that are transformed in relation to them. For example Giselle, in the contrast between the different use of dance languages in the two acts, uses the language of classical ballet to represent the development of the faculty of imagination in the form of the dancing image. By contrast the dance film Beach Birds for Camera uses the relation between dance and film to challenge traditional and conventional ways of thinking about and representing movement at the level of language. Thus to use structural linguistics as a means of addressing the ways in which dance language produces and naturalises meaning both acknowledges the complexity and diversity of dance as a signifying practice, and raises problems for accounts of meaning which treat language as a transparency through which a transcendent meaning can be accessed and legitimated.

There are some works that have been canonically defined as embodying the generative principle of Romanticism and these works make up what is called in dance historical terms, the Romantic genre in ballet. Giselle is one such work and it is utilised retrospectively (Carter 199?, Foster 1986, Beaumont 1988, Clarke & Vaughan 1977, Poesio 1994) to justify the claim that the Romantic ballet is both the culmination and the beginning of an account of meaning which has its relevance in explanations of dance technique and technical developments. The border between Romanticism and ballet within this account is set aside in favour of a descriptive account of meaning which seeks its justification in what can be demonstrated within the boundaries of historical inquiry. Within this framework how Giselle signifies as both an autonomous and meaningful work, and how it can be discussed critically as an explicitly Romantic work are issues that are

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placed to one side as less important than historically produced information about the ballet. Taking the differentiation between Act One and Act Two of the work as both a matter of history and a basis for a structuralist analysis of Giselle these two issues will be examined more fully to produce a reading which engages, first, with the complexity of the relation between Romanticism and ballet and secondly, with issues of meaning. This is intended to enable the work to assert its own autonomy whilst preventing its meaningfulness being constrained by a set of pre-existing explanations.

In Theories of the Symbol (1982: 10) Todorov argues for a continuity of tradition in respect of reflections on the sign. Focusing predominantly on "a period of crisis which coincides with the end of the eighteenth century" (Todorov 1982: 10) which produced a fundamental change in the ways in which the symbol was perceived, Todorov examines the Romantic engagement with classical rhetoric as it was developed in the context of German Romanticism.

In their concern to integrate a theory of art into a general reflection on the sign, the Romantics topicalised language as the condition of art. One way in which this was developed was in their articulation of the difference between the allegorical and the symbolic use of language. This Todorov (1982: 222) says demonstrates an awareness of the differing forms of signs that are sometimes brought together under the general heading of signs - for example the differentiation between transitivity and intransitivity in respect of the sign provides a foundation and support for the structural differentiation between symbol and allegory. Todorov (1982: 86) posits that the Classic age in relation to art and language was distinguished by a demand for a unified relation between the work and its referent. Whereas the decisive moment of Romanticism which is articulated in the relation between producer and product leads by contrast to a theory of expression. The development of the Romantic aesthetic which marks the shift from imitation to expression (Abrams 1971; Furst 1979; Warnock 1976) is thus characterised by the recognition on the one hand of the irreducibility of symbolic phenomena; and on the other, the acknowledgement that language as an

intersubjective phenomenon expresses both the individual, and the relation between the individual and society. (Todorov 1982: 285)

The Classical ideal to which art must aspire and that is associated with a belief in an immutable essence which is located in the past (identified with   its manifestation amongst the Greeks) is renounced by the Romantics. They did not see their art as a degraded classical art but a different and expressive art which must assume new and peculiar forms. This leads Todorov (1982: 287) to conclude that the Romantic crisis produces difference in the place of identity. In other words that the Romantics' description of art and language grants to classical propositions such as imitation, unity, symmetry a different role because it considers differently the hierarchies which constitute them. For the Romantics the concept of intransitivity demands that each work has its own norm rather than treating language as having a single objective which is the imitation of nature. Therefore, in attempting to produce an explanation which recognises the difference between a use of language which refers to something other than itself, and a symbolic language which refers to itself, they locate the artist and language differently. The Romantics, as the producers of art, become like nature itself in that it is through the faculty of creative imagination that they are both able to see things as they are, and as symbolic. As a consequence, it is through the symbolic use of language that they can express the ultimate nature of the world. Thus, the relation between producer and product articulates a different identity for art, language, and artistic imagination in which speech, form and shape are mere symbols of the "spirit of nature which is at work at the core of things." (Warnock 1976: 70)

Using the structural differentiation that the Romantics identify between symbol and allegory as the basis on which to construct a critical analysis of Giselle allows the ballet to be treated as a Romantic work which self-consciously constructs its own codes, and by doing so topicalises language as the substance of the work of art. Subsequently the way in which dance language is used

differently in the two acts of the ballet can be treated reflexively rather than merely as reductive form of historical essentialism.

Structural Linguistics: Saussure, Jakobson, Barthes

Structural linguistic theory used in this thesis as an analytical resource in terms of which to deconstruct dance, has its origins in the work of Saussure. It was Saussure's (1974) insistence on the arbitrary nature of the sign that provided the theoretical means whereby language could be released from a view which posited an unmediated relation between the text and reality. Arguing that meaning is produced within a system of relations and differences, Saussure demonstrates that language is not a transparency through which knowledge, truth, and origin can be simply accessed. What he shows instead is that knowledge about the world is structured and produced in the codification and conventionalisation of language. Jakobson (1956) argues like Saussure, that the relations within the content of language that are produced in the structural relation between its syntagmatic and paradigmatic planes are differential - and that it is the description of semantic relations that are significant. As such, his claim to scientific objectivity is based on the position that only formal semantic relations between signs can be described in a coherent language.

Combining the developments of Russian Formalism and the linguistic poetics of the Prague school, Jakobson produced a structural analysis of literature based on the techniques of structural linguistics, which anticipated the developments that were to take place in respect of the concepts of structuralism and semiology. (Minnis 1973: 124). In the attempt to detach the experience of reading the work of art from the conventions of realism and naturalism, the Formalists aimed to defamiliarise and to make strange the usual and the normal in order to produce new ways of seeing which would enlarge, rather than repeat, conventionalised ways of seeing/reading the work of art. Their work enabled the identification of two related positions: first, that the work of art can be distinguished from other modes of communication in terms of its aesthetic devices: and secondly, that the

focus on the aesthetic text as a formal structure activated by the languages identified in it, provided a means of treating art as a semiotic practice that was organised on linguistic foundations. (Barthes 1972; Coward & Ellis 1977)

Jakobson's writings, based in the belief that language must be perceived in itself, emphasise the poetic function of language and are concerned to identify poeticity as language which focuses on the message for its own sake. One important aspect of language for Jakobson is his dialectical conception of the self-regulation of form which he recognises as incorporating ideas about the intransitivity of language as they were expressed by the German Romantics. (Todorov 1982: 272) Although Jakobson draws attention to both the function of language in art, and the function of art in social life he is not attempting to liken poetics with the "art for arts sake doctrine" which he acknowledges has its roots in Romanticism. Instead he argues that the latter can be differentiated from his concerns on the grounds that art is "one component....in the social edifice....in correlation with others," whereas the art for arts sake idea deals with the function of art in social life. (Chatman S. & Levin S. 1967: 123)

Jakobson's work laid the foundations from which description as knowledge of aesthetic phenomena became possible. His interest was in literariness - the way in which the everyday use of language is transformed in the poetic work. Therefore his work was concerned with systems and codes as mechanisms that enable this transformative process. Thus the identification of the mechanisms within a work are instrumental to critical analysis in that they do not claim to replace the work of art but to describe the ways in which it achieves its meaningfulness.

In their concern to differentiate between an aesthetic use of language that stressed form as a communicable, autonomous entity that was self expressive, and the use of language that emphasised everyday, informational functionality the early Formalists identified the structures which gave to the work of art its peculiarly aesthetic character. This allowed them to dissociate versions of structure which

stressed the inner coherence of the work of art from explanations about the work of art, or its content - historical, biographical, psychological etc. Having made this differentiation on the basis that meaning in art was constructed in language and representative of anterior subjects, the Formalists provided a framework with which to identify the peculiarly aesthetic character of the work of art in terms of structures such as pattern, rhythm, repetition, simultaneity etc., as meaningful elements in their own right. As a consequence they were able to claim that the work of art, now identified as having an inner coherence which obeyed immanent laws, demanded examination in and on its own terms. (Bradbury & McFarlane 1976: 268)

Fundamental to Saussure's (1974) argument is the idea that language is simultaneously "a social system and a system of values" (Barthes 1967: 14). It is an act of sociality that has its own rules which are realised in the act of communication; but the elements of language, its signs, are also given value in the processes of production and exchange. Saussure treats language as a diverse combination of unrelated things that is organised by *langue,* which is a system of signs that associates and functionally unites sound-image and concept. The distinction that Saussure makes between *langue* and *parole* is made on the premise that *langue* can be differentiated from language as a whole. *Langue* is a system of signs which are combined according to specific laws and conventions agreed by a linguistic community. In this sense *langue* exists only within the collectivity of society, it is a social object and therefore it can never be modified by the individual alone. Yet despite functioning as a system which has precise operational rules, *langue* can generate new aspects of itself, or transform itself, in response to new experiences. It is able to do this precisely because language is also characterised by its arbitrariness. It consists of interchangeable and contingent concepts and is infinitely productive as it constitutes its own reality through the interplay of differences. In this respect language is self regulating and self enclosed. In contrast, *parole* refers to the way in which the individual uses and combines the codes of language to express their thoughts and ideas. Therefore it is in *parole* that the individual and the collective meet. Consequently

the interrelation between *langue* and *parole* is mutually reinforcing because language is both the product and the instrument of speech, one cannot exist without the other.

Jakobson was able to rethink Saussure's theory about the relation between the synchronic (axis of simultaneity) and diachronic (axis of successivity) modes of expression. Saussure separates the synchronic on the grounds that it deals with the logical relations that link terms in a system, whereas the diachronic is concerned with terms that replace one another as the system evolves but do not form a system themselves. This allows him to speak of meaning and value differently, identifying two types of meaning: one belonging to the sign in its individuality and the other that is determined in the contrast between signs. Saussure treats the former as subordinate to the latter, which he calls linguistic value, the value which is given to the sign in the chain of signification. This then leads Saussure to conclude that the principle that differentiates value from meaning also differentiates forms from each other and locates them as meaningful. Therefore the linguistic sign is both unchangeable - it has no innate qualities - and changeable - it has a value in terms of its relation to other signs within the language system.

Language operates diachronically at the level of change and synchronically at the level of structure. It exists in time and its events unfold in time. Yet it simultaneously operates in a totality of structural relations that are constituted by oppositions between terms and thus undergo transformations and substitutions. For Jakobson it is the process of diachronic/synchronic simultaneity which enables individual subjects to form and transform themselves in the discourses within which they communicate with each other. Furthermore he argues that it is this structural engagement which provides him with the basis for treating *parole* as an intentional systematic arrangement of parts which is constituted by the codified and collective system of *langue* and organised according to certain principles of structure.

Saussure's distinction between the event of speech and the structure of language provides for a view which treats art as "a system of signs and a system of figures that construct signs." (Kristeva 1989: 236) In this respect the system is autonomous, self limiting and self regulating, in relation to which the individual works stand as a *parole.* Yet it simultaneously allows the event to be considered as a process through which the system of *langue* can be found.

Kristeva (1989: 6) describes the function of language as being able to produce and communicate thought simultaneously and Belsey (1980: 42) argues that it is because language is seen to exist prior to the individual's entry into the world that it is treated as a tool to enable the individual to express themselves. Both argue that this view provides the basis from which to treat language as a transparency through which things that already exist in the world can be re-presented. However, giving examples of the ways in which different languages categorise the world in different ways, Saussure (1974) points to the specificities of context as limiting the range of meanings that a word may have in the signifying systems of different cultures, thus denying the view that language is transhistorical and cross cultural. This allows Saussure to propose that concepts are determined by their relations with other terms within the systems of signification, and not by innate content. In other words, the sign is constituted in the arbitrary relation between signifier and signified but it is the rules and conventions that order the act of signification that binds them together and gives signs a value. Saussure argues (1974: 116-118) that although signs signify themselves they gain value through their relative positioning. Consequently it is the structural differentiation between signs which allows the possibility of signification - not their innate content - and it is the structure of relations between signifiers and signifieds that enable them to produce meaning.

Structural linguistics describes the system of norms and conventions that determine the form and meaning of linguistic utterances. Barthes (1972) drawing

on Saussurean linguistics, examines different structural systems in society - food, fashion, sport - showing how forms of representation are taken over by systems of signification which he calls "myth." His concern is with the mechanisms by which myths such as national identity, heritage, human nature, are naturalised as 'truths' whilst masking the particular character of their production in the interests of the hegemonic group in society. Thus he is attempting to produce an analytic method which examines the ways in which social practices essentialise forms of thought. Barthes' work on myth provides the framework from which dance can be discussed as a cultural practice which is constituted like a language, as a series of signs whose meaning depends on the conventions, systems and relations that constitute that system. The two systems of meaning which Barthes (1972) differentiates are the denotative and the connotative. The former is the object-language; the film, the dance etc., and the latter is the myth which attaches itself to it. Because the relation between these systems although reciprocal, appears as unified, the connoted myth or meaning is successful when it naturalises a position, ideology, or norm.

Barthes accounts for the production and naturalisation of myth in terms of signification. He argues that as soon as a practice is endowed with meaning, it submits to the differentiation between signifier and signified. This takes place at the level of denotation. When the denotative sign is used as a signifier by the connotative system it then opens up to the connotative process and becomes the articulator of another concept - an ideological concept. (Coward & Ellis 1973: 28) An example would be the classical dance image - a *pas de deux*. This image would be both the sign in the denotative plane and the signifier in the connotative plane. This signifier might then articulate classical principles of harmony and balance, or legitimise as natural the differential power relations in the appropriation of the female body by the male dancer. Thus the

"world supplies to myth a historical reality...defined by the way in which men have produced or used it.....The world enters language as a dialectical relation between activities, between human actions; it comes out of myth as a harmonised display of essences." (Barthes 1972: 142)

By commandeering the denotative aspects of language to de-historicize and naturalise the processes by which reality is produced myth functions to mask the ways in which meanings are the production of socially and historically specific contexts.

In his early writings Barthes aimed to produce a science of the text using Saussurean linguistics and the structural anthropology of Levi-Strauss. (Norris 1984: 8) He aimed to develop a structuralist method with which to articulate the codes and conventions responsible for the constitution of meaning in the text. At this point in his writings Barthes (1967) treats the text as a formal structure whose meanings can be produced by the active engagement of reading and as such he is trying to construct a general descriptive model to define and account for *langue*. However, although he argues for an objective method with which to identify and articulate the codes and conventions which produce and naturalise the meanings of a dominant culture, he also argues for structuralism as an open ended practice of reading. (Barthes 1974) Furthermore, in his later works he maintained a dialogue with a structuralist view which he felt was limited by the idea that the relation between system and method could account totally for the text's intelligibility, claiming that despite the structuralist's attempt to efface the rhetorical play of meaning, its effects are everywhere. (Barthes: 1977)

Lacan and the Imaginary Body

Lacan, like Saussure, Jakobson and Barthes is concerned to challenge the idea of language as a message carrying medium in which a signified is transmitted between independently constituted individuals. His psychoanalytic work was part of a larger movement that developed in France in the 1960's that was concerned to challenge distinctions between aesthetic practice and psychoanalysis. (Kaplan 1990: 5) Lacan's writing focuses on the construction of the subject, the conceptualisation of the unconscious and the circulation of desire is available as a framework from which to explore the intelligibility of the aesthetic text. It

provides a specific set of processes that can be used to examine the work as a text - as an organisation of language, codes and signifying systems - as well as a set of resources for considering the reader/spectator positions.

Lacanian psychoanalytic theory is clearly influenced by linguistics and is developed and inscribed within the human context of the analytic encounter, where it gives language a pre-eminent role, treating the statements that pass between the analysand and analyst as products of linguistic mediation. Lacan's (1979, 1982) rereading of Freud's earliest texts posits that the unconscious is structured like a language, and is available to the practitioner in language only. For example, he argues that the symptom as the signifier of what is repressed from consciousness both resolves itself in language and is structured like a language. He argues the latter point by proposing that the patient's speech articulates symptoms whilst simultaneously acknowledging via, pauses, jokes, slips of the tongue, somatic events. Defining the signifier as a set of material elements linked by structure, Lacan proposes that the signifier is not the sign or signal of a thing, it is the material support of discourse. (Lemaire 1982) Thus he argues that the signified is not precisely situated in the signifier of the sentence, but is externalised in the "globality of successive signifiers." (Lemaire 1982: 38) He exemplifies this in relation to the unconscious which he says is everywhere without being anywhere. In other words, the figure which is a constituent element of the unconscious and is the literal character of the signifier, operates as a form of presence which simultaneously articulates absence. Therefore the unconscious can never be present itself but makes itself visible through its effects as they are felt in the conscious mind.

Lacan (1979) continues Freud's work on the constitution of identity through his formulation of the mirror stage. This is the process by which the individual internalizes himself, and as a source of all later identifications is central in articulating the fantasy relations which sustain versions of subjectivity. Lacan identifies the mirror phase conceptually as a representation of a stage that is both pre-oedipal and pre-lingual. It articulates the moment in the development of

subjectivity where the child misrecognises itself as an imaginary unity in the mother's eyes. At this stage the child makes an identification that offers an unmediated unity between inner self and outer image that is based on the absence of the real self. Fantasised as a reality and guaranteed by the mother's presence and look, this stage in the development of subjectivity is inhabited by a fundamental misrecognition. The fiction of cohesion and unity which constructs identity as an organised and integrated specular totality is dependant on a fundamental misrecognition which conceals the child's lack of coordination and fragmentation of its drives. As such it is an imagined identity that has the effect of dividing the child from itself.

By imagining itself as a unified totality the child sees an image of itself that is both accurate and delusory. In making an identification with an image that resembles itself but is different from itself the child is able to confirm, via the mother who becomes both the foundation and support of identity, the separation between subject and object as a hierarchical arrangement in which space is dominated by vision. What Lacan brings to our attention is that the structure that provides the ego with a sense of autonomy and authority - the structural relation between subject and object - is an alienating and illusory structure that is constitutive of the search for a nostalgic ideal unity whilst being the place where the ego is out of control.

At the mirror stage the child's body is a fragmented, uncoordinated body which is organised in relation to reflected fantasies about bodily organisation in accordance with cultural concepts of biology and identity. However this experience is lived as an imaginary anatomy [1]which follows a logic that relates to how the body is conceived culturally rather than how the body actually is.

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[1] In discussing the symbolic expression of the hysterical symptom, Lacan argues that after amputation the pain that is felt in a limb that has been removed is a symptom of mourning. Although pain cannot be felt in the real limb, it is still felt because the experience of the real is displaced into a space occupied by an imaginary body. Pain is a symptom that is directed towards a fantasy of lost bodily wholeness, whereby the imagine limb functions as a memorial to that moment. Pain is thus represented as symbolic of wholeness and loss simultaneously.

Lacan's work on the imaginary anatomy provides an analytical resource for questioning the placing of the dance body as an imagined ideal that figures meaning. Located as an aesthetic image in the visual field the patterned and organised dance body is objectified, enabling the audience to maintain themselves as a subject that is in a position of authority in relation to it and in doing so to claim a disinterested and distanced relation to it. As the embodiment of meaning the dance body re-presents a subject that, once objectified by the disciplining techniques of training becomes the proper object for consumption by the dance spectator. By taking their place in the reciprocal relationship between subject and object that is enacted around the shared material body, the spectator confirms the dance body as an objectified aesthetic body. This effectively derealises the spectator and the dancing body as the conventions of dance performance structure their relationship in terms of seeing and being seen (being fantasised as scene).

In other words in order for the dance body to function symbolically as a figure of meaning, to be aesthetically captured as form, it has to be desexualised and depoliticised. This allows the spectator to make an identification with a specular image which both affirms and denies their separateness. The dance body is sufficiently differentiated from their own perceived body and yet sets the style for their identification by providing an embodied image as the point of identification and incorporation. The boundaries of the dance body, which outline and contain its corporeal and representational limits, give the spectator access to an imaginary anatomy which is constituted as correct form. This imaginary anatomy is an effect of meanings which have been endowed culturally on the dance body but which also incorporate the specific, biological and naturally differentiated body. However, this representation is dependent for its status and authority on a particularly repressive mode of recognition which denies division and fragmentation at the heart of subjectivity in favour of an aestheticised ideal.

The imagined unity between subject and object that takes place in the visual field has no reference to a third term. For Lacan, the entry into the symbolic order - the

acquisition of language - which repeats the primal moment of loss and division at the heart of subjectivity - is played out within a register of demand and desire. The entry into the symbolic order, the second stage in the Lacanian account of subjectivity, is the moment that accounts for the child's symbolic and social construction as subject. The mirror stage, which is developed with reference to the fiction of the smoothness and totality of the mirror image, locates the child in a psychical and physical space. It is based on the unity of the mother/child dyad, where the child believes that they are all that the mother desires. Whereas the entry into the symbolic order, the second stage in the Lacanian account of the construction of subjectivity and the moment that accounts for the child's symbolic and social construction as subject, is structured by oedipalisation. For Lacan, it is the intervention of the third term - the law of the father - which structures the formation of identity, articulating who belongs to who within the oedipal triangle, and ensures the production of a socially functional and sexually differentiated subject.

The concept of desire is crucial to the Lacanian formulation of subjectivity. Defined as the gap that separates need from demand, desire is always addressed to the other. Needs are directed towards objects that will satisfy this natural requirement for survival, whereas demand is always formulated in language. It is always directed towards the other who is fantasised as the site of knowledge and certainty, the place where the truth of the subject can be known and its lack made plenitude. As such, demand is always a demand for, which exceeds the satisfaction for which it calls. It is this something other, that has no content as such, that Lacan calls desire. Desire makes itself manifest through its signifying effects on the unconscious and like the unconscious is produced through repression and is therefore beyond conscious articulation. Attached to a signifier or image that acts as its representation, desire is both constitutive yet marks, and thus reenacts, the fundamental division at the heart of subjectivity.

Lacan introduces his concept of desire into his formulation of subjectivity as a reworking of the Freudian definition of the law of the father and the concept of

castration. It is the intervention of the phallic term that disrupts the fantasised unity of the mother/child dyad, because the child is prevented from being all that the mother desires by the mother's desire for the phallus, a desire which is based on her own phallic lack. The phallus therefore stands for the third term which ruptures the mother/child unity, and initiates them into the symbolic order which is figured by the father's place. The phallus is both imaginary, in that the child imagines it to be what will satisfy the mother's desire, and symbolic because desire cannot be satisfied. It is repressed at the point where the law of the father, which prohibits the mother/child dyad, takes up the place originally figured by the mother's absence. Irreducible to the presence or absence of the real father, the law of the father is normative because the concept of the phallus places sexuality in the order of the symbolic and authorises the structure of patriarchy.

Building on the work of Saussure and Jakobson, Lacan assimilates the signifier/signified relation into the polarities of selection and combination. Like Saussure he argues that signifier/signified and sign are simultaneously terms and relations that are dictated by their opposition to other elements within the diachronic whole of the system, and in correlation with other elements in the synchronic structure of the material of language. Lacan also develops Jakobson's differentiation between metaphor and metonymy which the latter argues are the most condensed expression of the terms of language which lead to either similarity or contiguity.

In modern linguistics metaphor is defined as the birth of a new meaning in a substitutive relation between signifiers connected by similarity. Lacan does not stress the relation of similarity which exists in the process of substitution and it is this that differentiates his perspective from that of the linguist. Lemaire (1982: 198) argues that Lacan develops the concept of metaphor differently from the linguists on a second ground, which is that of sense in non-sense. So although he will adapt the concepts of selection and substitution from linguistic theory, in his work on the unconscious which he argues is not structured by a series of logical relations, he shows that although the analysand articulates their lived experience

and fantasies in language, the elements which are associated in the unconscious with a signifier do not belong to the codes of language with its fixed laws. In other words they do not enter into "language's catalogue of associations." (Lemaire 1982: 201)

Returning to the example of the symptom, Lacan (1979) demonstrates that it is a formation of the unconscious in that the unconscious articulates itself through an enigmatic signifier. But he then proceeds to say that the symptom becomes fixed through the process of metaphor. There is a substitution in the signifier/signified relation for another signifier which then operates as a signified. So the symptom functions as a substitutive sign for a traumatic experience.

Metonymy in modern linguistics is based on the substitution of signifiers between which there is a relation of contiguity, of contextual connection. A dance example would be the materiality of the body which operates both as itself, as a unique materiality, but it functions also as a performed materiality: a container of content whereby the dance expression is treated as embodying unproblematically the choreographic idea, thought, emotion etc. The body thus operates as an imaginary totality confirming its status as an expression of consciousness. Consciousness in this context is evidenced via the disciplined, geometrically ordered body and, as such, silences the threat of materiality - the body that is subject to inner desires and impulses. In this respect, performed materiality as performed presence, stands for a content which is simultaneously elided. Thus the dancing body as presence is a function of the connection between signifiers - between presence as a form of subjectivity that is figured in the materiality of the body as spontaneous expression in movement, and its absence.

Lacan (1979: 22) also argues, in his discussion of desire, that the signifier installs the lack of being in the object. Referring to the moment where the child desires to be at one with the mother but is prevented from being so by the introduction of the third term, the law of the father which is figured in the phallus, Lacan situates

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desire as denoting both a lack - the lack of being all that the mother desires, and the desire for that which succeeds it: the phallus which is perceived by the child as satisfying the mother's desire. Lacan demonstrates that it is as the subject accedes to language, as it enters the symbolic order, that the phallus as signifier of desire functions both to mark lack, and to re-place it. In this respect, he formulates desire as metonymy because this formulation indicates the fundamental rupture, and subsequent progressive alienation in the child/mother dyad, that results from the mediation of desire through language. This leads Lacan to adopt his view that the linguistic signifier renders the child's desire to be all that the mother desires as no more than a shadow of its former self.

Relating this to the earlier discussion about the body, it is possible to say that in Lacanian terms the signifier of the material body which functions to embody presence, marks and re-locates lack. The lack referred to in this case is the lack of content. This occurs in two ways. The first is in relation to the materiality of the body which is simultaneously itself, yet within the signifying process is relocated to become a signifying element invested with meaning and signification. Thus content becomes form as the body evokes by allusion its lack. The second is in relation to presence. To treat the dance body as the embodiment of presence is to adopt a position in relation to the dance work that treats it as if it provides a means of arriving at something anterior to it. The effect is that the moving body can then be read as representative of something other than itself, as intelligible in terms of the choreographer's ideas, background, psychology etc. Thus it functions to figure the presence of thought or intention. But Lacan would argue that the possibility of positing the idea of a presence as an originary plenitude which can be represented is based on misidentification. He shows in his discussions about language that identity is inhabited by lack and thus that any claim to represent an unmediated relation between self and other, between interiority and outer image, between choreographer and reader, is inhabited and structured by loss and division.

Lacan's work shows that reality is constituted in and by language and when formulating the unconscious he shows that language is subjected to an irreducible textuality in the sense that meanings can be conceived as processes which are produced in the interrelation between conscious and unconscious systems. In other words, a signifier will have several resonant layers which achieve meaning in the interplay between substitution and combination. Thus, in developing the work of linguistics, Lacan challenges the myth of the centred, unified and coherent Cartesian subject. Furthermore, by arguing that there is no unmediated experience, that the world is only intelligible through discourse, Lacan demonstrates the problematics involved in the positioning and construction of identities through representations of reality. (Belsey 1980: 61)

Frequently, the experience of dance is accounted for descriptively by pointing to the immediacy and totality of the experience of the ephemerality of performance. Thus, there is a stress on the visuality of dance, on the movement of the dancing bodies as significantly representational. Lacan's work, with its focus on the visual model of the mirror stage which enables the subject to misrecognise themselves as an imaginary plenitude, and the problematizing of vision - via the concept of castration - as the subject enters into the symbolic order of language, seems particularly appropriate to both the study of dance and dance film in that it provides a resource for considering the way in which the movements of the dance body figure meaning. [2] In this respect Lacanian theory, which develops from within linguistics, attends to the language of dance whilst maintaining a structural emphasis on the ways in which identities and meanings are functions of repeated difference.

Dance as a visual, signifying practice can be seen to depend thus on the imaginary restoration of the body as the aesthetic object of desire. Using Lacan's concept of the mirror stage one can assume an identification in the spectator with

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[2] See J. Rose, (1986) Sexuality in the Field of Vision. London: Verso, S. Heath (1981) Questions of Cinema. London: MacMillan, and V. Rimmer (1983) The Anxiety of Dance Performance in Working Papers in Dance Studies. London: Laban Centre.

the body on stage as it is in the field of the Imaginary that the fantasy of wholeness is constructed. Yet at the same time it is not the spectator's own body that is seen on stage, or on film, and in this respect the spectator's identification with the image or the characters is, according to Metz (1982) a secondary identification. The primary identification, inscribed within the film apparatus itself, is with the eye (I) of the camera, thus allowing the spectator to locate themselves as the all-perceiving subject and, in so doing, to capture the dancing body as form. However, this is challenged by Lacan's formulation of the structure of the look, where he argues that the relationship between the mirror stage and the structure of the look is not sequential. Metz's identification of primary and secondary identification is thereby made problematic because it posits a plenitude that is disrupted. Instead, Lacan proposes that the mirror stage is already inhabited by loss and division and this is reinforced at the point of symbolisation in terms of the interpretation of desire.

With all danced representations which use the material body as the medium of communication and expression, there is a demand on the part of the spectator to look for their coherence in a referential sense. But Lacan shows that at the moment of seeing, fundamental questions are being asked of the ways in which the spectator recognises and responds to their own subjectivity.

The construction and apprehension of subjectivity for Lacan is one which is increasingly dependent on an alienated other. This is articulated most clearly in Lacan's (1979) account of the gaze. Using the example of the camera, Lacan defines the gaze as a structure which both captures and constitutes the subject. Initially the gaze is experienced in a space that is external to the subject, operating in the first instance at the moment when the mother's look unites inner expression and outer image. Differentiating the gaze from the look on the grounds that the gaze can issues from all sides, whereas the eye sees from only one point, he argues that the relationship between them is structural in the sense that the gaze is supported by the look yet it can also masquerade as the look. Furthermore, the gaze, as a structure, cannot be apprehended or made self-present

although it can be confused with actual looking, since the subject can feel indirectly as if they are operating the gaze from a distance, thereby giving them the experience of seeing themselves see themselves. Thus they experience the effects of the gaze as it is in operation in and on the self without actual looking taking place..

In his writings referring to the gaze, Lacan shows that the gaze cannot itself constitute subjectivity because it is a structure of dispersability which needs the intervention of what he refers to as the screen. This is a culturally determined image or set of images through which all subjects are classified and it has a masking function. As an alienating image it is placed over the subject taking the place of material subjectivity by offering to the subject a constitution of themselves that is based on a separated form of itself. This according to Lacan this is a repetition of the moment of the subject's misrecognition of itself at the mirror stage.

Furthermore, Lacan argues that the relationship between the scopic drive and the object of desire, which is one marked by distance and externalisation enables the observing subject to both become the object of the look and, as such to be elided as the subject of its own representation. Thus the illusion at the basis of the structure of specularity - of the subject seeing itself seeing itself - is raised and challenged by the ways in which this is achieved. The pervasive quality of the gaze photo-graphs subjectivity even as it looks, and this leads Lacan to argue that all visual transactions between the spectator and object are infected by this quality. Thus the structure of subjectivity, the dance body as image, is fetishistic in that it is grounded on a decisive split, of the subject from itself. What this means is that identity is given through Lacan's screen which inscribes the subject within it as a fantasised specular totality whilst simultaneously hiding its subversive, potentially threatening sexual and material character. This allows the re-centralisation of the body in relation to the subject's precarious experience of their own materiality, in that the dancing image affirms control by the apparent centralisation of both the body and subjectivity as the subject and object of dance.

The spectator, by taking up their place in the reciprocal relationship, confirms the dancing bodies as objectified aesthetic bodies and thus they are both derealized, as the structure of dance performance and dance film place them in terms of seeing being seen (being imagined as scene.)

Both dance performance and dance film offer a "presentified absence" of the object in the play between the subject and its imaginary capture as object, which simultaneously recognises the barrier between the subject and the object of desire. Thus Lacan (1979) argues that it is this barrier or screen which embodies the demand to see beyond it, that drives towards something other than the relationship on which it is focused, that posits the impossibility of an unmediated relationship between spectator, performance, choreographer. Furthermore Lacan's explication of the concept of the Drive, which he defines as a process that articulates the loss of the object around which it revolves, challenges the possibility of achieving fulfilment. In referring to the drive as representational, Lacan is linking analogously the limits that representation imposes and the symbolisation of subjectivity enabling meaning to be treated as a process that is continual and ongoing rather than fixed and given.

Derrida and Deconstruction

This thesis also considers the applicability of the ideas of Derridean deconstruction to raise questions about language and identity as a form of critical dialogue with the texts - theoretical and aesthetic - under discussion. Deconstruction can be seen as "a vigilant reaction" (Norris 1984: 1) to the structuralist project. Acknowledging that all cultural artefacts are structurally constituted, structuralists recognise that the idea of structure is somehow objectively given. Yet they argue also that structures of meaning correspond to "invariant structures or formal universals." (Levi-Strauss 1969: 1972; Chomsky 1966; Culler 1975; Norris 1984). Derrida, (1978) like Lacan, argues that we are all inside structuralism in the sense that meaning does not precede language, it is produced as an effect of language. Thus his work, which stresses the structuralist

principle that in the linguistic system there are no positive terms only differences, draws on the insights of Saussure. However his engagement with structuralism is concerned to suspend the assumed correspondence between mind and meaning that the structuralists attempt to unite within the concept of method, and therefore to refuse a concept of structure which immobilises the free play of meaning in a text.

What Derrida shows in his reading of Saussure's work is that the structural dichotomies that underpin western thought which are temporally and hierarchically ordered are based on an illusory hierarchy which treats the first privileged term as an indicator of presence and the second derivative term as a signifier of absence. Derrida (1976) argues that Saussure's radical formulation that speech is structured by difference is almost, but not quite, a breach of the metaphysics of presence which underpins Western thought. Developing and reinscribing Saussure's ideas Derrida claims, in his use of the concept *differance,* a basis for a whole series of interventions in the operations of language.

Derrida defines the tradition of western metaphysics, which extends back to Plato, as a system which privileges and naturalises the relation between speech and meaning. Because words issue from the mouth of the speaker via the organ of the voice, speech is treated both as a spontaneous expression of thought, and as the confirmation of the presence of being. Within this framework the moment of speech and the understanding of thought are unproblematically conjoined in the seemingly unmediated and simultaneous relationship between signifier and signified. Derrida argues that the implication of this is that inner and outer are unproblematically conjoined. For example the spiritual and the material, thought and its expression, mind and body are seen to be united as harmonious totalities. But he also draws attention to the problem raised by treating the moment of one's own speech as an indicator of being present to consciousness. This enables a system in which differentiations are constructed as hierarchical oppositions. In the example above, mind, spirituality and thought are privileged as indicators of pure presence, the presence of interiority, whereas body, materiality and

expression are treated as secondary, or derivative terms that are placed in a relationship of exteriority to them.

Derrida (1982) demonstrates that all textual systems suppose the possibility of finding the truth of the topic/s which they are discussing and therefore it is necessary for them to claim that the statements that are being made are structured by reason, truth and logic rather than the rhetoricity of language. But he shows that this position, of classic idealism, is structured by the possibility of being able to contemplate thought directly. Furthermore to adopt this position is to necessarily treat signifiers as potentially dangerous because they threaten to interpose their materiality into the transparency of language, thereby disrupting the phonological claim to presence. (Derrida 1976)

The logocentric rejection of the signifier which takes the form of the rejection of writing (Culler 1994: 92) is fundamental to discourses which claim objectivity. By identifying certain aspects of the functioning of language as figural rather than literal, the problem of rhetoricity can be set aside in favour of an appeal to the signified. Dance historical writing enacts this strategy. By legitimating pragmatically information produced by research and inquiry as its proper content, it forgets its rhetoricity and effectively authorises the dance historical text as a literal message carrying medium, in which description becomes the means of reinstating unproblematically an *a priori.* As a consequence, approaches to meaning which are not committed to revealing or demonstrating the "truth which subsists behind appearances" (Culler 1994: 94), are treated as less serious in their concerns.

An important feature of writing which is germane to all language is that it inherently implies the idea of distance and mediation. Thus, any form of language that is enacted by the absence of its speaker implies mediation in the sense that both addresser and addressee are not present at the same time, otherwise there would not be a need for writing. Therefore, in the context of this thesis,

deconstruction offers another set of resources with which to approach dance and dance film as languages that are set aside as forms of writing.

A fundamental characteristic of Derridean thought is that it shows that concepts which are privileged as primary can only function because of their opposites, and therefore that it is the secondary or negative term which provides them with their condition of possibility. Developing Saussure's argument that terms only become meaningful in their difference from others within the system, Derrida (1982) argues that every concept has its opposite inscribed within it in the form of a trace. The distinguishing characteristic of the trace is that it is simultaneously both there and not there, and thus this concept challenges the possibility of positing a privileged first term that is inhabited by fullness and self-sufficiency. Thus a deconstructive reading of a transcendent signified will show that its constitution as a self present, self-sufficient origin is dependent to some extent on what is absent. The consequence of this is that although there are many attempts within Western thought to posit the possibility of a meaningful, self-sufficient truth or essence, this can never be the case because all origin, meaning, truth are appeals to presence that are inhabited by *differance*.

The privileging of an originary term is dependent on treating presence as a form of pure content that is retrievable. However, Derrida argues that what is given as presence is itself a complex and derived construction. The Derridean concept of *differance* is used to disrupt a view of language as a self-presence that offers total and immediate access to the thoughts which legitimate the representation. The "a" of *differance* is both active and passive (Derrida 1978: 1981) in the sense that "ance" and "ence" sound the same but they are spelt differently. Although this difference is not heard at the level of speech it produces an active difference in meaning, as the ending of "ance" turns the verb *differer* - which means to differ, or defer - into a verbal noun, *difference*. Thus the term *differance* designates a passive difference at the level of signification but is also an act of differing which produces difference. (Culler 1994: 97) What Derrida argues in relation to this is that writing cannot simply be a representation of speech because "*differance* is a

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structure and movement that cannot be conceived on the basis of the opposition presence/absence. *Differance* is the systematic play of differences, of traces of differences....by which elements relate to one another." (Derrida 1981: 27) The formulation of *differance* allows Derrida to argue that meaning is nowhere present, it is always produced in a relation between differing and deferral and therefore that "the self presence of consciousness is produced by the repression of the differential structures from which it is derived." (Johnson 1981: ix)

The term *differance* is one of a number of terms which crystallises the critical and experimental moment of deconstruction. (Brunette & Wills 1989: 12) Used by Derrida it both articulates his aim to examine the strategies of logocentrism, and refers to the way in which he tries to avoid a system of analysis that repeats unproblematically the same practice. In this respect Derrida's deconstruction is usefully employed in this thesis, (Chapter Five) as a means to define, without containing, the possibilities of other ways of reading. By focusing on how "intentionality-effects and signifying-effects are generated or undercut by language and culture" (Johnson 1995: 48) deconstruction provides a means of examining the ways in which meaning exceeds the boundaries of stable control or coherence. Thus, by refusing any simple return to an originary, a deconstructive reading of Giselle and Beach Birds for Camera provides a means of engaging with, yet remaining committed to, the discursive practices of western metaphysics as they are embodied by dance.

Dance, Media and Method

In the context of this thesis the term "dance" embraces both dance performance as a stage art and dance film as a new collaborative form which has developed within the expansion of the electronic and technological media since the 1950's. (Hayward 1988) The developments in the media - various forms of television, video, computer generated art, digital dance, holographic developments - combined with the thrust in late capitalism for visual art to be increasingly commodified as market product, has resulted in a shift in the relation between

dance as a high cultural form and film practice. This shift has effectively altered the conditions and the possibilities of production.

It is only relatively recently that the status and interaction of the specificities of different media in the complex interrelation of dance and media practice has been identified as an area which demands a reconsideration of the changed conditions of creative thought, and a new aesthetic with which to approach questions relating to "a changing specular and spatial dynamic." (Bode 1988: 67) However, alongside this newer form of contemporary artistic practice, pre-constituted art is still represented: for example in Brenell's direction of <u>Giselle</u> (1983). Critical writings on the ways in which dance has been represented in the media discuss stage dance in terms of the way in which film destroys the "essential theatrical illusion" of live dance performance. (Clarke & Vaughan 1977: 240) For example, the specifically filmic techniques of editing and close up are considered negatively in terms of how they interrupt the depth of patterning and spatial relationships of the choreography and in so doing impose the preferences of the director on the original choreography. (Clarke & Vaughan 1977; Lockyer 1993) As a consequence of the hierarchical ordering which separates and distinguishes dance performance from film practice, the consensus among directors of dance and choreographers is that the choreographer must, in the process of transferring dance to television, work with the camera in order to reconcile the dance and the television language. (Lockyer 1993) What is implied in the process of reconciliation is the aim of being as "truthful to the choreography" (Lockyer 1993: 133) as possible. The production of <u>Giselle</u> (1983) which is examined in this thesis is a filmed version of the Kirov production. The relation between dance and film in this context follows a traditional media address to dance which is committed to reproducing as faithfully as possible the aesthetic force of the ballet. (Wyver 1988) Thus, media technology is used to enhance a pre-constituted work and issues of representation and interpretation are placed to one side in favour of the ability of film to relay the performance of the ballet, and in so doing to confirm the aesthetic experience as its essential content. In the Vinogradov production the opening shots of the work move from outside of The Leningrad

Theatre into the auditorium, where the audience applaud as the conductor enters and commences the overture to the ballet. All titles are superimposed onto the screen throughout this sequence until the curtain lifts and the ballet begins. Attention is thus focused on the theatrical impact of the performance as the audience for the film are then linked through this series of establishing shots with the theatre audience of the ballet reinforcing the assumption that the film medium is a convincing mediator of the encounter between the spectator and the ballet. As a consequence, the interrelations between specific cultural, art historical, critical and representational discourses in respect of the two mediums are placed to one side, as are questions of selectivity, interpretation and transformation which are necessarily raised when one specific signifying practice addresses itself to aspects of another.

However, these issues are brought into focus when discussing Beach Birds for Camera. This work is made expressly for film and the textual analysis undertaken in this thesis encompasses the way in which this film engages with, rather than effaces, its media specificity in representing its subject. What can be seen in the Cunningham/Caplan collaboration is that, despite the attempt to preserve dance as the privileged movement based medium and thus preserve the traditional art critical discourses which locate dance as a high cultural form, the dancing is the result of technological process. As a consequence of this a complex engagement is enacted between the ordering view of *mise en scene* - the patterning and organisation of the dancing in the frame - and *montage* - the movement of framing, from frame to frame and from shot to shot, which functions to accomplish a simultaneously aesthetic and technological spatio-temporal continuity. The movements of the dancers, the movement of the camera, the movement of colour, the movements of cuts and edits etc., are combined to produce a meaningful and coherent entity - the dance film - which establishes an important homology between film, as a technology of vision which orders the relation between the world and the subject, and dance as an aesthetics of vision, which produces the ordered and the unified.

The different approaches to the act of reading which have been outlined above, and which will be developed in some detail throughout this thesis, are different but related attempts to explore the textual logic by which each work constitutes its range of meanings. Structural linguistics provides the means to question as problematic accounts of meaning that subsume the difficulties of interpretation within an *a priori* appeal, and to topicalise the rhetoricity of the dance text by treating it as a signifying practice which in its organisation and structure produces meanings. This in turn makes it possible to question the location of dance language as a transparency through which one looks for a single and authoritative meaning which is located outside the dance text. Structural linguistics also provide a description of the means whereby the way in which the identified interrelationship between structures and processes of a work become the topic of examination.

Conclusion: Writing/Reading Dance Texts

To conclude, much serious writing about dance concerns the possibility of describing different kinds of totalities. (This will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two.) Therefore, in assuming that a body of works, or an individual work, can be interpreted as if they were intelligibly complete, much interpretative writing about dance continues to be motivated by the premise that it is possible to produce a descriptive account of meaning that can be all encompassing. In this respect it is underwritten by a teleology that provides completion and closure as in the manner of traditional dance historical accounts of meaning.

Whereas the structuralist approach to meaning provides a set of resources with which to approach the dance text as a signifying practice whose elements are organised and structured to communicate with a spectator. But, to identify structures and organisations as meaningful has three implications. First, it identifies limits that prescribe a set of norms and, by implication, exclusions. Secondly, a structural account of meaning presupposes the possibility of drawing pure, differentiated categories. And thirdly, the relation between the identified and differentiated categories is therefore necessarily hierarchical. Thus the

Romantic differentiation between symbol and allegory which treats the symbolic use of language as a pure, intransitive use of language privileges it in contrast to its derivative other, allegory. Consequently to discuss this as a structural differentiation which topicalises the language of the dance work is necessarily to talk of the relations between the two categories in descriptive terms.

This example points to the problem of structuralism which is that it operates its own form of epistemological determinism reducing textual phenomena to a set of structural explanations that would provide the possibility of accounting for the work fully. In respect of this, the usefulness of Derridean deconstruction is that it challenges the self constitution of structural differentiations by exposing the exclusions and hierarchies that are necessary in order to establish them.

Therefore, although the following discussions of <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> and <u>Giselle</u> use structuralist versions of method to identify structural distinctions as ways of producing a description of the signifying practices of the dance texts, these are not used to construct an all inclusive account of the heterogeneity of the dance text. Instead, they provide a foundation from which to discuss critically issues of meaning that are raised in the interpretative process.

Deconstruction provides a means of discussing the empiricist-idealist position as it manifests in historical and structural accounts of dance. For example, essentialising explanations that identify and differentiate what is marginal or inessential are enacted in the strategy that legitimates history as a serious, truth seeking, truth revealing discourse. A deconstruction of this opposition would argue that this status for the dance historical text is dependent on its marginalised other, that is, interpretative non-serious discourse, for its condition of possibility. (More detailed discussions of these issues are to be found in Chapters Two and Five.) Accordingly, deconstruction provides a means of examining the metaphysical strategies that enable such distinctions and differentiations to be produced as essentialising explanations of meaning and in so doing to breach the terms that are used to sustain the illusory character of the system of representation.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY, RHETORICITY AND MEANING

The tradition from which dance history develops is one in which the documentary information provided in a variety of texts is woven into a narrative of emergent cultural achievement. Consequently, information about technique, authorship, dancers and reconstructive detail are used to demonstrate that historical evidence is determined by objectivity and reliability, thus providing an authentic basis from which to interpret meaning about individual works. This hierarchisation effects a separation between information that can be scientifically appropriated as a truthful representation of reality, and interpretation which is treated as interfering with the serious task of historical retrieval. The justification for this can be found in two models. First, the model of natural science which enables historians to claim objectivity for their discipline, and which distinguishes between the object of knowledge and the procedure of inquiry for recovering that object. And secondly, the model of literary studies as they were institutionalised in the 19th century within the area of philology and literary history, which provide historians with techniques of literary criticism with which to validate their historical concerns.

History which draws on the model of the natural sciences, works on the assumption that "the notions and statements of science can provide a framework by reference to which the nature of any form of knowledge may be determined," (Giddens 1974: 3) This has three implications. The first is that history can operate methodologically like the natural sciences, whereby the objects under investigation are on a par with, or can be treated similarly to, objects in the natural world. Secondly, that the outcomes of historical investigations can be formulated in terms that are equal to those of the natural sciences - their goal being to formulate laws and generalisations about the object being studied. And thirdly, that history has a technical aim which is to provide knowledge that is purely instrumental in form. This model provides historical inquiry with the rationale by which all historical events, such as dance works, can be causally

explained, and from which historical knowledge can be "objectively constituted and produced as a neutralised form of knowledge." (Giddens 1974: 4)

Literary studies on the other hand, provide the model by which historians can interpret and evaluate the object of their concerns whilst continuing to claim unproblematically an analytical approach to their subject. The difficulty inherent in a hermeneutic approach to meaning is that traditionally literary studies were treated by the natural and human sciences as non serious and centred around personal taste, producing knowledge that was quasi-objective and which remained in tension with the analytical and methodological operations of scientific inquiry. However when linked with the appeal to scientific objectivity, hermeneutics, which focused on how to understand the intended meaning of a work, provided a way of legitimating art as a form of objective historical inquiry.

Gadamer (1979) used historical hermeneutics to approach the issue of meaning in works that are not historically and culturally contemporaneous. By treating the work under discussion as a resource that could provide a solution to a historical mystery, Gadamer provided a model by which the authority of tradition and critical self-reflection could enable the discriminating historian, like the discriminating critic, to legitimate their pre-conceptions within a context which upheld unproblematically the authority of the historical canon.

But the problem with hermeneutics, Eagleton (1983: 60) argues, is that they contain a "distillation of blind spots, prejudices and limitations." When utilised in the dance historical context, the hermeneutic model produces a complacent theory of history that depends on an unreflexive discrimination, evaluation and interpretation of the work. It appropriates the work hegemonically as both a self enclosed object and, a way of arriving at something anterior to it. Effectively, hermeneutics reduces the work to a form of autobiography, whereby the convictions of the choreographer, the librettist, and the dancer, and information about them, are located as the legitimate source of historical meaning. Meaning about the work is subsequently based on the experience of being part of the

society at that time, and the rhetorical structures of the work in question are ignored.

The complexity of the issues that Eagleton (1983) raises in relation to historical hermeneutics will be explored below, but it is worth mentioning some of them here briefly in relation to Gadamer's work. Gadamer (1979) situates all interpretations of a work in the context of a dialogue between past and present - a position which assumes that the tradition of history can be perceived as a constantly flowing continuum that can speak through the work to the historian, via the contemplative techniques of literary criticism. Challenging the traditional boundaries of historical inquiry, Gadamer critiques the precepts of Cartesian rationality as the basis for the hegemony of scientific method. Using Heidegger's (1962) work as a basis for a theoretical explanation of the relation between truth and method, Gadamer (1979) argues that as a philosophical basis for scientific inquiry Cartesian rationality operates a distinction between mind and matter. In so doing it both conceals and justifies the constructed and dependent nature of its method which "allows only what cannot be doubted." (Holub 1984: 37)

Furthermore, Gadamer challenges the hegemony of the Enlightenment version of hermeneutics, which appropriated the methods of science as the means to understand and explicate meaning as a recoverable truth. In its place he adopts the Heideggerian view of hermeneutics which shows the hermeneutic project to be focused on the historical nature of understanding. Taking Heidegger's (1962) argument that all being in the world is historically determinable, Gadamer attempts to remove historicity from its placing as a barrier to the ideal of objective knowledge, transforming it into the condition that enables understanding. It is from this position that Gadamer addresses the status of the concept of prejudice in relation to historical inquiry. He shows that contrary to the Cartesian position, interpretation is governed by the suppositions of the historian and is therefore historically determined. Thus for Gadamer, a truly hermeneutic theory must self consciously show the ways in which the historian's horizon merges with the historical horizon.

However, in the attempt to give historical interpretation a heterogeneous identity Gadamer fails to address two important issues. The first is that the selective tradition and the techniques of criticism are encoded and conventionalised. This means that these can prejudice and/or influence the parameters and outcomes of historical inquiry. And secondly, that prejudice can be a positive when encompassed within the framework of creative criticism which claims a concrete and analytical approach to the work. As a consequence, Gadamer's theory of history fluctuates between a belief in the autonomy of the event, and an implied belief in the idealist assumption that the work of art constitutes the expression of a truth or origin that exists anterior to it.

Traditional dance historical accounts of meaning which are inherently hermeneutic, (Beaumont 1988; Clarke and Vaughan 1977; Guest 1984;) repeat the problems and contradictions of both literary and scientific models in their failure to account successfully for the dance work's existence as a signifying, expressive practice. They also fail to account for the contradictory claims that treat a work as having both a timeless, transhistorical meaning that can be revealed through the objectivity and authority of scientific investigation, and as articulating the specificities of its socio-cultural context. The effect of this is to force dance history back onto a naïve empiricist-idealism which, in the search to stabilise meaning, offers an unquestioning allegiance to the authority of the canon. As a consequence, history is treated as a system that is dominated by a universal and unchanging order. Thus self enclosed, the work offers to the historian a pattern of knowledge which, when tied to its specific historical location, can lead to an interpretation which is largely non-theoretical and non-explanatory precisely because it appears self evident in its historicity.

Although there have always been histories of dance, it is not until the twentieth century that dance as a form of cultural history came to be considered as an appropriate area of historical concern. In this context, dance history found its identity within a shift of ideas which has led to the expansion of historical topics and perspectives. As the twentieth century has progressed, determinist and

materialist models of historical explanation (Marx 1976; Dilthey 1976; Croce 1995) have given way to a cultural relativism out of which has emerged an enthusiasm for structural history. (Darnton 1994; Porter 1994) This movement for change has been a response both to the inadequacies of the traditional paradigms of historical writing, and changing views of subjectivity and language in the twentieth century. (Schutz 1970; Husserl 1970; Merleau Ponty 1962; Saussure 1974; Barthes 1972; Lacan 1979; Derrida 1978) Yet despite the impact of these developments on historical studies, dance history (Sorell 1975; Spencer 1985; Chazin-Bennahum 1997) has continued until relatively recently to subject itself to the constraints of the traditional paradigms of hermeneutics and pseudo-scientific investigation. The outcome of maintaining this position has been to prevent the development of a historical account which both produces and explains the convergences between the disciplines of literature and science.

It is only in the last decade that dance historians such as Phelan (1993), Foster (1995), and Franko (1996) have begun to move "between and across discursive and performative poles without artificially reducing their tensions." (Franko 1996: 45) The effect is that dance history, like other theoretical areas of inquiry which draw on the work of the structuralists and post structuralists, has begun to challenge its traditional parameters. By acknowledging the work of the structuralists and semioticians, which treat meaning as produced through a series of codes and conventions, new writing in dance history is beginning to engage with developments that have taken place in historiography (Burke 1996; Franko 1993; Martin 1995)) and which have led to differently formulated areas of inquiry. This allows historians a differently formulated position which encourages them to make themselves visible in their narrative whilst admitting the possibility of other different and varied interpretations. Reacting against traditional paradigms of a literary and subjective character by producing a newer, methodological historiographic account of the relation between events and structures, these developments have generally provided a background context for the production of different, interdisciplinary versions of dance history.

However, more typically, particularly in relation to older works such as Giselle, dance historians use information related to technique and style as a means of reconstructing the original work as the context in which meaning should be discussed. (Garafola 1997) The effect of this is that meaning is reduced to a series of informational details about the work which are there to be recovered by scholarly connoisseurship. This allows the historian/critic to treat themselves as "a recording eye...offering a picture of what went on." (Crisp 1983: 6) The traditional paradigm of dance history is then kept in place by privileging documentation and reconstruction as the primary sources of historical meaning. This position presupposes that the dance work can be treated as a series of signifiers which efface themselves before the privileged historical task of retrieval and recovery. This means first, that the original performance can be re-presented, and secondly, that this can be accomplished unproblematically in a form of historical writing which forgets its rhetoricity in pursuit of an objective engagement with truth.

This mapping of meaning is dependent for its identity on the structuring devices of narrative in which historical time is located spatially within a temporal continuum which links the events of the life of a society in a chronological overview of selected events. These are then authorised unproblematically as important and determining with the effect that historical time is thus treated as an emptiness which is made meaning-full by the system of history. History then becomes the measurement of a discursive space which can be separated into a continuous succession of intervals which are connected by a linear logic of cause and effect. And historical time is constituted as being outside of, or anterior to, the contemporary temporality of the historian who is located structurally in a moment of timelessness. It is from within this metaphysical space that the events of the past are represented through the structuring devices of historical narrative. This masks the constructed and subjective nature of historical inquiry by offering historical truth as an objectively produced view that is detached from its discursively produced perspective - as if it were a view from nowhere. Historical knowledge can then be treated as an omnipresence which transcends the interrelation between the specificities of systems, structures and events. The work

of both the historian and of history is treated as being produced in a particular integrated relation of parts to the whole, as if the facts about the work 'naturally' produce the story of the work. Consequently the mapping of time as a series of selected and related events which are joined in the natural and uninterrupted development of an original source, confers onto the historical task the appearance of a structural coherence. Information and facts that take their form from the historically original work can then be offered as the substantive content of meaning. The textuality of the work is denied, and facts about technique, style, convention etc., are organised as a narrative whose elements are integrated by the internal relations of empirical historical necessity and probability. This allows the dance historian to imagine himself as an archaeologist who is looking to the secrets of excavation and reconstruction to provide meaningful clues about past events.

The dance historian is often a critic who attempts, in the task of critical writing, to resuscitate the impermanence of ballet by securely fixing it in the printed text. (Crisp 1983: 4) This encourages the critic/historian to treat critical writing as a transparent medium through which they can retrieve and transform the performance whilst allowing the reader to,

> "examine a particular rendition of a work in terms of what they deduce from the printed page....to define the production's virtues and shortcomings." (Jowitt 1985: 47)

Historical writing functions similarly in that it represses the textuality of language within a theory of representation which is committed to the search for authenticating origins.

Within these processes the dance critic/historian offers themselves as being in a constant state of definition as the originator of a work's meaning. Critical assessment then functions as the fixative of the work which evidences and explicates the acts of history through descriptive and reconstructive details to meet with the conditions of context. The effect is that the critic/historian is treated as "the guardian of a work's proprieties." (Crisp 1983: 4)

The frame that constrains meaning in this way is produced in a combination between research and inquiry and the text's signifying practices, which work together to produce detailed representations of the real. The emergent character of the interrelation between these important features of analytical inquiry tends to be overlooked in conventional dance historical accounts. Written as a surface of narrative events they claim uncritically a privileged status in legitimating the historical task as the pursuit of recoverable truths.

One of the problems that is swept aside in this process concerns the grounds for statements about historical change and meaning. Typically such statements are produced in terms of descriptive details which are ordered by the conventions of narrative to produce the illusion of objectivity. These work to place the reader in an authoritative relation to the historical text and, in so doing, to locate them in a position which confirms the critic/historians interpretation of the work as the source and evidence of meaning which is readily understandable, coherent and non contradictory. This guarantees a shared understanding of the text between historian and critic, whilst representing the world of the work as evidence to justify the strategies used to underpin the search for meaning. Meaning therefore is not treated as an indeterminacy which is constructed within the combination of signifying elements. It is located as a fixed, stable essence, with the effect that the subjectivity of the historian and the text's existence as text are effaced.

For example, Beaumont's (1988) discussion of Giselle is, like the work which is separated into two acts, structured as two interrelated parts. The first covers historical and biographical details. The second, technical and critical. The structure of the book demonstrates the progress from the origins of Giselle, to its original, and subsequent productions. (Beaumont 1988) The historical search for meaning in relation to this ballet, which is enacted within the written text, both privileges authenticity, and brings to future reproductions of the ballet a standardising model.

"Giselle is a period piece in which theme, setting, music, and choreography all belong to the romantic era. Any attempt to transplant it to another period, to modernise it, to smarten it up.....is to invite disaster.....Such inventions...are alien to this simple, touching story of this rustic tragedy....The patina of a hundred years is not easily removed." (Beaumont 1988: 63)

Following the process from the original to the present by dissecting the work, Beaumont's discussion of Giselle enacts a form of historical retrieval. This allows meaning about the work to be produced unproblematically as a collection of properly ordered, objective facts that are brought into a coherent existence as narrative - The Ballet Called Giselle. This ordering is legitimated by the system of history and the system of representation which make what is contingent and indeterminate into a certainty. So, despite Beaumont's acknowledgement of the work as "the crowning glory of the romantic ballet" (1988: 134) any serious discussion of meaning which moves beyond an oversimplification of plot and dissection of content, is limited by the strategies of historical retrieval which re-present historical writing about the work as the scene (seen) of truth. As Crisp (1983: 4) says, writing about the dance will outlive the creative body on which it fed and therefore it is the task of the dance critic/historian to "honour original form and, where discernible, original choreographic structure" (Crisp 1983: 4) in order to "assess the nature of the original." (Crisp 1983: 9)

Although, in this example, the author of the historical text is clearly present to the reader - Beaumont identifies himself within the text by the use of the personal pronoun, and the presence of his signature - the processes and structures of narrative, and the strategies of representation which legitimate the dance historical search for origin, invite the reader of the text and the audience of the work, to evaluate historical meaning as an interpretation which is both a non controversial and privileged. Thus the intersubjective processes of historical communication guarantee the recoverability of meaning, its legitimation as being historically produced and the unproblematic acceptance of the methods of its production. As a consequence, both the system and structure of history enable two differentiated but related forms of denial. The first is that traditional dance historical accounts of meaning can deny their own construction as a type of interpretative writing; and

the second is a simultaneous denial of the textuality of works of the past. This results in a situation where the effects of locating historical writing as an objective, truth carrying form of knowledge enable an unproblematic privileging of a particular type of historical account over any other. Consequently the plurality of meanings is denied in a strategy which rules out other interpretations of works, events etc., as historically inappropriate. Also, the time and space of the danced interaction and its textuality are displaced and transformed into the temporality and spatiality of the dance historical system.

> "In the case of Giselle we are fortunate, for one of the chief contributors, certainly the original source of inspiration, (was) the distinguished French author and critic, Theophile Gautier. Having visualised a ballet in two parts, the second of which would illustrate the legend of the Wilis, he sought for a theme which would ensure the death of the heroine in the first part....In his notice of the premiere of Giselle, Gautier concludes his account of the first act with the words: "There, my dear Heine, that is the story invented by M. de Saint-Georges to bring about the pretty death that was needed." (Beaumont 1988: 18-21)

This account of the ballet is used to justify the authority of history's claim, that its statements are structured by reason, logic and truth. Meaning about the work is given as a form of truth that can be produced and evidenced in details of analysis, research and scholarship and the rhetorical structures and operations of the ballet are denied. As a consequence another form of denial takes place which locates meaning about the ballet within the system of history which is structured to produce events within a temporal continuum ordered by narrative norms and conventions. Thus meaning about the ballet can be contained descriptively within an account which denies its status as writing.

The contradiction at the heart of historical connoisseurship is that interpretation is authenticated by internal stylistic evidence and rather than broadening out the historical discussion, this position is dependent on a set of tautologies which demonstrate a closed, self confirming system. Combining reference with the systems of empiricism and hermeneutics, the connoisseur historian subscribes unreflexively to an unacknowledged and arbitrary system of interpretation. By demonstrating a visual memory for details of choreographic composition,

exhaustive knowledge of the period and the works in question, a capacity for assessing evidence, and a sense of artistic quality that enables the historian/critic to empathise with the creative power of the dance artist, the historians treat themselves as a reified, civilised and intuitive eye, whilst claiming an objectivity that is constitutive of scientific practice and investigation.

> "Beginning with La Sylphide (1832) and continuing through Giselle (1842) and, Coppelia (1870), and Swan Lake (1896), the love between an ethereal, unattainable woman and the idealistic, devoted man was repeatedly explored. The ballet lexicon which was used to realise this theme, however, emphasised virtuoso performance and visual spectacle as much as or more than it explores the dramatic characters in depth." (Foster 1986:144-5)

Support for the underlying assumptions of much connoisseurship is perpetuated by a dance historical canon which subordinates dance works to an arbitrary scheme of taste in an uncritical manner. This then stands as a permanent petrification of the practices and processes which legitimate the authority of the canon. And although it is modified to incorporate new works, what has been ignored until relatively recently, is the awareness that canons of perceived artistic excellence are historically contingent and determined by a variety of factors, some of which are related to but not explicitly categorised as, artistic issues - such as market economics, or shifts in the structure and delivery of arts institutions. What is needed for dance history to address the relation between traditional and largely unselfconscious attitudes to the canon, and the wider political, economic and cultural state of affairs, is a developed area of scholarship which foregrounds the issues discussed in order to provoke a thorough critical appraisal of the relation between dance and history.

To distinguish choreographers to be valued and admired, to privilege one dancer's interpretation of a work as more authoritative than another, to authenticate historical origin in an appeal to truth, is to operate a dialectics of inclusion and exclusion, without producing methodological, or self consciously ideological grounds to account for such constitutive positions. Because dance history has tended towards being unselfconscious and unreflexive in its implied claims, it is caught in a complex situation where it adopts one position while demonstrating

another. It claims the objectivity of rational inquiry by invoking scientific procedures whilst selecting indiscriminately from events, theories and paradigms, what is to be developed and retained and what is to be discarded. But it does not produce any analytic model which would provide the basis for an historiographic account of meaning which would demonstrate what are essential requirements in the process of making explicit the selection, production and organisation of events and sources. Instead, the selection of historical information is treated as being ordered unproblematically by an idealist belief in the possibility of uncovering the true nature of historical meaning as if it were outside the standardising sets of prescriptions and proscriptions concerning the definition and treatment of reality. Thus, when Beaumont discusses the rejection of Gautier's original idea for Giselle in order to offer a more original version than the original, he does not explicate the claim to truth which he enacts as an authentic basis for historical inquiry. To reveal the facts and events that surround a work as constitutive of its meaning is to differentiate hierarchically between the scientific and the artistic, between the intelligible and the sensible, as a matter of individual selection and scholarship. But this process prevents any meaningful engagement with the status of the work as artistic representation, and the claim to historical objectivity which gives a value to truthfulness is in tension with an account of meaning which is subjectively and expressionistically constructed. This enacts a position which fails to theorise the relation between historical production and artistic production. In this respect, Beaumont's work, in its flirtatious engagement with the paradigms of historical inquiry and artistic representation, is characteristic of much dance historical writing that fails to provide a methodological account of the interdisciplinary relation between context and content.

By continuing to think unreflexively about this relation, dance historical accounts avoid having to formulate specifically the exact character of their assertions and accordingly acknowledge the inadequacy of the claims that they are making. For without making explicit the theoretical frameworks which underpin dance historical investigations, historians and dance scholars who use their work as a set of important informational resources, are left without the use of critical tools of analysis. If an unselfconscious version of historicism prevails, the individual

dance work will remain constrained within an overall historical schema which operates within what have become rigid boundaries. The boundaries are those of historical recovery and retrieval which have their relevance in explanations of reconstructive, informational details, and critical connoisseurship which enables, through the use of descriptive detail, the work of the past to meet the contemporaneous eye unproblematically.

Conflicts about changing approaches to the issue of meaning in dance have become increasingly politicised in recent years. But many dance writers and scholars (of which Roger Copeland (1993) is an example) do not seek to engage in a more reflexive, self conscious cultural and critical debate. Using the hermeneutic model of literary critics such as Trilling, Greenberg and Rosenberg, Copeland (1993: 30) attacks newer interdisciplinary approaches to meaning as producing a "system of abstract system building" that threaten(s) to dematerialise the dance. From his perspective this is as problematic as "the descriptive bias" in dance critical writing which "remains intellectually insular, virtually estranged from the realm of ideas that enliven the other arts." (Copeland 1993: 30) As mentioned above, Copeland's solution to what he sees as critical extremes is to be found in literary hermeneutics which, whilst being empirically descriptive, has the capacity to generalise about the significance of the dance experience. What is repeated in this position is first, the masking of the organisation of discourses which constitute the specificities of dance research, inquiry and analysis. And secondly, the strategies by which dance writing smoothes over, or masks, its contradictions and inconsistencies. The consequence of this form of denunciation is the perpetuation of a position in which dance, as a serious, representational practice, is disciplined within the constraints of an unreflexive account which marginalises the signifying dimensions of the work as less important than information about it. Historical research and inquiry then function as special forms of critical appraisal which claim an unprovable access to meaning, and open debate which engages with current socio-cultural and theoretical concerns is perceived as being somehow incompatible with the particularities of dancing.

However well argued, dance historical accounts of <u>Giselle</u> (Clarke & Vaughan 1977; Guest 1984; Foster 1986; Beaumont 1988; Poesio 1994; Chazin-Bennahum 1997); which restrict the meaning of the work to what is demonstrable within the system of documentation, reconstruction and technical explanation, are insecure. This is a result of their claim to an epistemological authenticity which is dependent on misrecognising what Derrida (1981) refers to as the duplicity of truth. Operating from within a pragmatic framework, dance historical accounts which treat meaning in this way are both absolutist and normative. They are normative in maintaining a belief in the relativity of truth by asserting that the parameters of truth can change according to new information, documentation and interpretation. Yet simultaneously they assert the absolutist belief in the value of truth as a fixed, transcendent property that can be produced as the founding principle of the search for meaning and can be demonstrated according to the procedures of research, analysis and historical inquiry. To locate issues of meaning within a search for truth is to validate historical inquiry instrumentally as having a value and end in itself. Thus, to argue historically is to argue a position that is circumscribed by the boundaries and contexts of culture and time, whilst simultaneously arguing that meaning can be changed and modified as a result of further research and technological development. The traditional support for this version of dance history neglects to recognise that properties of an historical and artistic nature are themselves both historically contingent, and yet also produce complex interactions within specific socio-cultural conditions.

The logic that underpins dance historical accounts of meaning that sustain an appeal to an origin is dependent on the strategy of representation which posits the existence of truth as an absent, but recoverable foundation. To adopt this position as a means of asserting the authenticity of historical determinations of meaning is to assume that both the dance works under examination, and written accounts of history, are not inhabited by rhetoricity, but structured by objective, literal facts. By legitimating strategically the possibility of recovering a primary truth as the basis of meaning dance historical writing demonstrates an essentialising fetishism as a means to authorise the status of its texts. This position is dependent on a strategy of representation which asserts the possibility of an unmediated re-

presentation of origin by denying the rhetoricity of language. This allows the differentiation to be made between interpretative accounts of meaning and the literality of historical accounts in terms of the attention that the former draw to the processes of signification. The effect is that interpretative accounts of meaning are treated as if they are somehow contaminated by a figurality which threatens the possibility of maintaining an unmediated relation between an identified origin and its representation.

Conventionally dance history operates a metaphysics of presence whereby the primary factual statements about origins - original choreography, original dancers, original inspiration, design, costuming etc., - are privileged as statements that are structured by literality and consequently can be considered as the foundation of meaning. As has been shown (Chapter One 51) Derrida (1973) argues that the concept of truth as a form of presence is dependent on a logic of exclusion. Formulating the concept of *differance* he demonstrates that meaning is produced as the effect of systems of difference within processes of derivation and construction and not, as claimed within dance historical accounts, as a confirmation of pure origin. Thus, *differance* inhabits what is privileged as immediate and present and this means that the effects of the systematic production of differences can never lead to a synthesis of oppositional terms but must "constantly fluctuate between them". (Culler 1994: 96)

Conventional historical discussions of Giselle which categorise the ballet as Romantic in terms of style and choreography, imply that the ballet is an expression of the Romantic system and that this can be evidenced in terms of technique, dress and story line. These are all treated as significantly identifying the ballet as a work which gains identity within the system of Romanticism and which is fundamentally differentiated from what went before - a form of Classicism.

> "the etherealisation of the female was reflected in the gradual emergence of *pointe* work - dancing on the toes - which was intended to show the Romantic ballerina maintaining minimum contact with the ground. " (Clarke & Vaughan 1977: 46)

"The new style led to a great abuse of white gauze, tulle, and tarlatan, the shades dissolved into mist by means of transparent dresses." (Beaumont 1988: 14)

"Jules Perrot established himself as an original artist of supreme eminence, as fundamentally Romantic in spirit as the greatest exponents in the other fields of art. The secret of his genius was to be found in his choreographic method: his skill in peopling the stage, setting the scene in movement and breathing life into the narrative, and an ability, quite novel in his time, to weave the dances into action." (Guest 1984: ii)

All of the above examples taken from the writings of dance historians seek solid foundations in a version of meaning which exists anterior to the event and which can be re-presented using the work as evidence. Within this position there is a simple and meaningful relationship enacted between what is constituted as original and its representation. But the Romantic system in relation to ballet as it is discussed historically, is a product of past acts of communication. At the level of dance technique alone this can be demonstrated in the debate concerning the three genres and *tours de force*. (Chapman 1987) Within the nineteenth century the art of dance was expanding. Previously it had been dominated by the genre system which trained dancers within the categories of *danse noble, danse caractere* and *danse comique*. These differentiations between the genres were made in terms of how the technique was used and in terms of suitability of deportment. The older methods of ballet training which supported these differentiations could not sustain the demands that the model of classicism required from the dancing body. As a result, teaching practices and the character of physical training were under pressure to change. The resultant merging of the genres extended greatly what the dance could achieve and this, combined with the emphasis on *tours de force* which stressed technical virtuosity, enabled differently able dancers to develop - the Romantic ballerinas being amongst the first group of dancers to benefit from this combination.

Thus the demands of Classicism and the development of Romanticism combine. Classicism seeks to maintain the basic concepts of symmetry, balance and harmony in the line and form of the body as it moves through space, presenting a

movement embodiment of beauty and simplicity. Romanticism, by contrast, sought to enable the use of virtuoso technique to produce a differently expressive dance style, which still maintained the principles of the system of ballet Classicism. The Romantic work is therefore produced within the play between style and form, between the ideals of Classicism and the demands of Romanticism. But the derived and differential character of meaning which is inscribed in the interplay between systems which structure the dance language and the dance event, are placed to one side in the need for the historical account to categorise and differentiate events. In this example what is offered as presence - the romantic quality of Romantic ballet - is marked by *differance*. It is constituted in the interrelation between structure and event "as a product of a system of differences - a *differance* among whose effects one might later and for specific reasons distinguish between structure and event." (Derrida 1981: 30-31))

The possibility of offering meaning as a historically produced origin is embedded within the system of history. But the events in which the system consists are shown to be composed of structures that are complex and differentiated products. This can be exemplified with reference to the way in which the origin of Giselle is accounted for in the dance historical writing of Guest (1984) and Beaumont (1988). Both writers, who are recognised as the major historians of the Romantic ballet, offer metaphorically a version of creativity which is phallocentrically determined. They clothe their claim to objectivity in images of procreation and reproduction, speaking of the "origin and conception" and the "gestation" of Giselle. (Beaumont 1988) Both cite the originary moment of the ballet as Gautier's, "who came with the idea that was soon to germinate into Giselle, the most enduring of all the ballets created during those richly productive years of Romanticism." (Guest 1984) Thus the rhetoricity of the writing collapses historical argument unproblematically into descriptive detail as its locates Gautier organically - via the metaphor of conception - as the sire of meaning.

Guest and Beaumont both then proceed to discuss the derived nature of what has been metaphorically appropriated as origin. They show that, within the period of

gestation, the idea for the dance seems to have followed a passage from Gautier to Perrot who,

> "rehearsed fragments from the main part of another ballet for Carlotta, while the idea for the action was taken (by Gautier) from Heine's Les Wilis....(and was)....arranged and revised by Saint-Georges, and finally staged - or as one might say, composed - by the ballet master Coralli." (Guest 1984: 73)

However, despite arguing for the derived and deferred nature of origin, these historians then turn a blind eye to this position in favour of an appeal to origin which is strategically embodied in the form of the penetrative insights of Gautier which, thus privileged and sown, are offered as the essentialising condition for the production of Giselle.

Within this framework insight is dependent on error - the error of misrecognition - in which the rhetoricity of the language leads the historian away from their asserted critical stance. The dance historical writing about the ballet is committed to the idea that history can produce an autonomous harmonisation of contraries within an appeal to origin. But this stance is dependant on a forgetting of the differential nature of what has been offered as origin. Historical research and inquiry is overtaken by the needs of the historian, as insight becomes the means whereby the historian can penetrate and impregnate the body of the ballet to substantiate the claim to produce historical evidence as the truth of meaning. Thus the historian claims to enlighten the reader about the meaning of the ballet, but this fetishisation of vision is only available because, having blinded themselves to the impossibility of positing an origin, the historian is freed from having to report correctly what has been perceived in the course of the historical journey of recovery and retrieval.

Despite a claim otherwise what is presenced as essentially constitutive in dance historical accounts of Giselle is blindness - the absence at the heart of Gautier's insight. But to strategically enact a position whereby insight can be unproblematically recovered as danced expression is, as has been demonstrated, to 'forget' that any call to presence is inhabited by *differance*. In the examples

taken from the work of Guest and Beaumont there is a tension between the figurality of the historical writing which acknowledges re-production as the ground of meaning, and the literality of the historian's task, which insists blindly on a hierarchisation which privileges the act of creation - as a form of present-to-consciousness - over the intertextuality of meaning. (See Chapter One: 49-51 for a more detailed discussion of present-to-consciousness from a deconstructive perspective).

Using this example it is possible to argue that dance historical accounts of meaning enact an opposition between speech and writing. This enables historical writing both to deny its rhetoricity as a text that reverses its strategy in its writing, and to allow the historian to treat the rhetoricity of the work as a non serious area of research that needs to be relocated in terms of another identity whose foundation is in historical evidence. This deprives Giselle of a potentially infinite range of possible interpretations that could be enacted within its signifying structures, in favour of an essentialising explanations which privilege historical fact as the truth of the ballet's sole prescriptive meaning. Moreover it fails also to recognise the position that properties which are produced as constitutive of both an artistic and a historical nature - for example what constitutes the romanticism of Romantic ballet - are themselves historically contingent, produced within the complex interaction of specific socio-cultural contexts and relations.

In his formulation of the term *differance*, Derrida shows that origins are never original, they are inhabited by differences. Therefore an account of meaning cannot be grounded on a claim to truth because what is treated as a given is in effect a construction within a system of differences. Thus to locate Gautier as the insightful originator of meaning about Giselle is to appeal to two different but related positions. The first is dependent on a referential idea of truth which posits unproblematically a correspondence between words and the things that they can properly represent. An example would be the ways in which the historian can assume that historical statements about Giselle can be tested by determining their fit with outside reality - sources, productions of the work etc. The second is a distinctively Platonic conception of truth which allows for the possibility that

things can be known in their essence through a process of inward revelation. Thus dance historical writing can claim an unmediated relation between thought and its expression by treating the historical text as the very writing (righting) of truth which imitates nothing, but opens up, in the collation of information etc., the origin of the work that is being discussed. (Norris 1987: 54-55) Both positions lead to the idea that there is an ultimate truth which can be represented by statements of meaning that are structured by inquiry, research and analysis. And both treat historical writing as a form of writing which transcends its material condition. Thus language and thought are combined to offer authenticating origins as the lived reality of meaning. What Derrida shows through the concept of *differance* is that the figural play of writing makes it impossible to subordinate meaning to a preconceived system of explanation. Statements of history dissolve into the figures of rhetoric (Norris 1984: 76) and thus any historical account of meaning which is predicated on the possibility an unmediated and stable relationship between facts and their representation, is operating a metaphysics of presence which is necessarily dependent for its insights on a fundamental blindness.

Within the logocentrism of Western thought hierarchical oppositions, such as literal/figural, thought/expression, mind/body, enact an essentialism which, in favouring the first term of an opposition, strategically place the second term as marginal and derivative. A consequence of this is that historical explanations of meaning can be treated as literal, objective and serious in their pursuit of the recovery of truth whilst explanations which focus on the rhetoricity of the text are treated as interpretative, non-serious practices that by drawing attention to the signifying processes of language, threaten the stability of the logocentric position. However Derrida's use of *differance* demonstrates that language cannot provide spontaneous and unmediated access to thought. Consequently, any body of work which claims an *a priori* set of origins operates a logocentrism that strategically works to produce meaning as a form of self presence by necessarily hiding the differential character of its identity.

It follows that, although the possibility of offering *a priori* accounts of meaning as historically produced is inscribed within the system of history, these accounts of meaning must always shift in the relation between event and structure. Drawing on Saussure's (1974) model of language, which stresses the systematic and differential reality of language, it is possible to argue that each element is distinct from its origin and thus is different at each new instance of its repetition. Insisting that language should be studied both diachronically and synchronically - in relation to its individual elements as well as in terms of the relationship between those parts - Saussure (1974) argues that language as a system has a valid existence apart from its history. So although the system of *langue,* as a social product and collection of conventions, exists beyond and determines the character of each utterance or event, the system has no concrete existence of its own and consequently never appears in its entirety. Thus, using the work of Saussure to consider the dance historical claim to objectivity, it follows that the system of history is necessary for events to be considered intelligible and produce effects, but that events are necessary for the system to establish and maintain itself. Therefore, as Derrida argues, it is in the differential play between structure and event that meaning, as a generalised absence, is produced.

Dance historical writing treats a dance work as a form of origin which can be made present and confirmed in the intermediary and representational practices and discourses of historical information and research. But as has been shown, this framework, whilst treating the work as a form of presence, simultaneously conceives of it as a generalised absence. Within this contradiction the systems and discourses of dance history produce an intermediary space where the problems surrounding interpretation are strategically displaced whilst they are being enacted. Dance historical meaning about a work is placed in the interrelation between past historical facts and the present of the historical text which offers those facts as able to uncritically clarify or reveal meaning from within the structuring relations of mimesis. Describing his work as a ballet historian, Guest (1982: 17-21) confirms this process:

"…..nothing is more satisfying to the historian than to find himself working in virgin soil….I soon realised I was excavating virgin soil, as I turned up engravings of scenes from ballets and caricatures that, almost inexplicably, had lain undetected for nearly a hundred years."

Comparing the work of the historian with the work of the archaeologist, Guest demonstrates his concern, which is to locate and uncover meaning from within a perspective that treats the truth of origins as its underlying *raison d'etre.* This mobilises two ideas. First, in the combination between archaeological and penetrative metaphors, the historian differentiates between the value of history and the value of the art work. The work is ripe for plundering by the eager and excited historian. And secondly, the meaning of the work is offered as that which can be substantiated, not in terms of the combination and juxtaposition of signifying elements but in terms of a rhetorical claim to truth that is constructed as pure origin - as if buried within virgin soil. Thus the historian is given implicitly the power to see beyond the world of material objects - the virgin soil of history - to a higher reality of essences, truth as an absolute version of presence, which are embodied in the perceptible world and can be accessed through the process of inward seeking which in this case, takes the form of archaeological excavation.

Similarly, in his discussion of Gautier's notices of all the principal performances given in Paris between 1837-38, Beaumont (1947: 7-10) offers an account of Giselle which produces meaning unproblematically as a correspondential account of the work's appearance.

"How delightful his notices are! Not only do they explain the subject of the ballet, but also how the dancer looked, and, most important of all, how she danced….How adroit he is….in devising a synonym which exactly conveys the qualities of a certain dancer….These charming pages, with their fine phrasing, their glowing colours, and their wealth of poetic imagery, do enable us to form a very fair idea of the appearance and the ability of the past."

Beaumont draws the reader's attention to the critical writing and gives examples of how it constructs rhetorically the appearance of the past, whilst simultaneously treating language as if it is a transparency through which the appearance and the ability of the past can be known and seen. This is achieved by positing a

referential, or correspondential version of the relation between origin and representation whereby words correspond unproblematically to the things they are used to represent. Thus movement, time, space and materiality are organised, structured, and determined in the relation between observer and observed as a version of presence.

Both these examples show how the danced representation stands in a certain relation to truth as its proof or fallibility. The dance historical account of meaning which evaluates works in terms of how adequately they resemble in object and medium what has been evidenced in historical fact, distinguishes history as the primary carrier of truth. The effect is that the writing of dance history is conditional on a logocentric strategy which claims the possibility of an unmediated relationship between truth, in the form of pure origin, and its expression. This produces three different but related positions. The first is that the rhetoricity of historical writing which produces the effects of presence is denied. The second, that all other accounts of meaning particularly those that focus on the signifying possibilities of a work, are treated as non serious accounts which are incipiently subversive of the authority of presence. And the third impacts on subsequent reconstructions of dance works such as <u>Giselle</u> which are all evaluated in terms of how adequately they resemble in object and medium what has been evidenced in historical fact. Thus the generation of interpretative accounts by subsequent readings of a work are subjected, within the traditional establishment of the dance world, to criticisms that misrecognise the textual character of a work.

CHAPTER THREE

GISELLE

Introduction: Giselle and the Structure of Romantic Ballet

Whilst there may be disagreements amongst dance critics and historians about the significance of the Romantic ballet (Kristen 1983; Beaumont: 1988), there is agreement in respect of those ballets that are canonically selected as embodying the generative principle of Romanticism and which constitute the Romantic genre of classical ballet.

> "Romantic ballet is a period designation...loosely used to signify ballets in which dramatic pantomime or character-dancing predominated over the school exercise academic vocabulary...Oddly enough , the archetypal Romantic works (Giselle, Swan Lake, Coppelia) are now considered The Classics, and serve as the chief tests for the status of international star-style." (Kirstein 1983: 375)

This chapter will focus on the ballet Giselle as the work that "has become, thanks to the keepers of the true flame of the ballet tradition, sacrosanct," (Kirstein 1983: 391) in order to discuss the engagement between ballet and Romanticism from a structuralist perspective. Using Todorov 's (1982) investigation into the phenomena of the symbol the structural differentiation between Act One and Act Two in Giselle will be examined as a specifically Romantic engagement between different but related uses of dance language. This makes it possible to show how the correlations and oppositions between structures which are identified as giving form to the work can be understood in the context of Romanticism. It also provides an analytical means of detaching the work from its dance historical placing, which, places to one side the languages and techniques of expression and in doing so reduces the complexities of Romanticism to a simplistic account of a priori facts.

The structural differentiation between the two acts of the ballet, features in most dance critical and dance historical discussions, but it is identified in simplistic terms which whilst acknowledging that there is a different use of dance language,

leave this for the most part unaddressed as a phenomenon in itself. For example, Beaumont (1988: 22) argues that Gautier's original idea of making the first act a mimed version of Hugo's poem was abandoned because, as it was conceived, there would have been "a complete absence of action…of an ordered drama, with its introduction plot and climax." Ultimately engaging the help of Saint-Georges, Gautier produced a work divided into two acts, the first of which was "an undistinguished piece of stage carpentry" and the second "a genuinely poetic conception."

Giannandrea Poesio (1994: 563) also mentions this differentiation:

> "The division into two acts was a recurring and characteristic feature of the Romantic ballet, ….In <u>Giselle</u> each act is dramatically complete, with an introduction, a development and conclusion of its own. The second act, however, is complementary and consequential to the first because in this latter there are several dramatic indications which anticipate the development of the story…. It is important to note that all…episodes referring to the second act are in the form of mime scenes and not in that of dance sequences…The balance between mime and dance…finds in <u>Giselle</u> its finest and complete application"

In respect of the structural differentiations noted in <u>Giselle</u> by these and other critics, there are two interesting omissions. The first can be illustrated in relation to Beaumont's comment which mentions the need for a work to conform to a structural organisation that is dictated by the Aristotelian rule of dramatic action. This description provides Beaumont with the basis for further description - stage carpentry/poetic conception - but the relation that he implies in this differentiation between structure and language is once again passed over. The structural relations of the ballet are also identified in Poesio's discussion of <u>Giselle</u> when she talks of the organisation of the work in the contiguity between Act One and Act Two and the development of the story, but she also neglects to develop the implications of her argument beyond the level of descriptive detail.

The second significant omission is that practically all accounts of <u>Giselle</u> refer to the distinction between the two acts in terms of the differentiation between mime and dance, and most of these treat this as an important structural differentiation.

But this is placed to one side, allowing the structural division between the two acts in the ballet to be constrained to discussions which are motivated by historical and technical explanations of meaning. For example, both Beaumont and Poesio seek explanations of <u>Giselle</u> which point to, and then neglect to develop, issues of language. Descriptions of Act One are frequently limited to discussions of the ways in which mime is used functionally to both introduce the themes and content of the second act and to provide the narrative with a sense of continuity and development. By contrast, Act Two is discussed as a poetic conception that has "..a mystical quality that never had been achieved in ballet before." (Guest 1984: 75). However few critics or historians proceed to develop this with more than a superficial reference to Romanticism. As a consequence the different uses of movement language are constrained to being a reconstructive and narrative support which allows the rhetorical operations of the ballet to be treated as a transparency of descriptive detail that evidence historical research and inquiry as the foundation of meaning.

In Beaumont's claim that <u>Giselle</u> is "an ordered drama." (1988: 22) there is a further basis for a discussion of the different uses of dance language within the two acts. Drama, which is designed for performance in the theatre, is distinguished in three ways. First, the adoption by the work's participants - the dancers - of the roles of characters; secondly, their ability to perform the indicated writing - in the case of this ballet, Gautier's and Saint-George's narrative; and lastly, to "utter the written dialogue" (Abrams 1985: 48); the danced and mimed movements of the body. Abram's categorisation of drama draws attention to the issues that are implied in Beaumont's claim - the relation between the structure of the work, the language used to communicate with the audience/reader, and the ways in which the language of the dance medium is able to re-present the indicated writing. These issues are relevant to this discussion because they demonstrate a lack which inhabits the writing of many dance historians and critics. This lack can be explored in two ways. First, in relation to discussions about the ways in which 19th century ballet was seeking an autonomous identity for itself as an aesthetic practice. Many historians and critics relate that search to Noverre's ideas for the *ballet d'action* which were in pursuit

of a differently expressive use of danced movement but they then fail to develop the relation between ballet as an aesthetic practice and Noverre's theories about dance language in terms of the division between the different use of dance language in the two acts (between 'stage carpentry' and 'poetic conception'). Secondly, this failure leads to the abandonment of any serious consideration of the Romantic search for new forms of representation. Consequently the ways in which the language of the Romantic ballet - the danced movements of the body - engages with the problems of representation, character roles, and performativity, are placed to one side.

The inclusion of mime into the overall vocabulary of ballet is both a matter of eighteenth century dance history and a matter of representation. At this time ballet was still inserted into opera as an independent work in which the theme could reflect the action that had previously occurred. Pantomime was used in this context as a mute representation of the story which was governed in its form by the demands of realism - the need to express character and emotion "purely by movements of the body without any speech." (Guest 1996: 31) From the beginnings of the *ballet d'action* there was a differentiation made between dancing, which occurred purely for its own sake when the action had ended, and the mimed scenes, in which the performers, although still walking rhythmically, were able to "form a rapidly changing and impressive picture which thrills and carries away the audience." (Guest 1996: 76) However, as reforms in ballet took place, the way was being prepared for French ballet to free itself from the constraints of the court and to become a professional and independent art form. Gradually, in response to the demands of the Revolution, ballet attracted a new public which responded less favourably to traditional gestures of pantomime. This was a major influence on the taste of the opera-going public and, combined with Dauberval's influence on the integrated use of pantomime in *ballet d'action,* had the effect of softening and naturalising the style of presentation. Noverre provided the *ballet d'action* with it aesthetic basis and demonstrated its potential, but the way in which he conceived of the relation between dance and pantomime was contextualised by his view of ballet as an art form which he felt could be universally accepted, as were other art forms, and as a consequence, autonomous

in its expressive capabilities. Also he argued (Clarke and Vaughan: 1977) that ballet should reflect in structure and in content, the universality of the grand designs and rationalising principles of the Enlightenment. Noverre's *ballet d'action*:

> "relied heavily on pantomime to convey the narrative, and the mimed passages were prepared with the same care as the dances; he set the pantomime strictly to the music, adding, as he explained in his Letters, an injection of dance movement to add animation, and interest to the gestures and attitudes of the performers. In his desire to achieve the 'imitation of nature',...he heightened the dramatic effect by giving his dancers more expressive and varied arm movements, and by devising steps that would correspond to the action and reflect the feelings they were required to project." (Guest 1996: 8)

The examples of historical writing cited above imply an awareness of the importance of the structural organisation of the work but this is simultaneously subordinated in favour of producing historical retrieval and reconstruction as the grounds for meaning. Beaumont (1988) illustrates this strategically when he identifies as important the demand for the narration to submit to a dramatic unity of action which is governed by a continuous sequence of beginning, middle, and end - which he describes as "introduction, plot and climax." (1988: 20) Here he confuses story, which is a synopsis of the temporal order of what happens, and plot, which is a structural organisation and representation of the elements within the work. A plot is commonly said to have unity of action if it functions as an artistic whole which is apprehended by the spectator as a complete and structured order of actions. Directed towards producing an intended effect, it must demonstrate a relation of parts to the whole where all the important parts are functional. (Abrams 1985: 160) Both Beaumont (1988) and Poesio (1994: 53) draw attention to the organisation and representation of the sequential elements of the story and in doing so acknowledge that a story cannot be merely a transparent rendering of events but is structured to re-present and organise these events. And both writers identify the differences between the two acts of the ballet in terms of the different use of dance style, and thereby draw attention to the ways in which meaning is produced within a repertoire of codified and

conventional devices. But this is not contextualised as a matter of significance beyond being a descriptive support for the pursuit of historical authenticity.

> "The first act then was clearly the work of Saint-Georges. Whether the second act was the joint product of Gautier and Saint-Georges, or whether the former did no more than suggest the dramatic possibilities of the Wilis, we do not know." (Beaumont 1988: 21)

The conflation of story and plot allows Beaumont and Poesi also to note and then 'forget' the distinction between a temporal sequence of events and the discourse that orders and presents events in favour of their story - their history - of <u>Giselle</u>; a story in which the events of the ballet are reinterpreted in terms of events that actually took place (for example, who was the original creator of the work) and are embodied in the form of historical narrative. Issues of meaning are then translated as being issues of history, in which the rhetorical and structural organisation of the historical discourse are also unproblematically subsumed within a chronology of cause and effect. This privileges a logocentric explanation by assuming that there is a true order of empirical events which can be re-produced in the form of reconstruction and that somehow, this order is outside of the specificities of context. Thus, in the combination of the terms "Romantic" and "ballet" there is implied an awareness of the relation between Romanticism as an aesthetic, and ballet as an artistic practice. What might be assumed is that, in discussing the differentiations between plot and story and the movement language used in the two acts, attention could be given to the ways in which the Romantics reconsidered the function of art in, for example, the relationship between form and content. But to produce an historical account of the meaning of <u>Giselle</u> that seeks a solid foundation in the processes of retrieval and recovery is unconsciously to acknowledge, and place to one side, the systems of signification, and codes and conventions that interrelate to make the ballet a meaningful expression on its own intrinsic terms rather than those imposed by the narrative history of its making. This process which insists that meaning is found in an a prioristic set of origins or truths represses simultaneously the knowledge that meaning is inscribed in the relational and differential structure of language.

These issues will be discussed in further detail in this chapter. Initially, however, it will suffice to draw attention to some of the inconsistencies within Beaumont's and Poesi's writing on the Romantic ballet and use them as a basis for a reconsideration of the different use of dance languages in Giselle. Both critics give a relational interpretation to the signs of the ballet which makes a structural explanation possible by drawing attention to the different use of signifiers in the division between the two acts. What then happens is a rationalising of the processes and structures of signification, reproducing them as a support for a historical and causal explanation of meaning which it then becomes the function of language to express. It is this strategy of rationalisation that comes to be of interest because it provides the basis for a reconsideration of Giselle as a rhetorical text in which the play of signification is the necessary condition for producing the concepts on which meaning relies.

Discussions relating to the use of mime and dancing in Romantic ballet were framed within the context of "one of the great classics of dance literature - Noverre's *Lettres sur la danse, sur les ballets et les arts,.*." (Guest 1984: 323) Noverre's principles, although fundamental to the establishment of *ballet d'action* as a theatre art form in the 18th century, were also valid in the context of the Romantic ballet. As Guest notes (1984: 325), Perrot, who was partially responsible for the choreography of Giselle, "developed the *ballet d'action* further than any other choreographer of his time,...(and) could derive much satisfaction from judging his own work against the yardstick of his predecessor." The significance of Noverre's writings were that they advanced the idea of the *ballet d'action* as an autonomous theatre form. Detached from its placing as a *divertissment* in the opera, it linked dance with pantomime with the aim of elevating it to a position where it became a mute and expressive form in its own right. Inspired by the form of pantomime developed in ancient Greece and Rome the new form of mute drama aimed to convey "the impression of a scene with dialogue." (Guest 1996: 31) Noverre saw the dumb play "as drama for the eyes" (Guest 1996: 76) which used pantomime as a supplement to the dancing to express character and convey emotion in a direct dramatic form. The strength of pantomime was its capacity to

"rapidly convey movements of the soul; it is the language of all races, of people of all ages, and for every period; it depicts even better than words, the sloughs of sorrow and the peaks of happiness." Guest 1996: 404)

The importance of the differentiation between mime and dance, which was encompassed in Noverre's theories about the development of ballet, provides a significant point of departure for discussing the relation between Romanticism and ballet because it is within the language of dance that meanings about the world are produced and exchanged. As a representational and encoded system, language uses signs or symbols to communicate shared understandings about reality and experience. The logical positivist view of language is that thoughts should represent things as they are and, that language should faithfully represent thoughts. By representing what is there as an unquestionable reality, truth becomes a function of representational correctness. This position presupposes a reality that exists as an autonomous and objective state, outside of the language in which it is expressed, and that the function of language is merely to faithfully reproduce as nearly as possible that reality. In other words, language is treated as a neutral, transparent, message carrying medium which can offer a correspondential relation between reality and its representation.

The structuralist project shows that reality is a significant effect of language in the sense that it is an intralinguistic representation produced by the process of signification. In accordance with this, structuralist criticism treats the relationship between a text and language as homologous in two ways. First, the signifier is never subordinated to the signified and therefore the structuralist's concern is to show that the organisation of the signifying systems which produce the possibility of interpretation takes precedence over the message that the text carries. And secondly, to show that a text is constituted in language.

Thus, to critically engage with Giselle from a structuralist perspective is to actively construct meaning with the full knowledge that the text consists of a multiplicity of possible meanings that are constituted by the rules and conventions of signifying systems. As Derrida (1978) argues, structuralism

provides a methodology for problematizing the retrieval of a single definitive meaning as an objectively and separately constituted end. Instead it focuses on the importance and openness of the symbolic dimension of language and its contribution to meaning.

Todorov (1982), demonstrates the continuity of a tradition in Western history which systematically attempts to define symbolic phenomena. He organises his argument around what he terms, "a period of crisis which coincides with the end of the eighteenth century…(which produced)…a radical change in which ways of thinking about the symbol occurred" (1982: 10), and maintains that thinking about the symbol found its fullest development in the work of the German Romantics. But like Furst (1969), Abrams (1953) and Warnock (1976) identifiy an interplay of similarities and differences among the European Romantics.[1] Todorov's thesis demonstrates that a basis is found in the Romantic exploration of the issue of representation for treating the work of art as a unique form of symbolic expression whose force is grounded in the raw material of its medium. Focusing particularly on the differentiation between the allegorical and the symbolic use of language which he identifies as central to the Romantic consideration of the problems of representation, the following discussion will locate the differentiation between mime and dance as a specifically Romantic engagement with dance language.

The Romantic aesthetic is dependant for its validity on a critique of Enlightenment rationality and the preceding tradition of Classicism. In France, it was not until the late 1820's that a relatively coherent and self conscious set of Romantic doctrines emerged that collectively represented the Romantic conception of a differently conceived sensibility, and took a stance against what was perceived as a dead classicism. (Charlton 1984) The French Romantics, like

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[1] There are many well documented shared and divergent views about style and form within English, French and German Romanticism (Charlton: 1984, Milner: 1973, Furst: 1969, 1979, Abrams: 1971, Schroder: 1972, Jones: 1974). Whilst acknowledging that diversity, the contradictions and similarities between opinions are not the subject of this thesis. The usage adopted in this discussion is for the purpose of providing contextual background. This allows flexibility in referencing some theoretical considerations of Romanticism that feature in the work of major European Romantic writers and philosophers.

their German precursors, were preoccupied with the search for a differently expressive order of representation. This was in part a response to scientific materialism, which was perceived as reducing the significance of artistic expression to universalising principles. Committed to the ideals of liberal humanism, art was given a functional role which constrained its creation and production. Thus, art was required to observe carefully the complex rules of stylistic decorum which emphasised characteristics that represented widely shared experiences, thoughts, feelings and tastes of the society in general. (Abrams 1985: 26)

The Romantic's challenge to empirical and absolutist, scientific ideas about truth, knowledge and certainty (Wheeler 1993: 27) took the form of a critique of the duality between truth and its representation. Traditionally aesthetic experience had been placed as a secondary activity to, and a passive imitation of, life and truth. By contrast the Romantics treated the aesthetic as a primary, imaginative response to life where theories of language, art and experience could be examined as being fundamental both to the ways in which the work of art was constituted as such, and to the ways in which the spectator perceived it. The work of art was seen as a uniquely constituted symbolic object which, through its strategies and devices, placed the spectator in a position to consider their own interaction and experience of it. It was considered therefore both as a textual product wherein language was perceived of as metaphorical and quality of experience rhetorical, (Wheeler: 1993:) and an expression of the intuitive faculty of the Imagination which had the power to "bring the chaos of sense experience to order according to certain rules, or in certain unchanging forms." (Warnock 1976: 30)

The French Romantic movement was a mixture of different responses to a changing cultural situation in which the French, following recovery from the impact of the Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, and the increasing impact of industrialisation, were trying to create a new world from the ruins of the old. Barzun (1961), Charlton (1984), and Abrams (1985) suggest that the great high point of Romanticism was around 1830. Coupled with dance historical evidence, which identifies the significant contribution that French Romantic writers such as

Heine and Gautier made to the ballet, this supports the dance historical claim that ballets such as <u>Giselle</u> and <u>La Sylphide</u> were representative examples of new developments within both ballet and art.

In the dancing body, the Romantics found an image that reconciles intellect and emotion to become the fullest expression of the work of the Imagination. The image of the dancer, concretely visual, resolves the opposition between inner creativity and outer expression, distinguishing itself as a body that is free from expressible meaning. (Kermode 1986: 72) The dancer's movements, which are perceived as being controlled by the rhythm and the demands of the form, are thus able to produce the intellectual and sensuous appeal of the pure living symbol in a uniquely Romantic way. [2]

In relation to art, the challenge to the objectivising and neutralising principles of science and reason took the form of a critique of the principle of imitation and resulted in a new way of explaining the relationship between works of art and Nature. Tracing this critique mainly through the works of the German Romantics, whilst acknowledging the debt that both the English and the French Romantics had to them, Todorov (1982: 121) argues that Classical thinking on art associates imitation and Beauty by placing Beauty in a hierarchical relation where it is subordinated to, and imitative of, truth. The task of the Classical work of art is to represent the absolute and primary law of Nature which is idealised in the principles of equality and harmony. Thus a valued feature of a work of art was that its elements should exist in natural harmony with each other and in relation to the whole. Furthermore, the ways in which a work of art pleased the mind was to be found uniquely in the apprehension of the relations of unity and proportion that could be observed in the work.

It is not until the development of what comes to be known as the Romantic aesthetic, that the association of these two principles - of imitation and Beauty -

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[2] Kermode (1986: Ch. IV) discusses in detail the Romantic perception of the relationship of dancer to the dance - "the body is the soul" - as an expression of artistic sensibility which unifies in the symbolic use of language, the dichotomy between form and meaning

which govern creativity, is considered more fully. Once the work of art is treated as if it is structured like Nature, then the way in which it is structured gives to it its beauty. Beauty is thus protected as being the value and goal of art which needs no purpose other than itself. This articulation of the beautiful is a critique of the Classical view, which defines Beauty in terms of the pleasure it produces and therefore as usefully having an end other than itself. Considered in this way, Beauty is incomplete and achieves its completion in a combination between the work and the person contemplating it, who can find pleasure in its internal finality.

For the Romantics Beauty must be useless to the extent that it has no purpose outside itself; it is intransitive. Consequently, the art object is beautiful in itself and "the entire purpose of its existence is found in itself." (Todorov 1982: 156) Although, from this perspective the beautiful object is still judged in terms of the relation of parts that make up the object, it is no longer subjected to an imitative demand to produce the appearance of similarity. Instead, it is subjected to the demand of internal coherence which produces "an impression of higher beauty which resides in the great totality of nature." (Todorov 1982: 156). Thus, the interrelation of parts to whole is given in terms of the way in which they, like nature, follow their own internal principle of coherence. That is, not in terms of the ways in which they conform to ideas of harmony and symmetry that are imposed conventionally from outside of the work but, in terms of the way in which they produce the whole as an autonomous totality in which "..the parts and the whole become expressive and significant...(and) the beautiful object...needs no explanation or description.." (Todorov 1982: 159) From this it is possible to say that for the Romantics, internal coherence and intransitivity are necessarily constitutive of Beauty in the work of art.

Todorov demonstrates a shift from the Classical conception of imitation, to the development of the Romantic aesthetic whereby, through the productive role of the artist, who creates as Nature does, imitation was released from the demand to be a mere copy of Nature - which is in itself an imperfect representation of its own ideal model. Romantic artists were concerned to replace it with a different

model which privileges artistic creativity over the produced work. Thus, the relationship that links the artist with the work, and critiques the Classical conception of imitation is conceived as an expressive relationship which stresses the ways in which the work of art resembles Nature. Like Nature, it is a self enclosed, complete totality. By referring to the work of art as an enclosed totality, the Romantics liken its internal structure to the internal structure of nature. In nature, as in art, the relationship of the elements that constitute the work to each other, and to the whole, is perceived to be identical. Consequently it is internal coherence that enables the work of art to be treated as embodying a higher beauty that exists in the totality of nature.

There is a further differentiation to be made between Nature and art in respect of the relation between parts and whole. Moritz and Schelling see the parts of Nature as having divergent purposes; they therefore can be separated and used, subjected to an end, (Bowie 1997; Todorov 1982) whereas in art, the parts exist only in terms of the way in which they enable the perception of the whole. Condillac (Todorov 1982 158) demonstrates this difference when he distinguishes between the movements of walking and dancing. Walking has a functional goal - it is a means of reaching an end and is used in this way. When converted into dancing however, its functional goal disappears and its internal organisation appears. The movements are taking place for themselves, in relation to each other and therefore they acquire an internal organisation that demonstrates a structural coherence in, for example, measure of regularity and irregularity. Effectively, the utilitarian movements of the body are separated from their instrumentality, and danced movement is produced for itself. What emerges from this is the idea that if a work of art depends on something other than itself for coherence then it cannot be beautiful because the beautiful object is defined by the fact that it signifies itself, and in so doing constitutes its own description in the interplay of its parts. Thus the differentiation between walking and dancing provides a means of contrasting that which needs explanation or description, and therefore would be considered imperfect without such explication, and that which signifies itself through the interplay of parts and therefore is both significant and expressive in its totality.

Symbol, Allegory and Nature in Romantic Art

All the characteristics of a work of art become for the Romantics concentrated in the notion of the symbol, which "signifies nothing but itself, contains only itself and is a whole realised in itself." (Todorov 1982: 161) Language that finds justification outside itself, such as an allegorical use of language, is foreign to the beautiful and, by implication, to art. This means that signs which are arbitrary and designate by convention, "designate that of which one is to think in perceiving them." (Todorov 1982: 162) Consequently they are constituted as merely descriptive, implying a distance between signifier and signified that is both unmotivated and detached. As such, they indicate and signify a dependence on something other than themselves and therefore lie within "the limits of the faculty of thinking." (Todorov 1982: 160) This claim is made on the basis that the Romantic work of art allows the artist to express aesthetic ideas which, because they are aesthetic, would express what would normally be inexpressible through rational concepts. The work of art is therefore treated as an unconscious, expressive, organic form of representation whose model is to be found in Nature but which cannot be subjected to the natural order of things. What is implied here is that art is superior to nature because it is more highly organised - Nature can be disordered and asymmetrical - and in the harmonious interplay of its parts brings to fulfilment in a more intense way the principles at work in Nature.

Across all the arts, what is constituted as Beauty according to the Romantics - the principle of internal coherence and self sufficient totality - is identical. This is an important theoretical development in relation to the emergence of dance as an art form in its own right because it produces the grounds whereby what is designated by the body in movement is equivalent to what figurative art designates in drawing, and poetry describes in words. Once the internal organisation of the Romantic work of art becomes a new form of signification which, when combined with intransitivity, allows a differentiation to be made between two types of sign - those that designate by convention and those that designate themselves - the work of art achieves both a value in itself, and a value in the ordered relation of parts to the whole. And as all works that can display these

characteristics are considered beautiful, the consequence for ballet is that the body can speak through its external surfaces and its movements of itself in the sense that it becomes a signifier through the orderly and harmonious interrelation between surface, shape, and movement.

Whilst still being contained in a relation to truth, the truth of internal coherence which finds its model in Nature, the Romantic work asserts a relationship between what is valued as a form of truth in both aesthetic and moral terms. By giving to Beauty a subjective and privatised content, the Romantic work of art offers a means to truth which is clearly differentiated from the more concrete, empirical facticity of positivist science. In the comparison between art and Nature, the Romantics privilege the formative faculty of the artist. This indicates a shift in emphasis which privileges the process of creativity over the end result - the artistic product. Therefore it is the Romantic relationship of expression that links the work and the artist, and this dispenses with the classical relationship of imitation which links the work and the world. From this position a differentiation is made between two types of imitation. What is considered by the Romantics to be the wrong sort of imitation is where language is used indicatively to produce a false sense of the natural in its attempt to reproduce visible forms. The right sort is genetic imitation, which imitates a process of production whereby language signifies like Nature and therefore can be considered innate and natural. Thus what gives art its form is the way in which it expresses the spirit of Nature. In that sense, the language of art is a creative operation of the intellect that can allow the ideas of the soul to appear.

The opposition between the intransitive and transitive use of language allows a differentiation to be made between two concepts of language. The first is artificial, and consequently subjects art to external demands of function, communication, mediation determination etc. The second is of language that is pure, or truthful, guided by the intrinsic beauty of form which is not functional and instrumental, but exists in and of itself as the expression of pure ideas.

Speaking of music, Novalis (Todorov 1982: 174) identifies fugues, sonatas and symphonies as legitimate musical forms that are not the symbol of something else but symbolise themselves. The justification for this, in respect of all three forms, is to be found in the ways in which the disparate elements are harmonized according to laws of counterpoint which bring the whole into equilibrium. This can be related to the difference between Acts One and Two of <u>Giselle</u>. Act One is symbolic of something other than itself. It is used structurally to communicate what is to happen in the rest of the work, the relations between characters, and to identify the basis for comparison between form and matter. This is achieved in the symptomatic use of gestural language which is committed to two types of function. The first is to speak through the movements of the body, to indicate these relations and comparisons. And the second is that gesture - as a non-verbal form of movement - is used to indicate another form of expression - verbal expression. The transitive use of language which is artificial and false, produces a morbid effect which is represented in the fatality of Giselle's death. In Act Two however, gestural movement practically disappears and the danced language is brought together according to the principle of internal finality, producing a dream like system of associations. The Wilis exist according to their own laws which appear to unfold from within and allow them to move freely and autonomously. In their exteriority as Wilis, they show evidence of their hidden essence. In the way in which dance language is used in Act One, the relationship between signifier and signified draws attention to the gap between the sign and its referent, showing that the sign refers to something else - to its verbal referent - and thus it is perceived as being lifeless, and false. Whereas the dance language in Act Two is constituted as infinite, active and alive. The gap between signifier and signified is silenced in the Romantic conception of the sign which is treated as referring to itself as it unites inner self and outer expression. this is because like Nature it signifies and is simultaneously, and thus conceived it reconciles the previously oppositional relationship between form and matter.

A further differentiation in the Romantic theory of art is found in this distinction between different forms of language. An allegorical use of language is transitive in the sense that there is an immediate movement made through the signifying

face of the sign towards what is signified. The assumption here is that language used in this way is without value in itself but is instead, utilitarian and functional. Its value is found in the fact that it is used in the service of something else. In relation to dance, mime is treated in classical ballet as a mute gestural language through which there is a direct passage between the mimed action and the information signified. An example of this in <u>Giselle</u> would be when Berthe, Giselle's mother, warns her not to overexcite herself dancing because she could suffer the fate of the Wilis.[3] To express this idea Berthe

> "..arches her arms above her head and, wreathing one hand above the other, gradually extends and raises them vertically upwards; at the apex of the movement she clenches her fists and crossing her wrist, lowers her arms straight in front of her, then, just as the arms fall vertically downwards, she unclenches her hands and sharply separates them; she then turns sideways to the audience and, placing the backs of her wrists at the base of her spine, lightly flutters her hands." (Beaumont 1988: 89)

As this example demonstrates, mime is codified as having a particular vocabulary, with designated meanings which are determined by convention and therefore can be acquired and learnt. The effect is that dance gestural language can then function as emblematic of verbal language, as a natural language of the body. Yet, it is constituted as being motivated and acquired. As the sign for an idea, it conventionally conforms to what it expresses, but its placing as a natural language of the body allows for this conformity to be treated as if it is an immediate expression of thought - as if the user is "speaking by action." (Condillac in Todorov: 1982)

Based in 18th Century accounts of the development of language which attempted to establish gestural language as the absolute origin of language, gestures and facial movements were considered as natural signs that form a language of action. Gestural language was conceived by A. W. Schlegel (Todorov1982: 228) as natural, in that its signs were found to be in an essential relation with what is

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[3] There are two accounts of the legend of the Wilis. Heine's, which derives from Slavonic tradition and describes the Wilis as young girls who are engaged to be married who die before their wedding day and in so doing are prevented from satisfying their passionate desire to dance. The other is Meyer's

designated. Consequently it was considered to be motivated as it was perceived to be a direct and spontaneous expression of thought. Thought signified itself. However pantomimic language which was a signifying condition of the *ballet d'action,* was constituted by imposing an artificially imposed link between verbal language (which the pantomimic describes) and gestures. In this sense it signifies something other than itself through convention. The differentiation between a natural language of the body and pantomimic language which uses the gestural language of the body to signify, can be likened to the logocentric differentiation between speech and writing. Writing is treated as an external means of expression which, in its transparency, presents language as a series of signs which operate in the absence of the speaker. It operates strategically as a technique that is added to speech, becoming a representation of a representation. Speech within this framework is placed in a direct and natural relationship with meaning and designates the "constant of a presence." (Derrida 1978: 279) Similarly, pantomimic dance language is perceived and experienced as a series of signs that communicate meaning as directly as possible. The signs operate both in the presence of the speaker/dancer as character and in the absence of the speaker - the choreographer - who is presenced in the choreographic idea and action. What is enacted in this seemingly contradictory position is a silencing, or putting to sleep of the natural in order for something to be put in its place. Pantomimic language therefore repeats logocentric relations of contiguity whilst metaphorically substituting one form of language - conventionalised pantomimic language of the body - for another - verbal language. Consequently, in the relations of contiguity and substitution pantomimic language operates as a type of body writing whose figurality has been forgotten.

In the 18th century, gestural language was perceived as the ontological priority of the pantomimic. The significance of this separation between the two forms of language is that first, it provides the basis on which the gestural, as an original almost transparent language of the body, articulates an unproblematic relation between action and thought. And secondly, that the pantomimic is treated as a

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Konversationslexicon (Beaumont 1988: 10) which describes the Wilis as a type of vampire spirit of young girls who have died as a result of being jilted before their wedding day.

substitutive language which, like writing, contains the threat of contamination. It operates strategically within the Western tradition of thinking about language, where speech is privileged as being in natural and direct communication with thought and writing, as an artificial and oblique representation of this process. (Culler 1994: 100) The 18th century quest for the origins of language therefore privileges gestural language, like speech, within the system of *s'entendre parler* - simultaneously hearing/understanding oneself speak. The effect is that spontaneous actions of the body, which are described within the philosophical programme of logocentrism, are presented as being undifferentiated from thought because, like speech, they are constituted as being fully present to their signified.

Focusing on the writings of Aristotle, Derrida (1976: 11) argues that the strategy which places speech and thought in an unmediated relationship is a structural necessity of western metaphysics. Aristotle's discussion of spoken words groups the three phenomena of thought, speech and writing into an essential duality where thought/ speech are treated as if they are one. Spoken words therefore are conceived as symbols of mental experience, and these precede written words which are merely symbols of spoken words. In the 18th century however, gestural language is conceived as the most pure form of presence because it issues, like speech, spontaneously and naturally from the body. Consequently both speech and gestural language are treated as universal languages of the mind which are able to express things naturally through the process of effacement. Within this context, pantomimic language can be constituted as an emanation of gestural language in which its signifiers are conceived as transparent to the signified. It is privileged thus as "a codified echo of human consciousness" (Todorov 1982: 233) whereby the presence of thought can be evidenced unproblematically in the gestures of the human body.

But within the context of the aesthetic doctrine of Romanticism, a shift occurs which relocates the expressive form of pantomime as merely mechanical and lifeless. Because it does not express itself, but depends for its communicative force on an addition that is conventionally imposed (the particulars of gestural language resemble, through conventional usage, spoken language), dance gestural

language gets displaced to become a type of body writing. It undergoes a fall from presence, losing its status as a pure and unmediated form of expression to become a set of signifiers which can contaminate the purity of the relation between speech and thought. Thus the Romantic designation of the grounds on which the symbol is primarily expressive of itself determines the value of dance gestural language differently. It cannot be expressive of itself because the relation between sign and referent is conventionally determined - the particulars of pantomimic language resemble the particulars of spoken language. It is treated thus as language which is in the service of something else and which, by introducing a gap between the inner self and its outer expression, threatens to destroy the ideal of self presence that organises the possibility of an unmediated relation of resemblance between utterance and understanding.

The passage from the particular to the general is an important issue in relation to the differentiation that the Romantic thinkers make in respect of allegory and symbol. Calling on the distinction between motivated and unmotivated signs, Schelling (Todorov 1982: 208) argues that allegory is the signification of ideas through real, concrete images and that what is represented, in the use of dance gestural language for example, signifies something other than itself. Returning to the example of Berthe's mime in the first act of <u>Giselle</u>, it is through the dance gestural language of the body which produces real, concrete images, that there is a signification of ideas - a warning to Giselle of her potential fate. The signifying relation between particulars is based on a view which treats dance gestural language as a natural sign of the body which is in a direct and unmediated relation to thought. However, the body's natural signs, gestures, represent something other than themselves and, in so doing, then mark the difference between particulars, and between particulars and the general. Dance gestural language as a type of pantomime, or dumb play, is codified, and within the conventions that govern its usage as a communicative medium, it cannot signify itself. It must always refer to something other than itself. In this sense, as the language of the body, it becomes the instrument for ideas and in that capacity it cannot itself be the thing designated. As a consequence, the relationship between sign and referent is treated as one of designation.

Goethe (Todorov 1982: 205) argues that allegory is transitive and speaks only to deductive reason and intellection. He bases this view on a description of the relation between sign and referent, in which there is an instantaneous passage through the face of the sign towards the knowledge that is signified. Therefore, the sole function of the sign is to transmit meaning. In contrast, the symbol is constituted as intransitive. It signifies itself and speaks to both intellection and perception. From this he deduces that the symbol is primarily representative of itself, but it has also another secondary meaning, which is that it produces an effect and it is through this effect that it signifies. The process of symbolic signification is therefore treated as indirect, innate and natural, whereas the allegorical process of signification is conventional and acquired, and dependent on the relation between the sign and referent being learned and understood.

Mime and Pantomime in the Romantic Ballet

This provides a further key to understanding the ways in which mime as a codified gestural language of the body can be conceived of as allegorical. Although dance gestural language implies a spontaneous and unmediated relation between thought and its bodily expression, in order for it to be meaningful it is necessary for both dancer and audience member to know that certain gestures stand for certain words, phrases or ideas. Pantomime is the way in which a "dumb show of significant gestures...indicate the intricacies of the plot." (Balanchine & Mason 1978: 801) And as the following examples of gestural language demonstrate, the linguistic meaning of the sign is conventionalised and learnt in order that the spectator can recognise the sense of mimed passages.

> "DANCE: Circle the hands around each other above the head.
> FRIENDS: Clasp hands together on a level with the waist" (Balanchine & Mason 1978: 802)

Lawson (1957: 31) makes the point that all forms of gesture must be selected appropriately from the possible range of movements that the body can accomplish as a way of "expressing a mood or an emotion or describing an action - without resorting to words." The appropriateness of the selection is governed by

certain rules and once these are codified as being particularly meaningful they can give the dance a discipline to direct and place the body according to the demands of the narrative. They then become, in their usage, naturalised into a vocabulary of gestures which allow "natural emotional expression as depicted in the artificial environment of the stage." (Lawson:1957: 31) Within the conventions of classical ballet there is an equivalence in the gestural vocabulary used between the movements of the body and precisely designated words or phrases. Mime is used as a type of language composed of body signals, to make direct and indirect statements that constitute the story telling material of ballets.

"The artist in mime must learn to use his body as if he were playing upon some sensitive musical instrument, in which the several parts combine to make a whole. For the purposes of mime the body may be divided into four parts; the head, the torso, the arms and the legs….that..are linked everlastingly together. (Lawson 1957: 3)

Goethe's writing on the differentiation between the allegorical and symbolic use of language identifies the signifying relation as being in the passage from the particular to the general. In the case of mime, the particular has a value because it provides an example of, and the passage to the general. It evidences speaking in action and in doing so mimics the phonocentric relation between thought and its direct unmediated expression as speech. Thus, gestural movements are an example of the particular which provides a passage to the general - the word which stands in for thought. In the differentiation between mime and dance there is an implied differentiation between movement that is used instrumentally to express the ideas of the person using it, and language which is "the expression of an entire thought" (Todorov 1982: 174) The latter use of language is as a cipher which expresses, in its embodiment, an expression of itself. It is therefore an image of itself which refers directly to itself, whereas the gestural sign has no intrinsic meaning but functions as a transmitter, or a designator, of specific meaning.

When discussing the ways in which both the allegorical and symbolic use of language move from the particular to the general, Goethe formulates the

distinction between concept and idea. The concept lies strictly within the domain of reason and is expressible as a finitude. Therefore, the allegorical product has strictly defined parameters which articulate both its beginning and its end. Meaning in this case is treated as being complete and ended and, consequently, the allegorical use of language is considered to be in a morbid, fatal condition - a lifeless form of expression. In the case of the symbol, however, which by contrast is infinite and articulates in its concreteness the process of becoming, meaning is treated as active and alive. The symbolic image is then treated as a transparency through which, but not in place of which, it is possible to see the general law, or Idea, of which each particular manifestation is an emanation. This is then differentiated from allegorical language which is solely in the service of intelligibility.

The differentiation between allegory, which is transitive and conditioned by reason, and the symbol, which is characterised by its infinite, intransitive, and unmotivated qualities, provides a basis for discussing the creative process. The Romantic conception of the work of art as symbol is original. It refers to a particular way of seeing which marks a differentiation between the 18th century Classical treatment of the work of art, and the Romantic conception of the work which is considered to be analogous not to a predetermined formal order, but to an organism that has an independent life, and energy, of its own. This differentiation is also dependent on a distinction that is made between objects that can be perceived through intellectual proposition and explication, and those that are intuited as products of the imagination. Essentially vital, the Imagination generates and produces a form of its own and is to be contrasted with works of art that are produced within a mechanistic world. Governed by the triumph of Newtonian mathematics, eighteenth century science gave a "..new impetus to the Neoplatonic desire for exactness in the exact knowledge of inexact things" (Stafford:1993:12), transforming the physical into the conceptual through increasing specialisation. The theoretical address that the Romantics made to the proper constitution of the work of art, in their focus on the differentiation between allegory and symbol, articulated a need for a differently expressive

system of representation to account for the experience of the individual within the universalising constraints imposed by systems of rationality.

The rationalisation imposed on the work of art by the concept of mimesis, that is shown in this case in relation to the gestural movement of the body, is dependent on the conventions which link the image with a particular word, or phrase. It is dependent also on a view of meaning which treats language as a simple transparency through which reality or truth, as it exists autonomously in the world, can be reflected. Thus the Romantic enagement with the issue of language articulates a shift in relation to the issue of mimesis. Through the intermediary of resemblance, imitation and order are coupled together transferring the focus of meaning away from the external world to the inner world of the individual. This perspective, whilst still maintaining the illusion of the transparency of language, focuses attention away from universalising appropriations of structure, and moves towards intentionality, as the metaphoric expression of a vision of a different order, in which beauty is found in likeness, and not assimilated to imitation.

Beauty in the work of art is not produced from intellectual properties alone, it is produced in the realm of the Imagination which allows ideas that reside in Nature and the individual to be expressed symbolically in art. Imagination therefore provides the means by which ideas can be expressed and understood. This view of the Imagination, which is characteristically German in its development, (Todorov 1982; Warnock 1976) is identified by three features. It has, first, an inner power to shape or give form to an image. Secondly, it enables the universal or shared idea to instantiate or be accessed in the contemplation of the particulars of the image. It therefore stands for a universal or general thing as well as the particular thing of which it is the form or image. Thirdly, it also has the power to induce deep feelings in its presence - emotion could not have its effect without the presence of the representation of that emotion, but the representation could not be formed as universally significant without the existence of emotion. (Warnock 1976: 80-82). The function of the Imagination is that it enables the particulars of representation and form to be universally significant. This is

particularly important in the case of objects in the real world because the imagination enables them to have a significance that is beyond their particularity but representative of it.

Differentiation and Transcendence in the Structure of <u>Giselle</u>

The Wilis in Act Two of <u>Giselle</u> can be considered from this perspective. Detached from the allegorical demands of narrative in Act One which is dependent on the development of character and individual motivation for its effectiveness, the Wilis characterise in their grouping, patterning and dancing the emanation of an ideal or a truth that participates in a higher order of existence.

Throughout the opening section of Act Two when the Queen has invoked their presence, the Wilis always dance as one ensemble. In this they demonstrate a mutual relation of parts that are harmoniously and regularly arranged. For example, after being summoned by the Queen the Wilis enter the stage (sixteen dancers on either side of it) and following the Queen, who dances a low *arabesque en pointe* before she runs offstage, they also move towards their positions in groups executing a low *arabesque en pointe*. Having taken up their positions they then dance four small reverences in unison as they are joined by the two attendants. (Beaumont 1988: 110) Standing closely together, arms open to second position in a low *ports de bras,* the Wilis look as if they are woven together into one whole.

Another example of the way in which their integration and patterning represents the image of an intimate organicism is when the Wilis, having left the stage whilst the Queen is dancing her solo, reenter it in lines of four from opposite sides of the stage whilst dancing a series of *temps leves en arabesque.* They are then joined by another eight dancers repeating the same series of movements until the whole *corps de ballet* (thirty two dancers) are on stage. The whole ensemble, including the two attendants facing towards the centre, dance eight *temps leves en arabesque* as they cross the stage towards the wing. The *corps de ballet* are the same height, their legs are raised to the same height in *arabesque,* and their arms, which follow the line of the leg, are also at the same height. This

series of movements danced in unison, stressing the repetition of the *temps leves en arabesque,* gives a solidity and a patterning to the group that emphasises in the disposition of limbs, head and body, the way in which all the elements combine to give the impression of an inner finality of form. When they dance the *temps leves arabesque* the fabric in the Wilis' skirts fall in such a way that it gives the impression of a softened form of the isosceles triangle. And subsequently, as they move towards each other there is a moment in the pattern where the two triangles join to give the image of a graduated semicircle.

In this image there is a sense that the geometric principles that dictate the composition of matter have been used to produce a transcendence of the surface of matter to reach a higher order of existence "that lies beyond the incantatory sensory impression." (Stafford 1993: 365) At no time when the Wilis are moving together, repeating their danced sequences - i.e. twice to each side - and dancing in unison, do they express their individuality. This is always subsumed by the ideality of the group, and consequently their patterning, line, and placement in relation to each other dictates their actions. This contrasts with Act One where the motivations, desires, and wishes of the characters are developed with the use of pantomimic dance language. In Act Two the co-ordination between the parts of the body, and the dance bodies to each other, is synchronised to display visually the total line of the body and the group. The impact of using the choreographic devices of repetition and unison is that there is an equality of movement, both in the body and in the body of the *corps de ballet*, that gives to the world of the Wilis - a world that is linked with nature - a balanced and harmonious content. They are imaged as coextensive in matter and form, independent of ethical utility and emblematic in their ordering and patterning. Moreover, they are the form and embodiment of the Romantic conception of Beauty which is represented in the narrative through their resurrection as Wilis, and expressed in the symbolic use of dance language. Therefore, in their representation they express the fluidity and suggestiveness of the symbol whilst maintaining simultaneously a sense of concretion.

In this respect, the differentiation between the two acts of <u>Giselle</u> is of significance. The apparent stability of social order, produced in Act One, is threatened from the outset, first, by the tricks of deception and hypocrisy in the assumption by Albrecht of the persona of the peasant, Loys, and secondly by tragedy, which is expressed at the end of Act One with Giselle's collapse into madness and death. These two events enable the body of Giselle to be transformed. Overwhelmed by grief at the death of Giselle, Albrecht, as himself, enters into the world of the Wilis, which is characterised by its dissolution into strangeness. Here, in his pursuit of Giselle, he is metaphorically turned inside out, as the world of appearance of Act One is replaced by an other-world, which is constituted by a new order of truth. This is located in the figure and patterning of the Wilis, who embody metaphorically the Romantic conception of aesthetic experience. The contrast between the two acts represents a contrast between two different orders of experience and, moving between them both, Albrecht functions as a metaphor for the Romantic artist who is searching for a different order of truth.

There is also a sense in which Albrecht, when he adopts the disguise as Loys and falls in love with Giselle, has access to a differently ordered perception which is both peculiarly observant but undeveloped. It is only in the context of tragedy that he is able to deliberately work over his observations and feelings and thus to recognise their previously sterile and superficial nature. What is being evoked in the story of Giselle and Albrecht is a version of platonic love where the genuine beauty of the outer body is a manifestation of an inner beauty of the soul. The material presence of Giselle attracts Albrecht, as Loys, with its bodily beauty. Yet, this is treated in the context of the narrative, as a mere step on a journey that begins with sensual attraction but leads to the contemplation of a higher essence or ideal. Albrecht's journey represents a Romantic formulation of a new sensibility that is accessed through the faculty of the Imagination and finds its form and embodiment in the other-world of the Wilis. Thus there is, in the contrast between the two acts, a dichotomy between sight and insight. Sight is constituted as seeing or observing, and is subject to all the problems of appearance. Whereas insight, produced by the active working of the Imagination,

is the ability to contemplate the image, to see beyond its materiality to its inner design. The creative Imagination is therefore operating on a conscious and unconscious level simultaneously. Read in this way, the ballet brings together the ideas of Kant, Schelling and Coleridge (Todorov:1982), articulating the ways in which the Imagination can re-create out of the materials first acquired from perception. Thus in the movement from the particular to the universal, it can both extract the essence of the differing phenomena of experience, and transcend it.

For the Romantics, it falls specifically to art to show that there is a unity beneath apparently discordant qualities or positions such as material/spiritual, general/particular, universal/individual. Schelling (Todorov:1982:185) makes this assumption on the basis that ideal works of art and the real world of nature are products of one and the same activity, and that it is the Imagination which provides the means by which a concrete particular thing is able to convey the universal idea in its particulars. Once again, there is a repetition of the idea that the artist creates like Nature, in that he creates a living thing that manifests, like Nature, an inner finality or design. What the faculty of the Imagination allows is the capacity to see, and to express again, enabling objects to be seen as they are, in their true capacity, as symbolic of the inner finality of Nature. It thus becomes the task of the Romantic spirit to aspire to a fusion of contraries, and in so doing to identify the errors of Classicism. Based on the Greek ideal of unison, Classicism produced a version of the world that was based in and constructed by a natural harmony, for example between form and matter. The Romantics, conscious of internal discord, not only recognised this ideal as an impossibility, but gave to the Imagination the unique ability to reconcile what is perceived as contradictory. The basis for this view can be found in the principle of internal coherence which allows what is oppositional - for example, form and content - to be reconciled in the harmonious interplay between parts and the whole, and thus to demonstrate an internal unfolding within the content of the art work which gives to it its form.

The relation between art and Nature is not based on external finality, but on origination. That is to say, the work expresses the essence of Nature in the way in

which it originates. The Romantic image that is produced in the symbolic use of language is therefore determined by the manner in which it originates. In the creation and development of the character of Giselle, a transformation occurs from her location as a material reality to her relocation as the embodiment of an expressive truth. Initially, there is an appeal to the concrete. She loves to dance, and this is what gives her her defining and differentiated identity in her community and also provides the condition of her possibility as a Wili. She is defined as a Wili, by their identity as supernatural spirits - thus she becomes more than natural. Yet she is still attached to, though differentiated from, her material reality. In the nocturnal world of the Wilis, Giselle has no beginning and no end and like them, she does not follow a model other than herself. In this sense her origin is determined in her own material being. The discontinuity of death causes her to relinquish her specificity in the world that she has left behind. But in Act Two she is reincarnated in the form of a more than natural identity who does not differ from her essence but contains the totality of her individual manifestations within herself. The comparative use of dance steps to a different stylistic end, coupled with the development of both plot and narrative enables, in the resurrection of Giselle as the manifestation of Romantic form, the passage towards the transcendental concept of the Idea. As a consequence Albrecht, the Romantic hero in pursuit of the Idea, takes the particulars of the natural object, Giselle, as his starting point. In the process of the relationship between them, he is led to reject a way of seeing that is based in falsehood and deception, and to pursue instead the search for the transcendental manifestation of a divine, or in this case supernatural, principle - the transcendental Idea.

It becomes the aim of the Romantic work to use language as evidence of the proliferation of images of the natural which restore to language its material substantiality whilst simultaneously allowing the work to move towards achieving a symbolic concrete expressivesness. In order for this to occur there has to be a forgetting of a use of language which has been conventionalised in order to communicate an externally imposed set of meanings. The Romantics therefore sought increasingly to topicalise the capacity of the symbol to express the inexpressible by using the symbolic mode, often mixed with other modes, to

provoke a moment away from allegorising determinacies of meaning. The dance movements that distinguish the initial meeting between Albrecht, as Loys and Giselle in Act One and Albrecht, as himself with Giselle in Act Two, demonstrate both mixed modes of expression and the movement away from allegorising determinacies of meaning.

Dance Movement as Imaginative Expression

From the beginning, Act One relies on pantomimic language to express the relationship, which is marked by a dynamic of coming together and moving apart. When Giselle enters the stage from her cottage, in response to Loys knocking, she cannot find him because he has hidden from her. As soon as she enters, she peforms a series of *ballones* with *pas de basque* around the stage, which she interrupts to let the audience know, in a mimed sequence, that she has heard the knocking but is unable as yet to locate her caller. She then runs to take up a position from which to start dancing again. This consists of a small sequence of *ballotes* which she completes with an *attitude en arriere*. This *attitude* is executed precisely, and the position is held momentarily only.

This sequence, where Giselle is called from within, is repeated in a different format in Act Two, when Giselle is summoned from her grave by the Queen of the Wilis who commands her to dance. From the moment Giselle enters, all semblance of her first entrance in Act One has disappeared. She adopts a Romantic stance - body leaning gently forwards, the working leg extended behind with the toe well pointed. Both arms are crossed in front of the body, over the breast, and she is dressed in the same white costume as the Wilis. From the moment that Giselle is called from the grave she appears to be hynotised by the authority of Myrtha. As the Queen walks backwards Giselle follows, when the Queen stops, Giselle stops. When the Queen commands her to take up the Romantic stance and then to dance, Giselle automatically obeys these commands. Once Giselle starts dancing, her movements differ from those used in Act One. She lengthens her romantic pose into a *temps leve en arabesque en tournant* and spins on the spot in this position. Then she performs a series of movements that

include *grand assembles, grand jetes* and *grand jetes en tournant en l'air* completing the sequence in a sustained Romantic *arabesque.*

Ballones, pas de basques, and *ballotes* are categorised as transitory steps in classical ballet. (Lawson 1960: 127-8) These steps have to look light, as if they were moving away from the ground, and where appropriate, travelled. In Act One of Giselle they are used to demonstrate both Giselle's love of dancing and her skill and aptitude for dancing - her musicality, her lightness, her speed. Taking the *ballotte* as evidence of Giselle's dancerly qualities, it is possible to demonstrate control and equilibrium in the transfer of weight from one foot to the other as the body moves through the central line of balance, and rythmicality as the curve of the body moves forwards and backwards in the rocking movements of the step without disturbing its balanced quality.

By contrast, in Act Two a different dynamic and quality of movement is expressed by the use of the Romantic stance and *grand elevation.* The Romantic stance operates as a pose which expresses Giselle's ability to find her identity - to display her presence in the harmony of line - and, in its balance and equilibrium, to show her "natural" placing within the other world of the Wilis. The staccato dynamic of her steps when she is called from the grave serve to lead her, and the audience watching her, into a differently expressively world which is characterised by its organic, continually developing, properly rhythmic, flowing quality.

Grand elevation refers to steps where dancers, in the moment between leaving and returning to the ground, appear to maintain themselves effortlessly in the air whilst travelling through space.The *grand jetes* and *grand assembles* give a sustained quality to Giselle's movements in the combination between lightness, speed and timing and, in the placing and synchronisation of the arms in relation to the legs, they articulate a symmetrical use and placing of the body as it moves through space. The combination of steps, the speed with which they are executed, the distance travelled, all come together in the virtuosity of the performance to show Giselle's proper location in her new environment. For example, the use of

the posed *arabesque en pointe* at the end of this short sequence serves to demonstrate the ease with which Giselle can alter her timing and dynamic in the flow of the dance to find and maintain a moment of equilibrium. Thus she embodies Beauty in the interrelation of the curves and lines of the *arabesque* which produce a harmony and symmetry within the materiality of the body. Giselle's movements compliment and echo the movements of the Wilis to produce visually a world in which the parts and the whole become expressive and significant as a self sufficient totality which operates according to its own principles of internal coherence. In Giselle's entrance in Act Two the audience see the dancer of Act One, visibly becoming the dance. She transcends her materiality to become, like the Wilis, symbolically expressive of the Romantic image in the quality, dynamic, patterning and placing of her moving body in space.

Although mime is used in both acts, the contrast between the way in which it is performed is striking. In Act One, Giselle pauses after her first sequence of *ballones* to tell the audience that she has heard a knocking at her door. Standing still, she points with her right arm to the house, after which she brings both hands to her breast, then leaning to her right slightly, as if listening to her hands, she makes a knocking movement with her left hand on her right. She then opens her arms into a wide and low *ports de bras* in second position whilst shaking her head from side to side. Here there is an attempt to use the movements of the body, particularly the upper body, to give a literal translation of a verbal phrase - "At the door, I heard knocking, where was it coming from?"

In Act Two the mime is incorporated into the dance. When the Queen, Myrtha, wants to call Giselle from her grave she walks to the grave holding some flowers - these could be, according to tradition, lilies and/or myrtle - and lowers herself to the ground beside the grave in a deep *fondu* with her working leg stretched behind. She touches the ground with the flowers and rises slowly into an *arabesque a terre* whilst Giselle simultaneously rises from the grave. (In Vonogradov's production for the Kirov, Giselle rises from a hole in the floor within the grave, so she appears, literally and metaphorically, to be resurrected -

raised from the grave and restored to life.) Using the flowers which she points at Giselle, Myrtha commands Giselle to turn and follow her. To make Giselle take up the Romantic stance, the Queen places her left arm high in the air, with a slight turning and opening of the hand as it reaches its highest position. This is quickly followed by the Queen pointing to the feet of Giselle, at which moment she begins to spin. The attempt to produce a literal translation of the verbal in the gestural has almost disappeared in this Act, and with it the gap between signifier and signified (between movement and its expression) has diminished to the extent that the spontaneous actions of the body are presented symbolically as being undifferentiated from thought.

Through the different representations of the relationship between Giselle and Albrecht in the two acts it is possible to note again the shift in dynamic and quality. In both acts, the first *pas de deux* between them is marked by a tension which prevents close, sustained contact. However, this tension is expressed differently in each act. In Act One, prior to Giselle's entrance, the audience have seen Albrecht adopt his disguise as the peasant Loys. They are privy therefore to a secret which must be unveiled to Giselle in the course of the narrative because, it is this deception, that provides the basis for the development of the relationship between the two lovers. The ballet operates a conventional plot: the movements performed by the characters in the work are the means by which they exhibit their desires, intentions and moral qualities, and the plot pattern is the means by which the events, actions and personalities are ordered and organised in relation to each other. What is clearly represented in the ballet is an intrigue based on deceit, the success of which depends on the gullibility and vulnerability of Giselle. The crisis which is caused by the revelation of the disguise, and which causes a reversal in the fortunes of Albrecht, is Giselle's collapse which culminates in her death. This tragedy brings Act One to a close, and provides the possibility of resolution in Act Two.

The first *pas de deux* between Giselle and Loys in Act One functions to create suspense in the audience about their relationship which is founded on deceit. This is produced in two ways. The first is the way in which the dancing is continually

interrupted by mimed sequences. For example, Loys stands in front of Giselle and, stepping backwards, he points to her with his left hand and then, with right arm outstretched points, to the cottage. Taking some more steps backwards, he opens both arms with palms facing towards the cottage whilst shaking his head. With the gestures of his body he mimes "you, to the cottage, cannot go." Loys lifts Giselle's down turned face, falls backwards, clasping his hands to his breast as if overcome by emotion and, opening arms wide as he walks towards her, he then clasps both hands to his breast again lifts his right arm high in the air with his first two fingers together, and points to the sky, swearing that he will love her and be faithful to her eternally. Giselle picks some daisies, and taking the petals off one by one, she mimes "he loves me/he loves me not. " Faced with the possibility of a negative outcome, Loys picks up the daisy which Giselle has dropped in her distress and shows her, as he kneels at her feet, that all is well, the game has a positive end - he pulls the last petal off, he loves her! Throughout the courtship between them the audience see Giselle giving herself to an ideal that is based on falsehood and, consequently, they are waiting for the incident that will disclose Albrecht's betrayal of her.

In order to show and support the developing relationship between them, there is also a sequence of movements that consist in the couple coming together and moving apart - for example, the tug-o'-war game that they dance as Loys tries to prevent Giselle entering her cottage - until, at the end of this sequence, after a series of *grand jetes* which they both dance, they pause, again momentarily, at the front of the stage before being dramatically interrupted by Hilarion - Loys kneels on one knee as Giselle *developpes* into a high *arabesque en pointe,* leaning into him to support her weight but with her back turned away from him.

In the first act of the ballet, dance gestural language is given an equal if not dominant status as the communicative medium and, despite the danced passages which serve as an illustration and support of the mimed interaction, it is offered unproblematically as a transparent medium that can produce unmediated access to thought. This is despite the fact that gestural and danced images are used to signify concrete ideas - he loves me/not - and verbal phrases such as "you, to your

cottage, cannot go." It is only in the context of the performance of Act Two that the differentiation between the two types of language becomes significant.

Although the first meeting between Giselle and Albrecht in Act Two repeats the tension of coming together and moving apart, the difference in shape, timing and dynamic of the movements used gives to the relationship a different quality of expression. The *pas de deux* begins and ends with Albrecht kneeling at the graveside in a deep reverie. What happens in between is presented as if it is produced in Albrecht's imagination; at one point, after Giselle has appeared and vanished, he touches his head lightly as if to say, "am I dreaming/is this all in my mind?" The choreographic development of the *pas de deux* is dominated by the impalpable quality of Giselle's presence. On both occasions that she enters the stage she takes up the Romantic stance and, as he moves to touch her, she moves away. On the first occasion, he runs to embrace her but she exits the stage; the next occasion of her entry he lifts her briefly - her arms in fifth position and her leg in *retire* - before she exits again. This sequence places Giselle's ethereal nature, both as a Wili and in relation to the materiality of Albrecht's presence. Also, as the contact between the couple develops this sequence can be linked with the sequence where Giselle is commanded to life, and to dance, by Myrtha. What is represented in the links between the two acts is a visual embodiment of an organic sense of becoming. The audience sees Giselle being transformed - through the organic quality, fluid nature, and harmonious lines of her movement - into the embodiment of ethereality, the embodiment of pure spirit or essence, which Albrecht can only apprehend momentarily.

Having pursued the image of Giselle, Albrecht then returns to the graveside and sinks to his knees, head back, whilst reaching to the sky with his outstretched right arm. He completes the movement by placing his head in his hands. The tension in his body between the movement of sinking to the floor and the vertically upstretched arm, communicates a sense of anguish. (At this point in the ballet this moment is compared, but differentiated from, the moment in Act One where he is also longing to see Giselle.) Whilst Albrecht is still kneeling, Giselle appears to him again. This time she performs slowly an *arabesque*

penche. It takes her some 9 seconds to reach the full extension of the movement. This timing suspends the climax of the movement, which it then reaches momentarily before she proceeds with the next movement, and this allows the audience to apprehend visually - as Albrecht will - the unfolding of the image as the curving line of the body is fully extended through the limbs. There is a suggestion, in the contrast between the first and second acts, of the ways in which the Romantic image actively embodies life. In the combination between the extreme purity of outline, which the audience can see in the *arabesque* as it takes shape, and the timing of its performance, the dancer and the dance visually embody both form and meaning. The basis for this differentiation between form and shape is found in the Romantic aesthetic which both seeks to construct, and constructed by, the truth of another order to that of discursive reason. Thus there is a contrast between the shape and positioning of the dancer which would represent mechanical design in a formulaic way, and form as the expression of inner finality. The opposition made by the German Romantics between the symbolic and allegorical use of language, which contrasts the formulaic with the organic in order to distinguish the freedom and creativity of the poetic Imagination, is made explicit in the juxtaposition of the two acts of Giselle. Form is mechanical when it is ordered externally, when the work is made to obey a particular set of rules and conventions. Organic form in contrast, is produced from within the work, appealing to a higher order of existence which is produced from the inner recesses of the artist's mind and is representative of concepts which are structured by the intellect, in the service of creativity - which is in turn in the service of Imagination. This allows a distinction to be made within the work between that which is created according to conventions which are treated by the Romantics as sterile, and that which demonstrates a coherence that can be apprehended in the network of relations between its constituent parts. Within the juxtaposition between the two acts, and in the developmental structures of each of them there is a moral tale which speaks of the truth of the work of art. Differentiated from the sterility and falsity of Act One, yet linked inseparably to it, Act Two is expressive of the truth of organicism where all contradictory and seemingly disparate elements are harmoniously linked together into a coherent totality.

This is achieved by two means. First through the reconciliation of what may appear at first sight to be disparate and unconnected contraries - life and death, madness and beauty, materiality and spirituality. Secondly, in the organisation of Act Two, where all the parts, each individual member of the Wilis whose individuality is represented in the particulars of Giselle, are linked together to form an image of a fluid, suggestive, organic totality. In dance terms this is achieved with a strong use of ground pattern, the use of repetition, and the complete absence of any character development in respect of the individual members of the Wilis, all of which combine to emphasise the symmetry and harmony of the dancers. Added to this, the choreography consists of a "comparatively small number of movements, steps and poses," (Beaumont 1988: 85) which are used in various combinations and sequences. This simplification of the action, when combined with the above, has the effect of producing

"An unusual feature of this second act, probably unique at this period, ..the manner in which the dancing of the *corps de ballet* and soloists is combined to form one whole." (Beaumont 1988: 90)

In the ballet, Giselle transcends her material image as it is offered in Act One, but still maintains an affinity with it. This transcendence is shown in dance terms through a comparison between Giselle's entrance in the first and second acts. The reliance on *attitude* in Act One is developed, extended and sustained in Act Two in the performance of the *arabesque.* In the first act the *attitude* - which circles round the body and shortens the line of the body in the raised back leg which bends at the knee - is used to mark the end of an *enchainment* where it is held precisely, and momentarily, *en pointe.*

By contrast, an *arabesque* is danced in Act Two to mark the end of Giselle's first *enchainment.* In the use of *arabesque* there is visual demonstration of the way in which the symmetry of this movement fills the breadth, depth and height of the dancer's personal square, (Lawson:1960) following the Classical principles of

alignment, placing and balance. [4] This gives the impression of a life force that is moving from within and beyond the materiality of the body that carries Giselle onwards in time as well as in space. In the contrast between *attitude* and *arabesque* it is as if the former provides the condition of possibility of the latter in that the *attitude* in Act One is the preparation for the *arabesque* in Act Two.

The difference in tempo and the difference in movement produces a contrast between the concreteness and the fluidity of the image formed. The *arabesque* preserves the sculptural and fixed quality of the *attitude* whilst simultaneously evoking a sense of organicism and fluidity in the relation between the body and its movements. The requirement of concreteness in the work of art echoes the function of the neoplatonic symbol which, in its outline, expresses to the sense a truth of a higher order. But in the Romantic conception of symbolic language, the appeal to the concrete is detached from a version of form which is rationalised by formal, external and objective principles. What then activates the work is an indwelling power that is likened to the autonomous power of nature in that it is both organised and organising. This allows a distinction to be made between the plenitude of form which is organic, and the empty sterility of shape which is stylised, conventionalised and externally and inappropriately imposed. Within this framework form has a potential symbolic power which is informed and thus perceived, by the act of imagination. The imagination thus has a moral quality which enables the artist and, by extension, the audience to differentiate between improper and proper works of art through imagination - which is legitimated by the Romantics as a properly ordered form of perception.

The use of disguise operates as a means of distinguishing between a corrupt form of perception which leads to a corruption of the natural - the death of Giselle as a spontaneously expressive materiality - and a form of perception which is able to contemplate and apprehend a higher order of existence in which form and matter are reconciled. The opening *pas de deux* as they are situated within the two acts

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[4] The dancer's personal square is "an imaginary square...divided by eight lines radiating from the dancer's central point of balance and each pointing to a corner or to the middle of one side of the square. " (Lawson 1960: 26) It is personal to the dancer in the sense that as each movement is made through space, the square moves too.

of the ballet, enable the audience to perceive the process of transformation - Giselle as character into Giselle who as a member of the Wilis as the essence of spirituality - which leads to the contemplation of a differently expressive dance language as embodied and visually permeated with form.

Having completed the *arabesque penche* by the side of Albrecht's kneeling figure in Act Two, Giselle then moves towards him and dances an *adagio* sequence, consisting of slowly executed, extended *developpes, jetes en tournant* and *arabesques.* She performs this three times as she moves round him. Whilst she is doing this, Albrecht gradually lifts his head at the beginning of the third *developpe* sequence, as if he can feel but not see Giselle. He doesn't look at her, but looks out to the audience, as if he can feel her presence. Then, as she takes the last *arabesque* which lasts longer and is slightly more extended as if she is reaching out to touch him, Albrecht rises. At this point in the *pas de deux* we are reminded of the moving away/ drawing back character of their first meeting in Act One although, as the encounter between them progresses, it is clear that its nature and function have changed. What takes place is an exchange where Albrecht is always in pursuit of Giselle, but when he reaches her and attempts to touch her - he reaches out in a wide *ports de bras* towards her as if to take her in his arms - she moves slowly and discreetly away from him. This sequence is repeated each time he moves towards her. Although each time his touch is more tangible, moving from empty embrace to touching her waist as she *poses* across the stage in front of him and, eventually lifting her in a sustained "swallow" pose high above his head, the contact between them at this point in the ballet is minimal.

In Giselle the narrative of the love story encloses another narrative about the developing sensitivity of Albrecht as he struggles against the constraints of reality. Reality in Act One is embodied in the naturalised relations of domination and subordination that are enacted in the contrast between the movements of the members of the royal hunting party, which are highly conventionalised, bound and contained, and the peasant community, whose movements although conventionalised are freer and less contained. Also the ideals of Enlightenment

society, characterised as a form of reality on which Albrecht will turn his back, are represented in the use of a dance language - the pantomimic. Lastly, there is a version of reality in the dangerous state of transition which is enacted between Giselle and Albrecht; this is a reality that is dominated by disguise and will culminate in the death of the former who is freely expressive and spontaneous. Together they combine to produce an image of a world where convention, constraint, and morbidity dominate. By contrast, the possibility of redemption for Albrecht is provided, in the second act of the ballet, within the constraints an other-world of the Wilis, a world which visually embodies his subjective vision.

In the first act the external world represented consists of two opposites. The first is the world to which Albrecht belongs by birth, which is felt as constraining to his desires. Hence the need for him to disguise himself as a peasant, Loys. The second is the world of Giselle, a rustic community which both attracts him and is seen to nurture him as the narrative develops. The ability to transcend the distinct but related difficulties of the phenomenal world are produced by Giselle. She grounds his sensuous appetite, and her materiality provides the essence of his consciousness in Act One which is resurrected and embodied as form in the second act of the ballet.

There is a sense in which Giselle both describes and visualises the truth of the Romantic vision. The narrative orders and organises events in a palpable world but the differentiation between the two uses of dance language displays for the audience the world which is described. Act Two visually embodies the drama of imagination showing in the formal pattern and organisation of the dancing bodies the expressivity of the symbol. Thus the narrative enacts a rejection of a world which is dominated by the universalising, rationalising constraints of Enlightenment society and which is represented as morbid and deadly, morally and physically. The Enlightenment project is committed to dispelling mysteries in the name of science whereas the project of the Romanticism is to reveal, in the intense vision of subjective experience, the mysteries at the heart of things. This is why the Romantic project necessitates a use of language which is "connotative and symbolic where meanings prevail over denotation and in which, therefore the

mysterious and the magical are appropriately suggested." (Belsey 1986: 119) The effect is that the account of vision is the work of art itself and therefore it constitutes the proof of the validity of vision in the intimations of immortality that the ballet records. This Romantic work generates participation in these intimations in the audience/reader, and thus provides a visual representation of the demand for transcendence and transformation. In the ballet the Romantic vision which brings Albrecht to life - the life of the image - is produced from the remnants of Giselle's death. The work is thus self contained and, in its form, it is emblematic of its own values in that it offers, in the process of its production, the gift of life to its audience.

The Romantics claim to create a living world in the work of art whose model is Nature, but develops from the subjectivity of the artist who creates like Nature does. Therefore it is the subjectivity of the artist, produced by the faculty of Imagination, that endows the phenomenal world with a vitality which issues from a higher order of existence. This view of the creative act combines with a changing view of the muse. In Classical Greece the muse was thought to speak through the artist so that he became a medium of her speech. As such the muse animated artistic ability, and in providing an invocation point for inspiration she legitimated the artist's gift as dependent on a higher power. As a figure of inspiration, the muse is presenced in the aesthetic product by her absence. Thus, to invoke the muse requires her absence whilst simultaneously through the creative act absence is presenced as a form of life-in-death. By contrast, the status of the muse in the eighteenth century was "transferred on to a corporally existent beloved, only now she is dying or already dead." (Bronfen 1992: 365) Thus it behoves the artist to assert their power over the creative inspirer even as they invoke her in an act of appropriation and control.(Bronfen 1992: 364) Consequently the woman chosen to be the muse gives her body and her life to inspire the artist, rather than her breath or inspiration. This is conventionally represented in aesthetic narratives which comment on the exchange between death and life. This is exemplified in Giselle where the mourning artist - Albrecht - is dependent on the absence of the real woman and therefore, in order

that he can access the fecund power of the Imagination, he is condemned to hover between life and death, in the life-in-death world of the Wilis.

Significantly what emerges in this story is the preference for a copy of the real woman. Giselle is the source for creative inspiration and as such she functions as an image of herself as well as an allegory for the mitigated Romantic experience. The material presence of Act One is transformed in the second act of the ballet into a representation of the Romantic image. It is clear that even in this process of transition where she is resurrected and reanimated by Myrthe, she is still under Albrecht's control. Hence the appeal to Myrthe to save Albrecht from the potentially fatal dance of the Wilis. The embodied Romantic image is necessarily dependent on death for its possibility but in <u>Giselle</u> this is enacted, through the redemption of Albrecht, as a triumph.

Albrecht's redemption as a man possessed of a particular organic sensibility which is dependent on a rejection of his past life, is based in a belief in the autonomy of the subject. However the vision of a different order - the search for the beautiful - which excludes Albrecht from his previous existence, is only embodied momentarily. His presence in the world of the Wilis which is conditioned by his growing absorption with the image of Giselle, is dependant on his being able to accept a life that is conditioned both, by an increasing sense of solitude and isolation and, by his constant subjection before the Wilis as he participates in the dance of death. Consequently, his vision, which is dependant on a privileged and sensitive eye which enables him to apprehend in the phenomenal the transcendental, places him in a situation where he is constantly divided from himself. In Act One he is divided from the reality of his aristocratic existence, and his mortal existence with Giselle, and in Act Two Albrecht only has Giselle as long as he can sustain himself in the world of the Wilis. In this sense the ballet expresses the dilemma of Romanticism - the divided and uncertain character of the artist's vision. (Belsey 1986)

What Romanticism is seeking is to re-place in Nature an image of subjectivity which is centred, a subject at one with itself. But in the narrative of <u>Giselle</u> what

is enacted is a search for wholeness which is based on disguise. Albrecht falls in love with an imaginary projection and, in so doing, places to one side the realities of his existence. But the fantasised unity that he sought is also denied to him in Act Two. Having committed himself to the possibility of transcendence and transformation which he seeks in the figure of Giselle, Albrecht is placed in a situation where the unity that he envisions is predicated on absence. Giselle can never be his, and the world to which he has condemned himself will always be estranging, and possibly fatal.

Wellek (1968) and Belsey (1986) have defined European Romanticism as an attempt to reconcile subject and object, to obliterate the object in a subjectivity which expands to incorporate it. In Giselle, Albrecht is the subject present to himself who is differentiated from and permeated with the objects which he both perceives and half creates. The guarantee of this version of presence - the imaginative faculty - inhabits both Nature and the mind and drives both subjects and objects. (Belsey 1986) Act One opens in the unmistakable guise of the Cartesian cogito at its most confident as Albrecht dons the masquerade of disguise. What follows is an overbalance of idealism which, disrupted by Giselle's death, operates as Nature's punishment. Increasingly Albrecht is led into alternations between melancholy and joy in an encounter with Giselle. It is this encounter that destroys the illusion of plenitude whilst simultaneously engendering desire. The independent object - Giselle - gives meaning to subjectivity and inaugurates desire - the desire to possess Giselle and in so doing to access and inhabit the world of the Wilis, "unknowable modes of being which are plural, unnameable, like living, not living...mighty Forms that do not live like living men." (Belsey 1986: 70) Consequently, what returns to threaten the idealised plenitude of desire is the repressed condition of its own being: absence, difference and death.

The story of redemption also has a moral function that is introduced allegorically as a story about another death, the death of a reality which is given the characteristics of mortality, falsehood and finiteness. Embodied as an issue of language in the differentiation between the two acts of the ballet, what is evinced

is a transformation of the need to repeat endlessly empty, sterile conventions into the possibility of being able, through insight and sensibility, to access the products of the Imagination as they are embodied. In Act One this is represented in the extended use of dance gestural language, and in narrative terms, in the form of a carefully qualified betrayal.

In the narrative of the ballet this renewed vision is given as intransitive, unmotivated and representative of an inner finality where spirit and matter combine under their purest and most perfect conditions. The gap between the two acts thus becomes a space where transformation takes place between action and contemplation - Albrecht no longer controls Giselle via his actions; instead he is given the possibility, through his renewed sensibility, of contemplating her image. His sensuous appetite, which dominates the initial stages of their relationship and dictates the order of the action in Act One, is converted into a form of moral discrimination and perception. The faculty of the Imagination is the link which enables this transformation to occur. In Act One the dynamic of coming together and moving apart is given as a flirtatious game, the rules of which are dictated by Albrecht's fascination with Giselle. However, in Act Two, this dynamic takes on a different quality. Here Giselle leads the encounter with her relation to space dominating his. She places herself before him and withdraws from him, stressing the impalpability of her presence and in so doing enables a movement whereby the gap between the sign and its referent is reduced to allow, in the symbolic use of dance movement, the unmediated embodiment of thought as sensuous form. The juxtaposition of narrative content and the different uses of dance language enact both a corruption of the natural and the immanence of transcendental vision. Thus combined, they offer a critique of art that is not subordinated to an end that is imposed externally.

Conclusion: Dance Particulars as Aesthetic Universals

The transformation of the particularities of the love story into an allegorical tale about the Romantic search for aesthetic truth is then complete, and it becomes possible to speak of this transformation in terms of a reconciliation between the different uses of language in the two acts. The work is allegorical in that it

moves from its particulars, from its surface narrative content, to offer an other narrative which is something other than it appears to be. The story of <u>Giselle</u> becomes a story about the Romantic search for truth. But the reconciliation of the particulars is achieved through the order of language. The differentiation between the two acts, and the different use of dance language, of mime and dance, becomes a way of visibly embodying a different order of truth which is produced in the world of the Wilis. Differing totally from the person seeking her, Giselle becomes the general law of which she is an emanation. Her image becomes both meaning and form. Gautier articulates this clearly when discussing Taglioni:

> "..she is not just a dancer, but the dance itself. The name of the muse Terpsichore will inevitably fall into oblivion and be replaced by that of Taglioni. She is as great a genius, using the word to mean a faculty carried to its furthermost limits, as Lord Byron. Her *ronds de jambe* and the undulations of her arms are, by themselves, the equal of a long poem." (Gautier in Beaumont 1984: 1)

As De Man (1984: 3) notes, "the image is essentially a kinetic process." It is in a state of dynamic existence and arises out of the natural and therefore does not follow a model other than itself. The image therefore coincides with its mode of origination. In Act Two of <u>Giselle</u>, the Wilis, personified in the character of Giselle, find their origin in the materiality of their being. This exists on two levels. First, the level of materiality which provides the basis of their resurrection as spirits of jilted girls, and, secondly, in their reincarnation as Wilis which posits a unity between form and content that allows existence and essence to coexist at all times. The image originates in the materiality of the feminine body but, unlike that body which is subject to the discontinuity of death, the Romantic image has a permanence which is carried in the stability of its being. There is a separation being made here between entities that are engendered by consciousness and entities that are natural in the sense that they are patently female in their materiality and thus contain the totality of individual manifestation within their organic, patterned image. Giselle embodies this state because she is at all times identifiable with the Wilis, of which she is a particular manifestation. Yet, she and they operate collectively as a presenced embodiment of a transcendental principle - Beauty. Reincarnated, she becomes in Albrecht's imagination, a

conflation between the material and the spiritual. Thus the character of Giselle produces the possibility by which Albrecht can access a differently ordered, expressive truth.

The different use of steps, movements and gestures between the first and second acts illustrates the process of becoming that is so vital to the apprehension of the symbol. Mime is used in Act One to develop a sense of narrative continuity by introducing and identifying the characters of the ballet and the relationship between them. Dance steps such as *glissades, attitudes, piques, chasses, pas de basques, arabesque piques* and *jetes*, combine to give an earthly but light quality to the movement These serve to demonstrate Giselle's special dancerly qualities, as well as to ground the first act in the naturalised context of a rustic scene in which the peasant community is celebrating the grape harvest.

Giselle's collapse into madness and her subsequent death provide Albrecht with the possibility of redemption. But they also embody symbolically the collapse and death of one form of expressivity in favour of another. In contrast to Act One, Act Two is characterised by its "mystery and natural beauty, it arouses a sense of apprehension as to what dangers may lurk amid its leafy recesses." (Beaumont 1983: 60) . The embodiment of this Romantic image is achieved in the style of movement used: first, the use of pantomimic language virtually disappears; secondly, the movements become larger and the combinations more virtuosic in performance. For example, the *arabesques* are higher and more sustained, the *ronds de jambes* become *grand ronds de jambes,* the *developpes* are full and expressive and the *jetes* become *grand jetes.* As the narrative of the ballet develops, the dance language is differently expressive until, in Act Two, the dance language and the dance image become synonymous, producing an expression of the Romantic image.

Implied in the Romantic view of art and criticism is an evaluation of the faculty of reason which cannot alone to provide the reader with the means to discern the integrity and unity of the work of art. This can only be produced by a combination of faculties - of reason and imagination - for it is only in this form

that a formalistic, rationally perceived mode of organisation can be replaced by the unity of imaginative perception and the unity of intellectual perspective. The creative play of the reader's imagination therefore is seen to be closely identified to the artist's work. The idea that aesthetic unity was an objective, determinable quality that inhered in the work of art is questioned by the Romantics in their focus on the work of art as an indeterminacy of form and content, thereby implying that a work can be experienced as meaningful from a variety of possible perspectives. The symbolic use of language is designed in its juxtapositional placing to entice readers to discover unities and relationships, and in so doing to acknowledge the importance of the organic and living conception of unity which the Romantics thought could prevent a sentimentalising and empty idealising of art.

To discuss the meaning of dance language in these terms is to acknowledge two distinct, but related positions. First, is to treat dance language as providing the possibility of an unmediated access to thought is to posit a view of language which fades before meaning. This occurs in both acts of Giselle, but each act treats this position differently. Act One produces a version of dramatic unity which is predominantly characterised by the interruption of dancing to insert another style of movement - pantomimic gesture. Initially this is accepted, within the conventions of *ballet d'action,* as the appropriate form of dance expression which strengthens the relation between thought and its expression by treating dance gestural language as a natural language of the body. However, in Act Two, the combination of narrative development with the use of a differently expressive symbolic dance language, is used to make a differentiation within the structure of meaning about the constitution of essence or origin. This differentiation is articulated in terms of the imagination, which provides access to a more natural and truthful expression of origin - through the inner experience of creativity. What occurs in Act Two is a re-placing of one form of origin for another during which there has to be a forgetting of a use of language which is committed conventionally to communicating an externally imposed set of meanings. Consequently, although it is possible to speak of a theory of imitation that is replaced by a theory of correspondence, both rely on a hierarchical opposition

which privileges origin as the basis of representation. In this case, the Platonic concept of the idea is replaced with the Romantic concept of nature. Thus, by identifying the symbolic use of language in terms of the manner in which it originates, it becomes the aim of the Romantics to close the gap between the sign and its referent by questioning a use of language which is externally and arbitrarily committed to something other than itself. And the use of pantomimic gesture, which previously claimed its status as a form of speaking in action, is consequently marginalised as a form of language because it displays a lack which can only be made good through the supplemental addition of a linguistic referent, thus drawing attention to the gap of signification.

What becomes problematic in this position is that what is given as expressive of itself is shown to be deeply meaningful. In this paradoxical situation it would appear that although all language can be conceived of as allegorical, for most of the Romantic writers, the language of art is differentiated as a special form of language that can express aesthetic ideas. This is based in Kantian aesthetics which differentiates between language which names, ascertains and evaluates, and the language of art, which allows perception and comprehension to dominate over what can be seen, known and described. Implicit in this view is the idea that art does not deal with intelligible concepts as such, but with aesthetic ideas which are a mysterious form of content because they are characterised as being what language cannot say. As representations of the imagination, aesthetic ideas can express in their opacity a multiplicity of meanings. Therefore, in the symbolic use of language, which exists in and for itself, the signified overflows the signifier. The inner finality of form is apprehended in the secondary aspect of the symbol, its effects, and it is this that leads to the task of interpretation and evaluation. As a consequence, we arrive at a position where all art is generically allegorical, but that Romantic writers differentiate the symbol as a special case of the sign. This is achieved by hierarchically subordinating allegory in the symbol/allegory opposition through applying the principle of intransitivity. Thus implying that art can be allegorical overall, but in its composition it is still possible to differentiate between language that is used in a utilitarian functional capacity to refer to

something other than itself, and language that has its own form of internal coherence which can be visualised as an ongoing organicism.

In this chapter the structural organisation of <u>Giselle</u>, into two acts, which has been articulated historically and conventionally in terms of the differentiation between the two styles of dance language, has provided a basis from which to argue for a serious engagement between <u>Giselle</u> and Romantic theories of art. Todorov's topicalisation of the Romantic differentiation between the symbolic and the allegorical use of language to articulate a crisis of representation has enabled a consideration of the ways in which the differences in style, and the use of dance language engages with differences in content, idea and philosophical standpoint in addressing the issue of meaning in dance.

CHAPTER FOUR

BEACH BIRDS FOR CAMERA

Introduction: <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> and Issues of Dance Language

Practitioners of what was, in the late 1930's and '40's in the USA, called modern dance - Martha Graham, Ruth St Denis, Doris Humphrey - were producing their work and their ideas about dance in the context of an art world that was dominated by realist and naturalist representational practices. (Wood 1993: 9) These choreographers were particularly keen to develop "entirely new vocabularies" (Franko 1995: 27) which privileged form over content and innovation over tradition. However they were working at a time when the USA was trying to address a collapse in its economy that had provoked a slump in the stock market, high unemployment which affected a quarter of the work force, and cut the average wage by 40% between 1929 and 1933. The election of Roosevelt in 1932, committed the Federal government to a series of welfare reforms, amongst which were a series of projects that focused on the arts, such as the Federal Art Project (1935-43), that employed artists on behalf of the state. The aim of the Federal Art Project, Wood (1993) argues, was twofold. First, to counter the dominance of European artists, in respect of nineteenth century academic art and the newly arrived modernist art, from an American perspective. Secondly, to allow American art to "renew itself" as an expression of "community interests and community experience." (Wood 1993: 16) The ideal that underpinned the New Deal Government's welfare reforms for art and community was of a pre-industrial, pre-urban, pre-capitalist past. It was used by the government as an ideological means of allaying anxieties about the role of capitalism in bringing about the depression of the 1930's. It was in this context that artists such as Rothko, Pollock, De Kooning and Martha Graham, whilst becoming increasingly expressionistic in style, produced works that celebrated an organic, authentic Americanised version of pre-industrial culture. (E.g. Graham's <u>American Lyric</u> (1937), <u>American Document</u> (1938), <u>Salem Shore</u> (1943),

Appalachian Spring (1944), Pollock,s, Going West (1934-5), Rothko's, Subway (1936-9), Benton's, City Activities with Subway (America Today) (1930-1).

During the late 1930's and 1940's there was a small but active avant garde based in New York who were increasingly dissociating themselves from the socialist concerns of the New Deal government and moving towards a position that disconnected art from social and political realities. They challenged the drive towards Americanism in art attacking its parochialism and ignorance which they felt denied the development and quality of European modernist art. This challenge became apparent in the way in which modernist art was understood as a resistance or refusal of monopoly capitalist society. Throughout the 1940's a new eclecticism developed in American art which encompassed a diversity of styles from realism to primitivism. Distinguished as a form of political liberalism which stressed the individuality of the artist, critical eclecticism became one way of differentiating American artistic practices, as fundamentally democratic, from German or Russian practices which were seen to be dominated by one individual or group. (Wood 1993: 39) Moreover, the emphasis on the individuality of the artist marked a contrast between the crises of the late 1930's and early 1940's and after, which saw a shift from artists who were committed to the national values of Federal Arts project and were producing work for society's sake, towards a liberal-individualist ideology in art - artists who created freely for their own sake. As a consequence, the idea that art could be produced without reference to politics, ideology or nationalism was fostered and allied to the claim for the autonomy of the avant-garde from capitalist society. This enabled artists to adopt abstraction as a new paradigm of critical value and practice, and to legitimate it as a new contemporary expression of changing contemporary reality. (Wood 1993: 38). As America emerged from the second world war and the defeat of Fascism, it had to confront the possibility of the USSR becoming a major world power that was fundamentally and ideologically anti-capitalist. This period of political and ideological reorganisation of the USA as "the most advanced free nation economically and politically" (Wood 1993: 53) was fuelled by an anti-communist rhetoric committed to the ideals of triumphalist political liberalism. Within the context of these struggles over national identity debates were also

occurring about the future and value of art in Cold war culture. One consequence was the legitimation of Abstract Expressionism as both essentially American whilst being "internationally recognised….. as the authentic inheritor of Parisian inter-war Modernism, and the new embodiment of the avant-garde." (Wood 1993: 53)

These social and cultural changes formed the context in which Cunningham began to dance and choreograph. In the late 1930's he was invited by Graham to dance with her company in New York and during that time he also went to study ballet with the American Ballet School. In 1944 whilst working with the Graham company Cunningham began to work with John Cage. At this point he began to reject "all those ideas about 19th century form being variation, sonata, chaconne, ABA and so on," moving to a view of choreography that was influenced by Cage "who already had ideas about structure which were both clear and also contemporary." (Lesschaeve1985: 40)

In the 1940's and 50's modern dancers and choreographers, and the world of classical ballet, were still dominated by a commitment to representation. Thus the dance language was treated positivistically, as able to produce evidence of intention in the way that the dance work made knowledge and experience about the world visible and describable. For example, Graham, before she moved towards her own version of formalism, was concerned with the "search for subjective form" (Franko 1995: 40) in accordance with her belief that dance was the affirmation of life through movement.(Franko 1995: 56) Jane Dudley was interested in instituting an aesthetic education in the action of social and political revolution. Talking of creating mass dance in the classroom Dudley focused on simple exercises which were designed to have the effect of,

> "achieving a group sense in the class….Think of the possibilities in the walk - marching, creeping, hesitating, rushing forward, being thrown back, the group splitting apart, scattered in all directions, uniting, coming forward, backing away, being thrown down, rising up…All that is important is the movement of the group in space." (Franko 1995: 29)

American modern dance, from Duncan onwards although problematising issues of movement, technique and style, was constrained by the processes of representation which were committed to re-presenting an authenticated version of the origin of movement. Duncan's version of the real, for example, was based on seeking "natural movement...(and)....syntactically natural movement sequences developed from the unconscious." (Franko 1995: 5) Her body became for her a metaphor for imaging nature as it is idealised in the soul. Feeling restrained and confined by the work of Graham and other modern dancers, Cunningham, working with Cage, began to "know the painting world and....the music world " (Lesschaeve 1985: 46), and through his friendships and experiences at Black Mountain College[1] in North Carolina, where he was invited to perform (1948) and later to teach (1952-3), he began to clarify his ideas about what dancing should be.

As Cunningham developed his ideas about movement, space and time he forced dancing to withdraw from its conventional claim to represent reality. He saw the movement of the body as possessing a type of purity which could have an autonomous significance and which could be detached from conceptions of movement which treated it as either an individual expression or as the embodiment of a formulated intention. Committed to "the idea that dancing doesn't need something to support itself....that it is what it is by itself," (Cunningham in Kostelanetz 1992) Cunningham stresses his concern to free dancing from its functional and representational contexts in order to focus attention on the shape and organisation of the body in movement. Consequently, when he started to choreograph in his own style and to dispense with dance's dependence on other forms, the dance critics found themselves struggling to find a critical voice with which to discuss his work.

[1] Black Mountain College shaped a whole movement of modern art in America. At the time that Cunningham went to Black Mountain college Josef Albers who had come from the Bahaus was the director. There Cunningham encountered artists musicians and dancers such as Buckminster Fuller, Issac Rosenfeld, Nataraj Vashi, Charles Olsen, Irving Penn, Elaine and William de Kooning, David Tudor, Clement Greenberg, Agnes de Mille and Robert Rauschenberg. For a history of the arts at Black Mountain College see Harris: 1987)

There is a sense in which Cunningham's exploration of what he considers to be the aesthetic devices of dancing is similar to the Formalist's position in relation to structuring devices of verbal language in literature. Both the Formalists and Cunningham are concerned to identify what is dynamic and active about the medium used - for Cunningham this is the way in which dancing is committed to movement in and through space and time. Both are concerned to also challenge the notion that the work of art is committed to a view of language which subordinates language to causal explanations of representability by treating the sign as being unproblematically identical with its referent . For example, talking about observing the movements of animals in the zoo, Cunningham says that he would return to his studio and,

> "imitate the movements of animals, not to be them, but to appreciate the subtleties in the movement of each.....dancing having to represent something never really interested me." (Kostelanetz 1992)

The aim of this way of working is in part to encourage the audience to look at dance differently, to make them see the structure of the dance language which in turn questions anew notions of received experience. For Cunningham:

> "What the individual; spectator brings to (the) experience...depends on him. I can only think of the dances as pieces, they start there and end over there. ..someone familiar with this kind of work, with things being separate that way, maybe he can't make a continuity out of it. But if you accept it as it is and go along with it as it happens, then...It becomes what it is the moment you are looking at it. It is probably difficult for an ordinary theatre spectator." (Lesschaeve 1985: 172)

Metaphor and Metonymy as Structural Relations of Signification in Dance

Jakobson's structural linguistics enable a way of looking at Cunningham's work which accounts for its constitution as modernist. For Jakobson this would reside in a use of language which operates through internal laws which are appropriate to and reflective of its nature. (Hawkes 1988: 71; Bradbury & McFarlane 1976: 268)) This position provides for art as a special kind of activity that is self generating and self enclosed and is linked (as has been argued in Chapter one) to the Saussurean position which challenges empiricist-idealist ways of

understanding the relation between language and the world. (Belsey 1980: 37) Saussure, theorising language as a system of signs, demonstrated that language is not a neutral message carrying medium, nor a way of naming things that already exist. It is a relation that is naturalised in the "social fixing of the appearance of a relation of equivalence." (Coward & Ellis 1977: 13)

In the context of Cunningham's work, the simultaneous engagement between the arbitrary and conventionalised nature of language can be identified in the way that he seeks self consciously to break with the traditions of dance. The isolation and separation of body parts, the ways in which he uses repetition, unison and canon, his use of multi-directionality all derive meaning from the ways in which dance language had been used prior to his specific conceptualisation of dance technique and choreographed movement. His particular way of defamiliarising dance relies on previous work and traditions in dance and art because it is in relation to these that he is able to reorganise and reappraise his ideas about movement, space and time. Thus he generates, at the level of *parole,* new aspects of movement that challenge conventional and traditional ways of ordering the dance experience.

Jakobson, following Saussure, examined the aesthetic use of language by foregrounding the language of the work of art, "the act of speech itself." (Hawkes 1988: 76) In doing this he integrated the formalists preoccupation with literariness with the larger concerns of structural linguistics. Developing Saussure's principle that language as a system is governed by the relations between the syntagmatic and paradigmatic planes of linguistic performance, Jakobson offered the concepts of polarities and equivalences as a means of identifying the particular character of poetic language and differentiating it from a non poetic use of language. For Saussure, the syntagm is a combination of signs with linear space as a support and, because language unfolds in a successive spoken chain in which each term derives its value from what precedes and succeeds it, signs acquire significance in a system of relations which are ordered in the linear sequence of *langue.* The associative plane produces the possibility of selecting and substituting elements that are united in the same paradigm,

thereby articulating differential relations between elements of the same type. A dance example of the paradigmatic plane would be the way in which the placing of a tilt in a sequence of movement differs from the placing of an *arabesque* or an *attitude* or any other movement that could be substituted for it.

The syntagmatic and the associative dimensions of language are united in the way in which language moves sequentially in time. The syntagmatic plane which is constituted as a linear patterning operates as a form of presence in that meaning is put in place as the situational elements unfold. The paradigmatic plane, by contrast, is marked by absence in the sense that whatever element is located in the signifying chain has a relation to other elements which are linked to it and could be used, but on the occasion of a particular usage are absent. This is what Saussure calls "the inner storehouse of language" (Hawkes 1988: 27) - the range of elements that constitute the language of each speaker. Consequently what is not chosen to appear as an element on the syntagmatic plane helps to define the meaning of what has been chosen.

For example, Cunningham could choose to place the dancing body into a symmetrical organisation of parts in order to produce an image of a balanced, centred and harmoniously organised body. But because he is interested in taking something and stretching it, in "looking at something exactly the way it was and putting it together in ways that perhaps had not been put together before," (Cunningham: 1979) he uses the movements of the body as it moves through space and time to this end. However, the fact that the traditional conception of the dance body, which is idealised as a centred, whole, balanced unity, is not called upon to articulate the Cunningham dancer's movement, serves to help redefine traditional ideas about what constitutes a dance body, and what constitutes the matter of choreography. Working simultaneously with the associative relations that take place within the syntagmatic plane of the work, Cunningham defines differently both the way in which a body moves and its relation to space and time. He achieves this by disaffining directions, body splits and spatial projection, thereby drawing attention to the conventional representation of the dance body by presencing another, differently mobile dancing body. In this context, the actual

performance event forms part of movement's relationship with the whole dance language structure and Cunningham treats dance language as being constituted by a system of differences that issue from the dancing body as sign. Thus the dance work is structured from within whilst transforming existing rules and conventions.

However, it is the quality of changeability that provides the condition for a diachronic approach to language. The arbitrariness of the sign allows for changes in the signifier without changing the function of the sign itself, with the effect that language is constantly evolving. For Saussure, this is fundamentally linked to the phenomenon of analogy, which redistributes the elements of language in such a way that complex signs are constituted by recognisable parts that can be found in other complex signs. Thus, to differentiate between arbitrary and motivated signs allows him to argue that the practice of analogy is both creative and conservative. This perspective can be explored in relation to the Cunningham dance body. As a signifier this body is partly the same as other bodies. It has two arms, two legs, torso and head. It is also linked to other dancing bodies - e.g. the classical or the Romantic dancing body. These analogies draw the Cunningham dancing body into a series of forms, and thus limit the possibility of it undergoing change. Any change in the placing and alignment of the dancing body is thus caused, but also boundarised, by analogy. Therefore a diachronic analysis might look at differences in strength, muscularity, and virtuosity which define the expressive qualities of the dancing body, but which are independent of its ability to express meaning. Whereas a synchronic analysis of the dance body would look at relations between existing conventions that govern the organisation of the dancing body and the production of alternative or new patterns of organisation. In relation to this the Cunningham dance body is produced as a new form because it effects the disappearance of the classical, or contemporary way of moving to produce the appearance of an integrated but differently mobile dance body. As such the way that it moves challenges conventional conceptions of spatiality and temporality.

Changes in the dance body and dancing, and the ways in which these would inevitably engage with older forms of dance movement, can also be looked at throughout an identifiable period. Thus, in accordance with Saussure it is possible to say that changes in the ways in which the dance body is used can alter synchronic phenomena. An example would be the reconstruction of older ballets, such as Nijinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*, (Hodson 1996) using dance bodies trained within the eclecticism of techniques that characterise dance of the late 1990's. The contemporary dance body is more virtuosic, more flexible, and able to perform using a number of different dance styles, unlike the dancers that Nijinsky and Diaghilev would be using at the turn of the century. These dancers would have been trained predominantly in the Imperial Russian tradition of classical ballet and would have, as a result of their training, a different range of movement, a different flexibility and a different engagement with the conventions that articulate the way in which dancing, gesture, mime etc. could be used. The *parole* (in the example of the reconstruction of *Le Sacre du Printemps*) therefore depends on the language system, and that consists necessarily of an interrelation between the synchronic and the diachronic planes of relations.

Whilst accepting Saussure's basic idea of language as a system, Jakobson challenged his formulation of the divergence between the synchronic/diachronic planes by showing that the linearity of the synchronic mode did not just rely on juxtaposition of signs. As a result of his work on aphasia, Jakobson questioned the linearity of the signifier by studying both the ways in which elements combine and the ways in which they compete. Elaborating Saussure's conception of syntagmatic/paradigmatic relations to define metaphor and metonymy as the essential poles around which all systems of signification revolve, Jakobson provided a structural analysis of the means by which the message - the utterance or *parole* - could be valued for its own sake. Arguing that the two axes of paradigmatic and syntagmatic are related to the rhetorical figures of metaphor and metonymy (Hawkes 1988: 77), Jakobson demonstrates that combination creates the context for the selection of signs, whereas context provides for the compatibility of signs for selection.

In Giselle there is a need for the structure of the work and the structuring codes of classical ballet to combine in their contiguous arrangement to report on and transcribe a series of plausible, intelligible events. Thus the conventions of classical technique, the conventions of ballet Romanticism, and the conventions of narrative work together to display for the spectator the world which the ballet describes. As systems of representation they are committed to particular ideologies and structural organisations which work to legitimate a world whose tensions are identified, integrated and harmoniously resolved.

The Romantic engagement with classical ballet was committed to the ideals of classicism which organised the body and its movements according to principles of symmetry, harmony and balance to produce an image of subjectivity as similarly constituted. The cultural forms of eighteenth century bourgeois aesthetics as they emerged in Enlightenment Europe, (Eagleton 1983) produced the classical ideal of the body and its movement as one which appears entirely whole and centred. In the harmonious arrangement of its parts it should demonstrate itself as a poised body that is calm and unconstrained by the world around it, so that

> "the circumscribed forms of the body and its location and movement in space and time are used to play out and then preclude internal tensions and anxieties." (Potts 1994: 145)

In the combination of technique, vocabulary and the narrative patterning and ordering of the elements of the work an ideal world is represented. Peopled by individuals whose geometric and geographical placing demonstrate subjectivities that are rational and autonomous, any tensions that exist between them are played out and resolved. The function of language within this context is to be a neutral, transparent, message carrying medium which offers a correspondential relation between reality and its representation. Consequently choreography, which according to the developments of Romanticism was thought to "organise movement as an absolute "self speaking" material" (Franko:1995:xi), was treated as the language of the dance and recognised as the dance way of privileging the

presence of the artist's intention. Thus the style, vocabulary and principles of classical technique were a means of organising the body and its movements into the form of a organised and organising dance language. Through the patterning of the dancers by means of repetitions of movements and phrases of movement, the temporal and rhythmic structures of the work function to bind together body and movement in the organisational form of narrative. The dancing is thus held as examples of narrative instances that are codified to parallel the duration of the work. Poses - *arabesques, attitudes,* - are used as moments of stillness that allow the audience to produce the narrative as a sequence of temporal, linear and cumulative events. These are connected with steps that are referred to as transitions - *pas de bourrees, glissades, assembles* - to combine as contiguous elements that in their arrangement, embody meaning as a support to the process of narrativization. Whereas the movement parts - the *arabesque, grand jete, rond de jambe* etc. - are selected from a paradigm of co-existent dance movements in order to give meaning to the organisation of the work, and thereby to transform the movement of the dance bodies and their structural organisation into the embodiment of organicism. For example, standing on one leg, in the language of dance, can be an *arabesque, attitude*, tilt etc. This is a part of the whole system of dance, where the selection and the appropriate organisation of standing on one leg, when combined in relations of contiguity with other movements as they unfold to produce the whole, gives to the work a metaphoric force. Movement in dance functions as a symbolic representation - the movements of the body are condensed and displaced to re-present an idea or emotion or philosophy. The choice of the repeated use of a slowly unfolding, fully extended and held *arabesque* in Act Two of <u>Giselle,</u> in contrast with the use of *attitude* and the momentarily held, high *arabesques* in Act one, is an example of the way in which the codified movements of the body are repeated and developed to portray the organicism of romantic image. In this juxtaposition there is a condensation between two types of images which allows a displacement to occur from movement into an idea with the effect that the arrangement of the body and its relation to other dancing bodies provides a visualisation of an image of Romanticism. In this process the movements are no longer movements of the body. As the signifier passes into the signified they are replaced by the referent as

a particular signified reality. Within the system of dance language it is the connection of signifier to signified that enables an elision through which the chain of signification constitutes meaning. (Barthes 1972: 115)

Conventionally, the system of classical ballet operates syntactically to produce in the combinations between poses and transitional steps, a structure that is linear and progressive.

> "Movements flow from beginning to end, and from one to the other dancer with a continuous merging of step into pose and on again, so that the pictorial value of their dance is only appreciated when the onlooker is able....to follow the continuity of the whole pattern." (Lawson 1960: 23)

This complements the structure of beginning, middle and end, which enables the narrative to progress. For example, a movement phrase from Giselle could emphasise the pose, in the form of a sustained, extended *arabesque,* which gives to the audience/reader a place that is framed and structured and which functions as a type of starting point of action. The *arabesque* might then lead into a series of small, linking steps such as small runs, *glissades, pas de bourres, assembles* etc. which culminate in another held pose. These serve both to maintain the continuous flow of movement in a structural form that supports the organisation and development of the narrative, and to lead the eye of the audience/reader positioning them to interpret the elements of the dance work as a meaningful expression of a reality which exists beyond the text. The illusion of language as a message carrying medium, through which the audience/reader can see an unmediated reality/idea/intention, is maintained and this confirms ideologically the audience/reader as an autonomous subject, who is the source of knowledge and meaning about the world. Using the above example the combination, repetition and development of movements in the duration of the ballet - which in this case follows a temporal, linear and progressive structure - functions to fill the empty signifiers with meaning within a process - narrative - which is systematised as meaningful. As a consequence the materiality of the body can be organised and transformed within the system of aesthetics to become being that is meaning-full.

Although Jakobson demonstrates that "combination and contexture are two faces of the same operation" (Jakobson & Halle 1956: 60) which are necessarily related in order to produce meaningful language, he also posits that they are opposed in the sense that, in the context of cultural pattern, style and personality (Bradbury & McFarlane 1976: 483), "an individual exhibits his personal style, his verbal predilections and preferences." (Jakobson 1956: 76-77) Like Saussure, Jakobson shows that an event, or *parole*, is constructed in the interrelation between syntagmatic/paradigmatic processes and therefore it is the way in which, and the extent to which, the individual writer/choreographer uses the relation between the metaphoric and the metonymic that allows Jakobson to formulate a description of the way in which language works.

The representational view of dance treats movement as able simultaneously to both signify itself and what it designates. As discussed in Chapter Three, dance language is representational when treated as if it is constituted in a combination of natural signs which are in an essential relation to what is designated. This allows for the materiality of the body to symbolically express thought itself. Thus, the Romantic engagement with the symbol is based on the assumption that the mind has a logical structure which is thought and that the symbolic mode of expression, which is evaluated positively, is able to enact presence. In this context the extent to which the referent is present in the sign is importantly the indicator of proper meaning. This formulation is based in two different areas. First, the differentiation between the original, natural language of the body and a new form of speaking, the language of action, the pattern for which is originary in the sense that it is based in the natural sounds of "speaking of the first man." (Todorov 1982: 233). And secondly, different ways of looking at the relation between proper meaning and figurative meaning whereby value is given through an appeal to the natural, whilst allowing designation to provide its condition of possibility. The former position argues that the natural is not subjected to the constraints of linearity, it is spontaneous and simultaneous and therefore conforms to what it expresses, and the sign is therefore the signified itself. (Todorov 1982: 235) Whereas the latter position implies the possibility of

abstraction and displacement, and signifies a gap between sign and referent. However, Todorov (1982: 240) offers a means to reconcile this opposition in his discussion of the symbol. He points to the relation between savage language - that depends on the identification of the symbolising processes of the primitive mind as being natural - and original language which depends on the identification of the first natural language of man. Both start with presence and both define their naturalness in terms of a differentiation from the conventional which reduces the relation between language and objects to one of resemblance, whereby language is valued in terms of how accurately it represents the world. Consequently representation and expression are linked synchronically, and dance as a signifying practice inherits a view of language which naturalises the body and its movement as symbolically expressive. The dancing body as a symbol signifies identity whilst giving life to what it designates, therefore it is treated as designating Being naturally and unproblematically. What Todorov shows is that this potential to symbolise can be valued as either a metaphoric relation between image and Being that the Romantics pursued in terms of the symbolic use of language. Or, as a metonymic relation between agent and action which is organised according to the system of representation.

In Beach Birds for Camera (1991) Cunningham engages the relationship between the metaphoric and the metonymic planes to challenge a reading which interprets syntagmatic relations as if they are paradigmatic, as well as disrupting the metonymic continuity of narrative. He uses the process of contiguity to produce a continuous statement of contradiction and disaffinity. The work opens with a sustained close up of arms moving in the television frame. The film is black and white and this contrast is reinforced in the costumes of the dancers whose upper bodies (shoulders and arms) are clothed in black whilst the rest of the body is in white. The sameness of the costumes and the framed close up of the arms moving fluidly like the wings of a bird leads the viewer to consider a metaphorical similarity between the elements of the work and the beach birds of the title. The viewer is then drawn into the perception of similarities - the white and black costume is reminiscent of the colour of gulls; the contrasts between different types of movement - of the bodies and birds; and substitutions - arms for

wings. Consequently, at the beginning of the work the contiguous elements of the work - title, movements, pattern, use of space, costume, camera shots etc., - which in their literal usage denote one kind of thing, combine and condense in their application to another. The production of an image of beach birds is dependent on the momentary and close physical juxtaposition of the subject to which the metaphor is applied, and the carriers of the metaphorical term. So there is a sense that the costume, movement, camera shot, and title appear to combine and condense to organise the body/movement signifiers to become a metaphor for beach birds. But as the work develops the process of combination and displacement cannot be sustained. It is interrupted by a structure which focuses on body, shape and time and this intervenes to disrupt the metaphorical reading. The representational elision between signifier and signified is thus shown to be problematic as the work draws attention to the gap of signification by emphasising the constructed nature of the relation between the elements within the work which produce the concept of metaphorical meaning. Instead of the body, movement, costuming, camera angle and framing combining to produce a system of associated commonplaces that serve as a filter through which the viewer observes the topic or subject of the metaphor, Cunningham uses the signifiers of the work to point continually to the problematics of substituting one set of signifiers for another.

At the beginning of the work, Cunningham plays with the use of contiguity to build metaphorical structures. He sets up a situation whereby the combination of signifiers in the metonymic plane are detached from their denotative capacity to enable the signifier to pass into the signified. But at the point where the signifiers are replaced by the referent to which they refer he disrupts this relation by emphasising the formal movement relations between bodies as they co-exist spatially. Thus the metaphorical reading that is encouraged is interrupted by new relations of contiguity which provide new, at times related, material and this actively prevents all the devices within and across sections of the work being drawn together in meaning.

In the interplay between the metaphoric and the metonymic planes of language Cunningham forces the issue of representation in dance to a different consideration. The temporal, cumulative logic of cause and effect which is fundamentally structural and organisational (e.g. as it is used in <u>Giselle</u>), is dispensed with in Cunningham's work. He is not concerned, in his articulation of his subject matter and ways of rendering that subject matter, to represent experience or ideas with conventions and codes which naturalise the effect of the real. The example from <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> illustrates this point. The work is built on contiguity. The movements of the dancing body are combined within a temporal and spatial framework in a linear manner. What is missing is either the structure of enigma and resolution which would allow the work to be roughly differentiated into units characterising beginning, middle, end, or a conventionalised choreographic structuring device which would enable the work to progress in a sustained and developed way towards a climax. Instead of being used to conform to the rules and conventions which allow the reader to feel familiar with the constituted work, repetition, resemblances, the use of canon and unison, symmetries etc., are used to violate and manipulate the conventional syntax of dance producing ambiguity and strangeness. Thus the components of metaphor are denied their full development and the metonymical texture of a representational text is also denied its culmination. As a consequence, the reader/viewer is placed in a position where they have to re-evaluate the discourse of dancing and its constitutive components.

The difference between the poetic and non-poetic use of language is for Jakobson not to be found in the innate and unique qualities of poetic language. He believes that this differentiation is produced linguistically, and can be identified in linguistic terms. Drawn from his linguistic model of the communication process (which is discussed in detail in Chapter One) Jakobson (1956) argues that communication events take their particular characteristics from the dominance of one linguistic function over others. For example, if the referent is emphasised the utterance is denotative whereas if the pattern and physical representation of the signs of a work are stressed then the aesthetic function is dominant and art

becomes its own subject. (Jakobson1956: 357) Thus the structural relation of the elements of language determines its constitution as an aesthetic message.

Following Saussure's discussion of language, and foreshadowing the work that is developed by Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, Jakobson shows that meaning is dependent on how elements are selected and combined. Looking at the use of shifters - "You," "me," "I," "we," etc. - he shows that these elements of language only become meaningful through contextual placing. For example "I" refers to me, as well as you, depending on who uses it, and therefore shifters indicate the extent to which all meaning is context bound. By formulating context as a fundamental and boundarising characteristic of the nature of language, Jakobson also allows for the art work to be discussed in terms of its relationship with history and society. The codes and conventions that structure the specific distribution of signs that constitute any work and give to it its particular figure, form and style, provide the methodology for an analysis of the formal nature of the aesthetic message. It is in this engagement between the structural constitution of the aesthetic message and the society/historical periods in which it is produced that the effects of a work can be considered.

Thus Jakobson's writing provides a framework from within which to discuss Cunningham's socio-cultural placing as dance modernist, whilst enabling a methodological engagement with its underlying "philosophy" - which is Cunningham's active search to focus himself and his audience on "how movement can operate in a given situation and change totally space...and....time." (Cunningham in Kostelanetz 1992) In other words, Cunningham's work is focused on structural, formal specificities which constitute the dance utterance and thereby foregrounds issues of dance language in a reflexive way. Talking of <u>Winterbranch</u> (1964) Cunningham says,

> "In Sweden they said it was about race riots; in Germany they thought of concentration camps, in London they spoke of bombed cities; in Tokyo they said it was the atom bomb. A lady with us said...it looked like a shipwreck to her....but, everybody was drawing on his own experience, whereas I had

simply made a piece which was involved with *falls,* the idea of bodies falling."
(Lesschaeve 1985: 105)

Jakobson and Cunningham share a conception of the work of art as an intrinsic, self generating, self regulating and self referential system. Both conceive of it as a structure that has its own sense of internal coherence that is not a composite formed of otherwise independent elements. This sense of structure talks of a dynamic interplay between conventions and rules that govern the work to give it structure whilst being simultaneously structuring of it from within. For Cunningham the "subject of dance is dancing itself" (Lesschaeve 1985: 139) and as a consequence of this focus he works with the logic of movement, the limitations of space and rhythmic possibilities as they are dictated by the qualities of the movement. To order the dancing he uses techniques such as chance which define the physical limits within which the continuity of the dancing takes place.

"A sequence of movements for a single dancer was determined by means of chance from the numbered movements in the chart; space, direction, and lengths of time were found in the other charts. At important structural points in the music, the numbers of dancers on stage, exits and entrances, unison or individual movements of dancers were all decided by tossing coins."
(Lesschaeve 1985: 38)

This leaves the work free from the conventional cause and effect relations that organise the continuity of the work and removes any illusions of the work representing an unmediated version of choreographic intention. Thus, the dance work is structured from within whilst transforming existing rules and conventions which traditionally have ordered the danced representation, producing a new form of dance utterance whilst retaining a sense of convention and tradition. Cunningham's use of classical and contemporary technique illustrates this point.

"I thought that in the modern dance, they used the torso, the back a great deal, the legs not so much. In the ballet, on the other hand, they used the legs a great deal, the arms too, in the great Russian School, and the back not so much,.....but I wondered if there were ways to put them together....to go beyond them."(Lesschaeve 1985: 59)

He not only altered the way in which the body is trained to work technically, but made this transition and transformation between and within different techniques the subject of dance. In Torse (1976) he used,

> "the idea of the leg's directions at varying speeds, at varying tempos, in various kinds of phrases; the body changing with or against the legs.....That's what the material of Torse is." (Lesschaeve 1985: 63)

What is striking in Cunningham's work is that the elements within the work conform to a set of intrinsic laws which determine its nature and theirs. Therefore any discussion of structure must acknowledge that the constituent parts of a work have no genuinely independent existence outside the structure in the same form that they have within it. As a consequence, the structure is self regulating because it makes no appeals beyond itself to validate itself. Dancing does not construct its formation of movements in terms of reference to something anterior to the work, instead it (the dancing) is the basis of its own internal and self sufficient rules. Talking of working with John Cage, Cunningham says:

> "what was involved was a macro-microcosmic rhythmic structure in which the large parts were related to the small parts in divisions of time. This was a way of working between the music and the dance that allowed them to be separate,...This use of a time structure allowed us to work separately, Cage not having to be with the dancers except at structural points, and I was free to make the phrases and movements within the phrases vary their speeds and accents without reference to a musical beat...." (Kostelanetz: 1992: 138-9)

What Cunningham does is to introduce a way of working metonymically which challenges the syntactical rules of dance and allows the moving body to generate its own meaning without privileging the act of intention. As Croce (1982: 10) argues, "Dances that are their own subject have been his speciality for thirty years." Connecting with the ideas of indeterminacy, discontinuity and chance action in the music and painting of 1950's America (Croce 1982: 243), Cunningham challenges a view of language which treats it as a message carrying medium. His aim is to enable his audience/reader to look at the signifying elements of the work, not to encourage them to look through the work. Therefore, although Cunningham still uses *arabesques, attitudes,* etc. the pose functions

differently. Because classical ballet requires an ordered, balanced form in which a calm spaciousness of movement animates the dancer" (Lawson 1960: 25) the pose functions in an *enchainement* to give the impression of continuity which progresses both the flow of the movement and the development of character and plot. Whereas in Cunningham's work it functions accidentally. It functions according to a logic of temporality whereby dancers come together at structural moments within the piece, not to support a representational logic but because the logic of temporality has dictated this. So if three dancers come together at one point in a sculptured pose, forming a picture or held image, this is an effect of chance and not intention. Discussing Pictures (1984) Croce writes (1987: 181),

> "...the dancers fall into poses and hold them while the others keep moving...Whether the stopped action has any intelligibility as a pose seems a matter of luck,...and meaning, if any, is purely formal; these aren't images in the poetic sense, and they have no cumulative power."

Talking of the intelligibility of the poses, she is referring to both the classical organisation of the body as a symmetrically and harmoniously ordered whole, and the body in movement, where the pose is used cumulatively to produce and reinforce the logic of representation. As a consequence, the contextual relations that would normally link substitutions together are neglected by the use of techniques of chance, indeterminacy and improvisation which shatter the perception of similarities on which the metaphoric use of language relies.

> "In the first part of Locale (1979) they come out in twos or threes. For each one of those, duet or trio, I had devised with chance means a series of positions for the legs and the arms, among about twenty possibilities; for each person, what their legs did at any given moment, and what their arms did. And I figured out who would be with whom" (Lesschaeve 1985: 197)

So, despite the fact that the audience might read for meaning, Cunningham works to construct the viewer as an active part of the dance text. This means that the logic of classical technique, its intelligibility as Croce calls it, is dispensed with as movements of the body and movement relations within the body are placed together in a way which disrupts the inscription of the subject at its place of intelligibility. Therefore, in order that the work is intelligible, the reader has to

adopt a certain position with regard to the text which is that they must operate the identity between signifier and signified which would enable them to place themselves in an imaginary position of transcendence in relation to this system.

Metonymy as a Structuring Aspect in Cunningham's Choreography

The dance audience is conventionally captured in a relation of watching, a specularity which places them as a homogeneous subject of certainty.

> "…..every pose and step is directed towards….the angle at which it will be seen best from the audience…..the dancer moves within the same space in which he poses, therefore each pose must also appear as a highlight in a series of movements. These…..draw lines over and through the rectangular shape until the….whole stage has apparently been filled in depth, width and height by ordered and balanced dance." (Lawson 1960: 26)

In Cunningham's work, by contrast, dance language is shown as arbitrary and shifting rather than ordered and balanced. The dancers are not identifiable as representationally expressive. They are points that are brought together by the discourses of dance but are denied the coherence that these traditionally offer. They move in and out of groups in a constantly changing series of patterns, rhythms and dynamics but the viewer is unable to establish an evaluative comparison between dancers and groups according to point of view or positions that they express. Within these processes of change, what has previously been the essence of dance, physical presence, is denied its grounding point as any vestige of character or individual identity disappears. Instead, Cunningham's work articulates the production of position and identity in dance language as an issue of shape showing it to be an interweaving of multiple contradictions which disestablishes social positionality in the interplay of signifiers.

In Beach Birds for Camera Cunningham is working with shape inside the body as well as shape in relation to bodies in whole space. The body is organised according to spatial tensions which emphasise a body to space split. Cunningham disaffines the sides of the body, the forward and back movements of the body, and he splits the workings of the upper and lower body. At times these disaffinities occur simultaneously, at other times they occur in isolation or in

different combinations. For example, at one moment in the third section of <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> in the third section of the work, the black dancer takes up an *attitude* at the front of the screen. As he moves into the *attitude*, left leg behind, the arms slowly open into second position and his upper body is parallel with the floor. At this point the viewer recognises elements that constitute a familiar dance pose - the shortened and raised back leg in relation to which the dancer will adjust the body in respect of choreographic design - but its conventional message of symmetry, balance, control is displaced.

From the *attitude* position the dancer begins to move his arms. They move up and down slowly into an open first position followed by a return to second position. This is repeated twice in a symmetrical arrangement. The third time this happens the timing of the right arm is slightly different to that of the left. It is slightly behind the left arm. This leads into a section where the up/down movements of the arms are repeated and then the arms are once again opened out into second position. As the movement starts again, it appears that there will be a repetition of the previous sequence, but after moving the arms into second position the left arm remains out to the side of the body and the right arm moves up and down eight times in smaller movements which take place from the elbow. At this point the camera centres the dancer but produces a view of the body which is cut into below the supporting knee by the bottom of the screen. The right arm is then held out to the side and the left arm begins what appears to be a repetition of the arms moving in succession, but instead they both open out into a held second position. Both arms are then lowered together into an open first position, and the right arm opens out to the side whilst the left arm moves slowly up and down twice. The arms then move back to second position from which they move up and down symmetrically twice. Then the right arm flutters slowly from the wrist, they both flutter slowly, and the right arm moves up and down in larger movements whilst the left is held in an open second position.

Throughout the duration of this sequence, 38 seconds, the level of the body in relation to the floor, and the *attitude* are sustained. Only the arms move. What Cunningham is doing here is playing with the conventional image of the dance

body as an upright body that, in its alignment and placing in space, embodies an image of stability and harmony. His dancer's body, whilst being centred and grounded, is not committed to representing an ideal. The incongruent movement of the arms disaffines one side of the body from the other and disrupts the classical ideal in which

> "the arms and hands must always be alive and synchronise absolutely with the legs and the feet so that they begin together and arrive simultaneously at the finished position." (Lawson 1960: 70)

The familiarity of this positioning, which differentiates parts according to classical principles of composability, is disrupted by the incongruent movement of the arms, the asymmetrical rhythm of the movement of the arms, and in the duration of the sequence. The sequence of movement is not divided into continuous segmented parts which are organised and balanced to produce a whole. For example, there is not a balance between direct and indirect movement, strong and light movements, quick and sustained movements. Instead, the held long shot, the held *attitude*, the returns to second position which have lost their functionality of placing the dancer coherently in their kinesphere, and the wide screen which cuts into the full body image are used, together with the asymmetry and anti-symmetry of movement and rhythm, to prevent a representational development of the relation between signifiers and their signifieds. The dynamic, interconnected whole is differentiated and disaffined by the parts which would conventionally locate and define it as such. Consequently the body, in its corporeal complexity as a dynamic mobility cannot be reduced to the embodiment of rationality. What is interesting in respect of this particular sequence of movement is that body does not dictate shape, rather shape dictates the body. The effect of this reversal is that, as the sequence progresses, the movements of the body and its shape in space require that it is looked at, rather than looked through. And the principles of composition which traditionally are used to produce a harmonics of the body in movement are challenged.

Consequently, in Cunningham's work the use of position is related to the way in which space is used and how it shapes the body and this becomes a structural

device that shapes the dancer/s in space and in time. For example, one way in which he interrupts the classical representation of the body in space is by disrupting the use of focus. How the dancer is facing as they move to their next point in space is not constrained to presenting an image of stability or to presenting a Cartesian version of subjectivity where,

"The head always leads the movement and is always in control. ....(and) the eyes....find the direction to travel. They indicate the height at which to aim a jump and the point at which to maintain in balance in a pose." (Lawson 1960: 30)

The way in which focus and projection are used is very powerful in <u>Beach Birds for the Camera</u>. In the transition from the black and white section to the coloured section of the dance the dancers who perform the duet are in close contact but often they face away from the direction in which they will move. When they do come together the effect is very intimate. The female dancer repeats twice a movement where she leans over the back of the male dancer using her face, and more specifically her cheek, to brush along his shoulders and neck. This again is a weak metaphor because it reminds the audience/reader momentarily of the conventional male/female duet which is often used to speak of a love relationship between the characters. But the idea of using the focus to project onto the partner and to develop the possibility of relation between characters is absent. Projection is used but it is defamiliarised. It does not extend in this example beyond the female dancer's own kinesphere to create a sense of shared space, and thus the impression is that she does not look with the purpose of projection. So although the sustained movement and the limited space between the dancers, which are usually associated with intimacy, are used, in this case they limit the development of projection and prevent a reading of agency and motivation. The disaffinity of spatial projection that is produced in the engagement between projection and focus is used consistently throughout the work. Thus, although the dancer will face the side of the screen with the legs and hips, and in this placing imply forward projection into space, the tilt and curve of the torso towards the opposite diagonal and the differently directed focus reinforce a particular expression of tension which talks more of energy in space than it does of subjective intention.

The Cunningham dancer's body is equally strong in the upper and lower body. Consequently, unless the choreography demands it, the conventional movement in the body between light to strong (torso to legs), is denied. Shortly after the above example in <u>Beach Birds for Camera,</u> a female dancer detaches herself from a group sequence and moves towards the camera. At one point in this process she stands vertically in an open fifth position of the feet, left leg in front, whilst on *releve*. Her arms are in a low second position and her focus is forward. As she steps forward onto her right leg, she swings her upper body in a semicircle to the left, keeping her support, her lower body vertically placed. The swing to the left finishes with her torso tilted and pulled slightly towards her left shoulder, legs vertically directed, her arms in an angular lower second and her gaze following the direction of the placing of the shoulders. This articulation and placing of the body, which is typical of all Cunningham's work, once again disrupts the conventional alignment and placing of the dance body. By disaffining the relationship between body parts, audience attention is drawn to the dynamic complexity of the structural relation between parts, and of parts to the whole.

This sequence ends with the dancer standing in a parallel first position, in a *plie* on her right leg with the left leg lifted into a high *retire*. The torso is curved forward over the legs, gaze downwards, and the arms are in an open first position. The effort flow of the body is contained, but as she lifts the body vertically and steps forward onto the left leg, she then leans her torso backwards, using the high part of the back and holds this position. The effort flow changes momentarily as she lifts her torso and places her leg, but it is prevented from becoming free by the backward tilt. The 'ongoingness' of the movement, the fluid and logical transitions that characterise dance, are disrupted by the bound and contradictory quality of the relation between effort flows, reverse direction and body parts to the whole. The disaffinity that Cunningham is working with here is that of forwards and backwards. The body opens up to move forwards but leans backwards, and in that process it visually embodies a simultaneous counter spatial tension which captures the body in space.

By fragmenting and isolating body parts spatially and temporally, by disrupting the linear progression in the locomotion of weight in space, by producing tensions in the projection of the body in space, and by decentring the body and focus of the movement, Cunningham challenges the way in which dance means. He causes the relationship between signifier and signified to be considered differently by questioning the rules of dance language that enable the unproblematic elision between sign and referent through which the chain of signification installs meaning.

Repetition and Representation

One of the devices by which this is achieved is the use of repetition. In a narrative work, or one that is committed to representing an idea or emotion, repetition functions as a figure of memory which enables a cumulative movement whereby one signifier is substituted for, and governed by, another that is absent. Consequently, the coherence of any work depends on maintaining a balance between the introduction of new information, which marks points of advance, and repetitions of past movements and phrases which provide a connection between past and future. As a structuring device repetiton orders the heterogeneity of the work by identifying and privileging certain movements or sequences of movement such as motifs, or the repeated use of the structure of the *pas de deux*. These are then used to stabilise the progress of meaning as time from the past, represented spatially as movements/motifs etc., is accumulated successively into the present to modify, develop and change it. Within a context that is dictated by the demands of representation, repetition functions as a process whereby one event is registered through another which recodes it, and as such it represents what is remembered but, in the integrative process of repetition, is deferred.

Normatively, narrative is used to produce an economic tightness of structure where elements of form and content are related across the work. This has significance in the structural differentiation between the two acts of Giselle, where action and idea are combined in the linking between unison of movements,

phrases of movements, musical motifs, couplings, structural repetitions, etc. In this work, narrative is used to produce an overarching structure that relates and holds elements of form and content together by mapping out paths of recognition. Whereas Cunningham uses repetition in his choreography to disrupt the idea of a coherent narrative pattern that is sustained in the equilibrium of anaphoric recalls, new information, progression and resolution. He uses repetitions and echoes of previous movements to disperse the similarities that are half-suggested in a work, into a chain of movements, patterns, rhythms etc., that are freed from any representational reference between form and content. Movements, such as the tremulous shaking of one leg that occurs at different moments throughout <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u>, can repeat each other. Instead these movements disrupt a conventional structure that depends on the accumulation and progression of successive repetition to resolve meaning. However, the economy of repetition can be used to disperse the half suggested similarities into a chain of elements that run on the surface of the work. Elements such as the shaking of the leg, the turn away from and return to the partner that are performed in the transition from black and white frame to colour frame, can repeat each other without privileging any process of unification which joins memory with the present to bring and develop new information. Cunningham uses repetition as a means of pointing to and demonstrating past movement, positions, groupings etc., in the present only then to forget them as being significant. So by denying the familiar systematic production of coherence and unity, Cunningham's use of repetition points instead to a lack, or loss of making sense.

Clearly this is an important aspect of the function of repetition as understood by Freud (1961) who argues that the compulsion to repeat is not only linked with pleasurable gratification, it is also used to reduce the anxiety of an original trauma by depotentiating it. He gives the example of dreams and symptoms that repeat something which is not necessarily pleasant through the processes of condensation and displacement. What the act of repetition allows is a different type of engagement with the original trauma by shaping differently the way in which the individual experiences their world. The compulsion to repeat is thus both a positive and negative process. It is simultaneously a way of remembering

past gratifications, and resisting a trauma by deferring or displacing it. Lacan develops this further with reference to the mirror stage. He (1977) argues that at this stage in the individual's development the structuring process of repetition enables a form of identification which is based on an imaginary relation of wholeness between subject and Other "which preferentially orients the way in which the subject apprehends other people." (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973: 196) Lacan posits the relation as imaginary because the child misidentifies itself as an imaginary unity in the eyes of the (m)other, which function like a mirror to reflect an image that denies the child's fragmentation of drives and lack of co-ordination. Consequently, entry into the symbolic order of language which restates this imaginary unity by constituting the subject as presence is shown by Lacan to be fundamentally inhabited by, and repetitive of, a primary lack and division at the heart of subjectivity.

Developing Saussure's and Jakobson's work, Lacan (1977) identifies the linguistic shifter as producing an image of unity and autonomy which repeats the constitution of a full subjectivity that occurs at the mirror stage. Thus, for Lacan, the compulsion to repeat is a necessary condition to sustain the illusion of a fully rounded subjectivity that is formed in the possibility of a unified and thus unmediated relation between the sign and its referent. But he argues that it is language which provides the possibility of the subject being able to constitute themselves as "I " whilst showing that language is meaningful as a system of differences with no positive terms. In his re-reading of Freud, Saussure and Jakobson, Lacan decentres individual consciousness so that it can no longer be seen as the origin of meaning, knowledge and action. The effect of this is to address the spectator, who is conventionally produced as the "I" that masters the scene, as a spectating activity that is constantly being dispersed into the processes of the work.

In relation to Giselle, which is committed to effacing its own existence as text, the reader is invited to confirm the truth of the work as a coherent, non contradictory interpretation of the world in which all tensions are reconciled. The reader then becomes the place where understandings of the world represented are

shared and confirmed. The reader is then able to constitute themselves as a "knowing subject in a world of knowing subjects" (Belsey 1980: 69) whilst simultaneously subjecting themselves before the ideological demands of representation. Within this framework systems of repetition such as the use of musical motif, the *pas de deux*, and structure of entrances and exits, are held together by narrative action which binds them into a structured coherence. These are then used to advance new points of information to produce change, development and ultimately resolution.

But in <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> agency is located in the interplay between movement of the dancers, the movement of the camera and the movement of the film, and it is in this interrelation that the structural functioning of duration, and patterns of repetition, are enclosed. The structures of the work both recognise the way in which meaning is produced and the desire to make meaning; yet at the same time, by demonstrating in the present what is then forgotten, they deny the illusion of presence on which representational meaning depends. The effect is that the spectator is dispersed into the patterns of the work as a subject in process who is confronted by repetitions that are subsumed by the coherence of the narrative and the closed relations between sign and referent. The privileging of signifiers is detached from a representational end, and the dancing body, once the possibility of a narrative reading is evicted, operates as an end and sufficiency in itself. Repetitions in this work are used to defamiliarise the familiar as the relation of movement to space and time becomes its own enclosing project.

The use of the wide screen, for example, introduces a problem of seeing by limiting within the *mise en scene* the way in which the geography and geometry of the dancing bodies is perceived. This produces an out-of-field effect which holds the work as a series of perpetual presents because it denies both filmically and choreographically the repetition and development of significant moments as points that can be organised into an organic, linear chain of meaning. Effectively, this maintains the viewer in a process of formation and reformation as they anticipate, correct and intervene in the dance film.

How Cunningham engages with traditional issues of continuity in <u>Beach Birds</u> <u>for Camera</u> is an issue of both dance conventions and cinematographic conventions. His interest is not to repeat a series of conventions which work towards creating a verisimilitude but rather to treat the idea of continuity as if it was "constantly unpredictable rather than as though you were being led up a path." (Lesschaeve 1985: 133) Classical ballet produces lyricality as a flow of organic continuity which is maintained on a diachronic level in terms of a linear and temporal progression. The dance pose is used conventionally this way. It fixes images, links images, and produces a sense of rhythm in the movement as it progresses from pose to pose. It therefore conveys a sense of continuity whilst producing also a static moment in the flow of danced action. Cunningham uses positions differently. His emphasis is not on moving from one pose to another, but on the relationship between dancing and energy where positions punctuate the dancing whilst "producing the rhythm, canalising the energy and sustain (ing) it." (Lesschaeve 1985: 126) He therefore works with a tension between fixing a position momentarily and undoing that position.

In <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> there is a passage in the colour section where the female dancer leans on a male dancer but the dynamic of movement and tension between the weight of the bodies does not allow that pose to become recognisable as either an aid to narrative - there is none - or as a fixed image that is part of an accumulation of images which are directed towards reinforcing a fixed meaning. The bodily contact between the dancers in this duet is related to the shape that is created by spatial tensions and any progression is arrested within shape rather than projected forward in space in a linear progressive way to develop a relation of significance.

But these are not privileged instants that function in the same way that the pose does in classical ballet because these instants have nothing in common with the poses that take place in the work. Poses in <u>Giselle</u> are held to give full exposure to the position and are taken as moments of actualisation of a transcendent form. Whereas in <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> they become "any-instants-whatsoever"

(Deleuze 1992: 5) among others, as they produce and confront singular points which are actually present in the moving, dancing body and relations between bodies. By abandoning the conventional organisation of movement in space - the traditional structuring of poses and gestures - Cunningham abandons a commitment to express an *a priori*, releasing dancing to become actions that can respond to accidents of the environment, to the distribution of points in space, or the moments of an event. Within this framework, the materiality of the body does not change; but as the movements of the dancing body translate space, there is a qualitative change in the relation of bodies to each other in the shot and in the duration of the whole work. An example of this occurs at the opening of the first coloured section in <u>Beach Birds for Camera,</u> where the movement between shots, the movement between black and white and colour, the movement of the male dancing body as it exits one frame and enters another, and the movements of the female body in that same transition, express changes in energy, changes in relation between the bodies dancing, modifications of space and disturbances of perception. As Cunningham says,

> "What dance needed most was to open up new directions, to explore new possibilities, other than the solution to choreographic problems brought about by classical ballet, beyond the formulae and stereotypes of that tradition." (Lesschaeve 1985: 129-130)

Consequently his aim is not to re-produce a version of what exists, but to show that the nature of dance is to change constantly, to give rise to something new.

Dance Movement and the Movement-Image

As the body continues to move in space and time it constantly expresses both a change in the whole and the state of the whole. The whole in this respect can be defined by relation, not as a property of objects but as a set of relations which changes the movement in space of the dancing bodies as they change their positions.

Deleuze (1992: 19), in respect of the way in which the shot is bounded and used, develops Bergson's (1983: 1991) ideas about the temporality of thought to

differentiate between systems that are closed and thus immobile, and the whole which is characterised as open. The former Deleuze (1992) identifies as including everything that is visible and legible in the framed image. The latter, by contrast, he discusses as the determination of movement which is established within the closed system of the shot as framed image. Deleuze (1994: 19) argues that the shot is movement considered in two ways. First, in the way that characters and elements within the shot modify their relations to each other. These modifications become meaningful in that they affect a change in the duration of the whole. And secondly, movement is determined in the mobile section of the whole whose change in duration it expresses. The shot then functions as the intermediary between the enclosing of the parts within the *mise en scene* of the frame, and the montage of the whole. In formulating the camera shot as acting like a consciousness, Deleuze (1997: 20) identifies it as carrying out divisions and reconciliations within the totality of the shot which articulates the relationship between elements within it. This also occurs in the relation between shots in that editing and montage produce changes in meaning in the context of the whole as these processes fuse with changes in the duration of the film. Both affect the determination of movement in the relation of parts to whole within and between shots, tracing a movement which reunites parts into a whole, and also divides the whole. For example, the shot divides duration into rhythmical units according to the elements which make up its enframed content. The movement between the black and white and colour sections of Beach Birds for Camera is thus produced as a unity of movement and duration.

In this way, movement is decomposed and recomposed. In the case of the former it is decomposed according to the elements between which it plays within the shot, and in the latter case movement is produced in the relation between photograms. These are fixed cinematographically as static images which are projected onto the screen at regular intervals. Separated by black spaces, and produced by the intermittent obstruction of the projector's lens by a rotating shutter, the discontinuous stimulus of light produced gives the impression of continuity and movement. (Aumont 1997: 32) The consequence of this process is that apparent movement cannot easily be differentiated from real movement. As

all images are the perception of images, consequently it is in the movement between decomposition and recomposition that the trace of movement is produced as a representation of dancing bodies. In <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> movement relations are established spatially between the bodies in the frame and within the frame of the body, and between shots in a reframing. But the movement produced is illusionary in that it is costituted in the continual processof decomposition and recomposition. The shot "which is an intermediary between the the whole which changes, and the framed image which has interrelating parts and which constantly converts one into the other" (1992: 22) is what Deleuze (1992) calls the movement image. Gathering together variable elements which act and react on each other the movement image is constituted in two different forms. First, through the mobility of the camera which allows the shot to become mobile itself. Secondly, by *montage,* which is the continuous connection of shots. This allows maximum mobility to be extracted from the dancing bodies with very little camera movement. The spatial and fixed shot, used conventionally, tends to produce a pure movement image. This end was eventually produced by the mobility of the camera in space, or by a *montage* in time of mobile and fixed shots.

The fundamental quality of the movement-image is that it can extract from moving bodies their shared substance - movement. If the camera is fixed the frame is defined from a frontal viewpoint which is that of the spectator in relation to the image. This gives to the shot a uniquely spatial determination that indicates a slice of space - close/up, long shot - at a particular distance from the camera. Movement is then carried by the bodies within the frame. Duration then consists of a mixing up and dislocating parallel slices of space rather than superimposing them. This gives a situation where the image is in movement rather than being a movement image. The movement-image can also extract from movement mobility in the sense that the camera has the capacity to leave the figure and follow its own movement. Deleuze's conception of the movement-image accounts for the process that is happening in the film apparatus - the homogenous abstract movement of the procession of images - extending it into the illusion of movement and mobility.

The shot can describe fixed spatial determination. It can consist of slices of space, such as a tracking shot which would conventionally be considered as a sequence of shots which inherits movement and duration. Or it can be considered as distances in relation to the camera - long shot, close up. Attempting to create precise concepts to identify the unities of movement and duration, Deleuze (1997: 25) says that unity "is an act which includes a multiplicity of passive or acted elements." Unity can then be established in the continuous movement of the camera which defines the shot, whatever changes of angle and perspective. An example is found in Beach Birds for Camera when the male dancer is foregrounded in the fixed shot which produces a temporal perspective; but as the camera moves, it defines the shot by tracking slowly across the scene to produce a variation of viewpoint and a difference in the image.

Unity can also be produced in the continuity of connection between shots. In Beach Birds for Camera this is provided in the transition between black and white and colour. The content of unity is produced both in the juxtaposition of two successive shots and when the camera moves closer to the group of four male dancers that are linked together in a circle formation. This selection and foregrounding of the group would find its explanation conventionally in relation to the narrative, or theme. However, in this case, Cunningham uses the movement of the camera to set up the spectator, to lead them into looking for significance; for example, looking for repetitions as markers with which they can organise their perception and build meaning. He offers, in the combination of shots, a series of presents which defamiliarizes their conventional viewing position. Unity in this case is produced in the continuity of connection, organised according to a modernist logic which functions within the language of the film to defamiliarise the spectator. Unity is also be provided within the long duration shot which includes all slices of space simultaneously. Thus, depth is no longer restricted to the superimposition of self sufficient parallel slices that are transversed by the movement of the body. Instead, it is distributed in the movement, actions and reactions of dancers to each other which are spaced out at different distances within the shot. In this case, it is the relationship between the distant and near

parts that produces unity. This is marked by a process in which the oblique meeting between dancers as they summon each other from one plane to another, acts and reacts on the elements of another plane. Cunningham's use of *mise en scene* allows him to use all areas of space equally without privileging the dancing that is foregrounded over that which is backgrounded.

The possibilities of deep focus and its relationship to movement are explored explicitly by Cunningham in works such as <u>Wesbeth</u> (1974) where no area of space is especially privileged and no dancer is consistently privileged, even although at times dancers in the foreground are produced as much larger than their contemporaries in the background. (Vaughan 1997: 221) By disrupting the conventional use of deep focus Cunningham allows distinctions between different spatial planes to be replaced by passing movement through a series of reframings which are substituted for change of shot, thus giving the illusion of a flow of movement within the shot. This effect is encouraged by the use of the horizontal boundaries of the frame, which disrupts the depth relations of the image. In all of these examples, the unity of the shot is a unity of movement which is caught between two demands: the demand of the whole, whose change it expresses throughout the film, and the demand of the parts, whose displacement within the frame and from one frame to another it determines.

In <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> the filming creates the illusion of a continuous sequence, or whole. The held *mise en scen* shots, the continuity between shots, and the subtle movement of the camera within the shot all encourage this. But the parts within the shots, the movements between the dancers and within their bodies are discontinuous, disseminated and dispersed in a way that discourages a comfortable, linear and progressive reading; as are the breaks between shots, which Deleuze (1997: 28) calls false continuities. He gives Eisenstein's (1977) use of montage as an example of these, which articulates a rupture or discontinuity in the passage of continuity between two sequence shots. Added to this, the parts of the film are fixed shots which in their particulars decompose the movement enacting, as Barthes (1981) argues, a conjunction between death and the referent. It is only through the process of recomposition that the virtual

sequence of movement, which functions as both an imaginary whole, yet marks the lack ((w)hole) which is constitutive of this identity, can be reconstituted and fetishized as self-presence.

Furthermore, Deleuze argues (1992: 22) that the shot produces the movement image. It is a fixed section of the work which frames the relation between the constituent elements within it. But the shot also functions to locate and link what occurs within its frame with the duration of the whole. In this context, what occurs throughout the film is inextricably linked to what occurs within the shot, because the content and organisation of the shot would be in an arbitrary relation to other shots if it did not express a qualitative change across shots and within shots. Thus the idea of the dance film being fundamentally concerned with movement is produced in the relation between shots, as closed systems, and the whole which is open. As a consequence Deleuze (1992: 20) argues that the frame is the intermediary between the *mise en scene* of the dance action, and the *montage* which determines the duration of the whole by means of continuities between shots produced by editing. This allows him to argue that the whole constantly creates itself. The conception of the dance film as producing a movement-image is constituted in two relations: first, the relation between the elements of the shot, the bodies, to the changing whole which the movement expresses in the dimensions, distances and positioning of the bodies, as it endures. And secondly, the relation between *mise en scene* and *montage* Thus, it is the shot, as a mobile section of the film, that produces a temporal perspective in which the constituent elements are related to each other and to the "changing whole which it expresses." (Deleuze 1992: 23)

Paradoxically, the dancing body as we conventionally know it is rendered immobile by technology and then recomposed via that same technology as an image that is visualised as active. Thus, the idea of the dancing body is constituted by either the mobilization of the camera in space or by montage in time. For example, in Beach Birds for Camera when the camera moves in towards the dancers or pans slowly across, them what is happening is a

decomposition of movement into a sequence of shots which then re-composes both movement, and its duration, into a dance image. (Deleuze 1992: 14) So there is a sense in which dance movement, which has claimed for itself a legitimating presence in the collaboration between dance and film, points to absence as its signifying condition. This is because what produces and therefore presupposes dancing as a form of presence is the reproductive technology of film, which limits existence and movement both physically and dynamically.

The frame records everything which is present in the image. To frame the work as a closed system, therefore, is to imply the way in which the enclosed elements are produced and composed. Conventionally, the frame produces the field, which is an imaginary, three dimensional space that incorporates both what can be seen and what extends indefinitely off-screen. There is always implied in the artificial and relative closure of the mode of framing - i.e. the *mise en scene* - an out-of-field (1992:15) which exists elsewhere and adds space to space. But there is another way of considering the out-of-field relation which is that in the succession of images it produces or releases, there emerges another dimension of meaning which is beyond the immediate, implied body/space relations. In the transition between the black and white and colour sections of <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> there is a momentary blank screen. This adds nothing to the above way of considering an existent but absent out-of-field. Instead, it introduces a play of relations which are beyond space, that draw attention to temporality as a significant dimension of the work which can only be apprehended in terms of the whole. In <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> , the frame contains the entrances and exits of the dancers to produce a sense of a world beyond the immediacy of the film frame. This is reinforced by the use of the wide screen which places the viewer in a voyeuristic relation to the act of dancing and denies the full perspectival image. But this framing, which could produce the effect of bonding the two mediums together, operates differently to bring the dancing and the filming into dialogue.

The verticality of the screen, which privileges the upright body of rationality is dissected by the use of the wide screen, and the conventional choreographic

organisation and patterning of dance space is undermined in favour of omni-directionality, which constantly varies angles, directions and co-ordinates. Conventionally, the film frame, and the proscenium arch, organise and produce space as if it were an area dominated by a specific perception of perspective which pre-exists what will occur within it and is governed by the act of looking. This positioning places the viewer as an autonomous subjectivity who is in an authoritative relation to meaning and allows them the illusory perspective of having a mobile, and controlling gaze. This imposes on the performance a limitation which is dictated by a spatial composition of parallels, diagonals and hierarchies which function to give to the dancing image a symmetry and equilibrium. These then function dynamically to link the scene, the characters, the props, music etc.

Cartesian geometry, which identifies the three axes of co-ordinates (Aumont 1997: 22), describes space as three dimensional. In terms of the human body and its position in space, this model formulates the vertical axis as the direction of gravity and is represented in the standing posture; the horizontal axis is constituted by the line of the shoulders parallel to the visual horizon; and lastly, the third axis is depth which is articulated by the body moving forwards and backwards in space. The classical dancer who works within the highly disciplined style of ballet has to use their body to exemplify Cartesian subjectivity.

> "The tail (coccyx) and pelvis must be pulled downwards and the spine upwards from the waist…The pelvis must be balanced over the two legs and held firmly by the so-called 'muscular corset'….The torso from the waist upwards, must be balanced over the pelvis so that the shoulders and hips face the same plane and lie parallel….The legs must be stretched away from the hip joints into the feet, so that the body's weight rests firmly over the three points of balance….The head must be held erect so that the crown is directly over the insteps of the turned-out feet…. No tension should be felt anywhere." (Lawson 1960: 13-14)

For Romantic choreographers, dance movement was used to express symbolically the eternal, intelligible elements of form. One way in which this is reconstituted in movement terms is to actualise, in an order of poses, a synthesis which gives to the space and the movement an order and measure, "arranging things in their

proper place to achieve an ordered and balanced form." (Lawson 1979: 16) There is a regulated transition from one pose to another and these are treated as privileged instants in the overall framework of classical ballet. Thus,

> "..the various poses, properly timed....can help the audience to appreciate the flow of line because they act as do commas and semicolons in a sentence. They draw attention to the dimensions of the pattern woven by dancers as they move within their personal sphere over the stage." (Lawson 1960: 88)

However in Beach Birds for Camera a tension is set up between the verticality of the screen that implies the verticality of the human frame and its placing in the world, and the wide screen which cuts and fragments bodies and movement whilst pointing to, but limiting, the sense of out-of-field. For example, the camera moves from a sustained long shot of the wider group to a close up of a circle of male dancers who are linked together and into and out of which female dancers move. In this editing pattern the distance from which this group is seen is reduced as the camera moves in to show and detail them. The use of close up alerts the audience to identify significant connections and/or relationships between the dancers. But this is prevented and the spectator is held at a distance by the material construction of the collaboration.

Space also muddles its directions and orientations, and the primacy of the vertical axis that conventionally defines the dancing body and the frame is used to create a disjunction between frame, camera and the flux of movement. In this dichotomy the viewing subject is fragmented and unable to recognise and locate themselves in a world that is both knowable and familiar. The effect is that each medium used - set, lighting, sound, movement and film - maintains their autonomy whilst entering into complex intermedial relations that consist of neither subordination nor commensurability.

The frame is also geometrical or physical in another way. In Beach Birds for the Camera Cunningham divides the frame geometrically in the transition from the black and white/colour section. The male dancer exits the frame at the top right hand corner and enters the next frame at the top left hand corner. The transition

between the movement of the male dancer and the movements and repositioning of both this dancer and the female dancer takes place in an unseen out-of-field which refers to what is not seen but which, despite that, is perfectly present. The implication is that space and action go beyond the limits of the frame. This structure of juxtaposition provides a sense of continuity as well as allowing Cunningham to contrast the way in which the previous image offered depth of field in which there is a saturation of object-signs within the frame, and the way in which the following image focuses the duet as a rarefied image. The elements within the frame are of a limited number and identified in the relation between colour, set and their identity as human bodies. This contrast expresses a transformation in the bodies dancing by introducing modifications and change whilst expressing a change in the whole. The contrasting use of *mise en scene* that is expressed in the combination between black and white depth of field and the brightly lit, full blueness of the colour set, which details the black and white in the dancer's costumes and makes the duet appear closer to the audience/reader, has two functions. One is to encourage the illusion of dance caught in the act of performance where the sustained and careful transition between shots, and from group to duet, function to bind time by emphasising the interrelation of action. The second function is that Cunningham and Caplan limit the depth of field by the use of the wide screen and by the interpositioning of the dancers within the shot. This has the effect of both concealing part of the surface of the image and confusing the conventional spatial relations that organise and pattern the frame of film and dance.

In Giselle space is organised to privilege the premier dancers and to produce, in the spatial patterning of the work, an expression of subjectivity that is both authoritative and familiar. In conventional film representations, the compositional relation of foreground to background in the shot, and bottom to top of the shot, are used in similar ways. However, Cunningham and Caplan subvert these hierarchies. They hold the duration of screen time in time with the action of dancing, to create the illusion of catching dance in the act of performance. The transition from black and white to colour, for example, marks both a closing and opening out from the larger group onto a different elemental relation and

patterning in the form of the duet. But, simultaneously, it is film that closes each section into a unity of time. It is the patterning between shots which produces the idea of continuity. The repetition and preservation of depths of field produces, in the relations, positionings and the dynamic engagement within and between the dancing bodies, the effect of movement which prevents the fixing of the gaze in a hierarchical set of relations. This effects a deterritorialisation of the dancing image which allows the eye of the audience to rove freely over what Cunningham refers to as "a field." (Lesschaeve 1985: 173)

The constitution of <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> as a dance film is achieved both in the relation of *montage* between shots, which changes the whole whilst progressively expressing the whole, and in the *mise en scene* which produces a relation between the parts. The *mise en scene* takes movements of the body and movement between dancers and treats them as discontinuities which are organised within the frame, whilst simultaneously treating space and time as discontinuities which are similarly organised. In <u>Beach Birds for Camera,</u> depth of field is used to provide a sense of three dimensionality in the frame because it enables all slices of space to be simultaneously involved in the image which the moving body transverses. Depth of field is then used as a means of establishing the interrelationships between the moving bodies in which the relation between near and distant parts creates unity. By contrast, *montage* operates as the selection and co-ordination of shots which enter into new connections and liaisons through their combinations. Deleuze (1992: 29) argues that montage is the process by which the movement-image releases the image of time. This can take the form of a totalising and universal concept of time where time is treated as a succession of equidistant units that can be unified within a view of temporality which locates the relation between past, present and future as inevitable and determining. Such a view would treat the relationship between the black and white and colour sections of <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> as an expression of the chronological development in Cunningham's work between the performance of <u>Beach Birds</u> (1992) for the stage and its later development for the camera. Thus, the dance film collaboration would be treated as a means of appropriating dance as a filmed performance.

However, to conceive of *montage* as a means whereby the relation between the parts is produced by differentiation and division which is motivated internally and united in this process, allows the first instant to pass into the second whilst giving to the second a new power. This then produces the transition from black and white to colour as quantitative - it moves from a held *mise en scene* long shot to a clarified, and detailed *mise en scene* of a duet - and dynamic, in that the transition between shots enables the re-composition of movement and time. What the viewer is looking for in this articulation of shots is an organic link between two instants which would enable the first instant - the previous black and white shot - to pass into the second - the colour shot - whilst giving to the black and white shot a new power. What actually happens is that the act of cutting does mark a differentiated and privileged instant which relates to the previous term of the combination. But instead of using this organically to link instants to each other in a cumulative relation, and in so doing to enable the viewer to read the work as familiar, Cunningham and Caplan make collaboration a reflexive display by creating within it a dialectic about movement and time as it has conventionally been thought in the context of the two mediums.

The *mise en scene* allows the dancing bodies to articulate a configuration of parts which combine and, in their combination, transform space according to the relationships through which they pass - relations of repetition, alternation, unison, periodical return etc. But the use of *montage* disaffines the representational relation between form and content by setting up within the dialectic of shots a rhythm of continuity which is disrupted within the image by a series of body and movement disaffinities. Thus the whole, which raises the movements of the dancing body to a totalising logic which allows it to be apprehended for its own sake, becomes an expression which exists in the parts and causes the organisation of the parts. This, in turn, produces an anti-intentionalistic statement where the gap within the process of signification, which is evidenced visually as interval and instant, takes on meaning.

Jakobson's stress on the interrelationship between the metaphoric and the metonymic planes of language can be further developed in this context. The previous differentiation made between the mobility of the camera and the succession and selection of shots necessarily implies an insertion of cinematographic devices into the diachronic choreographic plane in the relations of the moving body in space. This interplay produces the illusion of presence - the presence of movement and temporality - as the condition of possibility of the dance/film collaboration. But the self consciousness of the collaboration makes significant the technological devices that are responsible for the decomposition and re-composition of movement. As a consequence, the constitution of movement, space and time as essential conditions of dance are shown to be produced within a systematic play of differences.

Conclusion: The Use of Movement, Space and Time as a Process of Defamiliarisation

As has already been noted, what Cunningham does with privileged instants is to replace them with a mechanical, structured succession of instants. The body then acts as a means of translating the division of space. Thus the dancing, and the use of the film frame in conjunction with the camera movement, offers the description of space which is always in the process of being formed and dissolved through the movement of lines and points taken at "any-instant-whatsoever." To some extent, Cunningham is playing with traditional ideas of temporality which organise movement through an ordering of poses to describe the figure in a unique moment, which are transformed in the process of passing from one to the other. The conventional use of interpositioning, which produces a juxtaposition between the foreground and the ground of the dance image, enables the audience/reader to judge the relative distance between dancers and objects yet prevents, in the choreography, a hierarchical interpretation of the image. The film image is produced by monocular geometry, whereas the choreographed image is an agglomeration of separate but related foci. The camera operates technically to give the impression of continuity as images are organised and juxtaposed, as well as giving the impression of movement within the image. These together give the illusion of real movement as the dancing body is captured in a succession of still

images. In the tension between movement and stasis, Cunningham plays with the viewing subject. His choreography, which disrupts the conventional notion of regularity in the sequence of fixation points, prevents a systematic reading of the dance work as a metonymically ordered diachrony. These processes produce what the Formalists refer to as *ostranemie*. (Hawkes 1985: 62) They encourage a creative de-formation of the usual to produce new ways of seeing. Thus the interplay within the frame, the juxtaposition between frames, and the choreographed surface of the image, provide an interplay of information which produces a new totality in the intermedial language of the dance film. As a consequence, the dissemination and recomposition of the dance into a filmed image manifests rupture and absence as a means of disrupting an organic model of correspondence which relies on conventional assumptions of harmony, linearity, unity and closure. And the relationship between form and content is used to intervene in and change familiar ways of seeing.

In the relation between dance and film there is a sense that there is always an implied out-of-field besides the out-of-field that the formal devices of the work specify. Although operating as a closed system, the dance/film collaboration is never finally closed. It always refers to, and is connected to other systems, and in that sense it operates as a part within the whole storehouse of dance/film language which allows this particular expression to be reintegrated within a whole. The imaginary out-of-field is therefore present as absence in the concrete expression, and thus ceases to be boundarised and formalised as out-of-field within the order of the work. This raises an interesting challenge to Cunningham's work which claims to produce a form of presence which is dominated by the natural limitations and energy of the body as it moves through space in time. The concept of out-of-field challenges presence as a type of authenticating origin because it disturbs and subsists alongside this version of presence thereby undermining the authority of its claim.

Paradoxically what is truly invisible in <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> is the presence of movement. This is recomposed in the technology of film - in the editing between shots which the audience are unable to see - and as a consequence what is

produced in the collaboration between the two mediums is the illusion of movement. It is this movement of shots that produces a whole which changes. Thus the idea that this collaboration has a relation of resemblance to the original work which Cunningham made for performance, to which he refers in his introduction to <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u>, is problematic. Modified by the filming, which both turns it into an immobility and re-produces the illusion of movement, the dancing as an absolute is transformed into a relativity. Thus, there is a turning of movement inside out as Cunningham's choreography is divided, decomposed and broken by a descriptive geometry of filming, which submits the materiality and the movements of the dancing bodies to a process of filmic de-realisation.

The ways in which Cunningham addresses relations of space, time and movement, disrupts two conceptions of dance language. The first is that meaning is pre-given, that it exists as a transcendent signified which it becomes the task of dance language to transmit, or reveal. The second is the idea that the choreographer is the source of meaning about a work and that the chain of signification effaces itself before choreographic thought. In both cases language is treated as a neutralised message carrying medium, a vehicle for a transcendent signified.

Jakobson's structural linguistics, which identifies metaphor and metonymy as the two axes of linguistic operation, provides a methodological framework that attends to the ways in which relations of sign and meaning, which are treated as stable and fixed in a choreography that is organised by the structuring code of narrative, are displaced and redistributed as constitutive of meaning. Jakobson's ideas draw attention to two different but related ideas. The first emphasises the way in which the choreographer/artist deals with the interaction between the system of language and its usage. Drawing on the work of the Formalists, he demonstrates that the work has to be considered in terms other than as a sum of its artistic devices. Jakobson demonstrates that it is the competitive interaction within the hierarchy of these linguistic devices that expresses a interaction between diachrony and synchrony. "In other words, continual shifts in the systems of artistic values imply continual shifts in the evaluation of different

phenomena of art." (Newton 1988: 29) In this respect shifts or changes in method and philosophy, such as those that Cunningham articulates, are not treated reductively as one aspect of a chronological, organic chain of dance historical developments. They are experienced as synchronic phenomena of artistic value, demonstrating a simultaneous engagement with, as well as a breaking away from, conventional ways of thinking about dance language. For example, Cunningham refers to, and then ruptures the conventional use of metaphor in <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u>. By abandoning the idea of language as a simple message carrying meaning, and emphasising metonymic relations between elements, he stresses the formative role of the signifier in the production of meaning. It has been argued, thus, that Jakobson's work provides a methodological framework to situate Cunningham's concern with form, and to describe the expression of that concern in terms that address the productive function of the material chain of signification.

In this chapter also, Deleuze's ideas about film have been developed to provide a framework for considering the collaboration between dance and film. Deleuze (1992) argues, like Saussure and Jakobson, that language is characterised by an interplay between its syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes. Thus, although the choreography privileges the metonymic relations of combination, the film image is still committed to a version of organicism in which image, world, and spectator are united in formal ideal. From this perspective dance movement is constituted by filmic techniques of signification as a process of actions and reactions that unfold to produce the stability of dance as moving reality. The choreography for <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> fetishises movement-space relationships as form. Consequently, time is subordinated to the representation of movement which derives from the actions and reactions of the performing figure. However, Cunningham would argue that he attempts, through the use of aleatory procedures, to disrupt a linear progressive notion of time and space in order to produce a change in the way that space is perceived. In other words, space becomes a field of possibilities where referential anchoring is disrupted. Consequently, when he argues that dancing describes itself, he is attempting to

disrupt a schema that dictates an ideal image of the ways in which space and time have been thought about conventionally.

However, the filming of <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> is governed by an imagined relationship between time and space, whereby time is subordinated to the universality of action as the dancing figure is framed and edited to produce a continuous linear unfolding of parts into whole. For example, the movement within and between shots, where clear spatial and temporal links are created and maintained throughout the duration of the film, actively encourages a reading which produces an indirect image of time. Therefore, although the stress in the *mise en scene* is still on metonymic and contiguous linkage as opposed to metaphoric displacement and substitution, time is spatialised both by the content of the shot - the movement of the dancing bodies - and the movement between shots. For example, the transition from wider group to small group of dancers is an organisation of the framed shot which produces a common standard of measurement to the image between shots. The movement from long shot to medium shot is a movement of parts that do not have a common denominator of distance or pattern. This could produce a deterritorialisation of the image. But, once the shot is framed and organised from a point of view, the relation between the elements within the shot, and the relation between shots are both patterned to enable the reader of the film to order and compose the plastic and figurative aspects of the image. In this way, the work is organised into an organic whole with relatively predictable and determined relations in which time is subordinated to movement.

In the next chapter the strategies and practices of Derridean deconstruction will be used to examine the ways in which <u>Giselle</u> and <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> differently engage with the experience of movement, space and time, as a resistance to, or a compliance with, the philosophical authority of logocentrism and presence.

CHAPTER FIVE

DECONSTRUCTION AND DANCE

Introduction: Dance as a Form of Writing

The aim of a deconstructive reading of dance is not to produce another form of analysis as an explanation of meaning to replace previous meanings but to consider the ways in which each work asserts an "unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another." (Johnson 1981: xiv) The implication of this perspective is that each work signifies in a variety of ways, with varying degrees of explicitness and it is the task of the deconstructive reading to examine the tension that is produced in the relation between what the choreographer asserts as meaningful and what is actually produced in the pattern of the choreographic language used. This relationship can then be appropriated as a signifying structure that will enable a reading which focuses on the grounds that underpin the theoretical system/s identified in the works that are discussed. (Derrida 1981: 158)

Having already summarised in Chapter One the Derridean elaboration of the speech/writing opposition which underpins Western thought, this chapter explores the ways in which dance as a textual system can be considered as a form of writing. Derrida (1976) argues that writing is systematically treated as a derivation of natural language - speech - and thus its signifiers are conceived of as mediating and therefore interrupting the direct and spontaneous relationship between thought and its expression. All writing is a form of communication which "extends …..the field of oral and gestural communication." (Derrida 1982: 311) Drawing attention to the ways in which writing is commonsensically represented as extending the gestural and oral, Derrida argues that it then brings the gestural and the oral to an empirical boundary that is located temporally and

spatially but which, despite the mediating possibilities of the written meaning, is not affected in an essential way. He illustrates this interpretation from the writings of Condillac[1] which he treats as characteristic of the system of hermeneutics.

Condillac's reflections on the written are produced within a recourse to origin that claims that writing is the means that men have invented to communicate their "thought, their ideas, their representations." (Derrida 1982: 312) Writing thus supplements the language of action, which is "the radical principle of all language," (Derrida 1982: 312) by providing the means of communicating thought in the absence of others. Consequently the development of writing follows a clear, linear progression from the language of action, the natural movements of the body, through articulated language, to the written expression of thoughts, ideas and representations. Representation is crucial to this process because it allows different modes of notation, from hieroglyphics to figurative and metaphoric language, to be treated as the most natural means of communicating and expressing the presence of the speaker. Thus the structure of representation, which is marked by an unmediated relationship between sign and referent, is inseparably linked with communication and expression.

Derrida (1982: 313) points to a number of problems in relation to Condillac's formulation of the mechanical, economic and homogenous character of the development of writing. First, he points out that although Condillac acknowledges implicitly the gap between sender and addressee that language fills, he simultaneously abandons this knowledge. Consequently the idea that language still produces its effects whilst being detached from either sender or addressee, which Derrida has argued is constitutive of the structure of all writing, is not explored. Secondly, representation is treated as if it modifies and supplements presence but the structure of supplementarity is not treated as a break in presence, instead it is treated by Condillac as a continuous and "homogenous modification of presence in representation." (Derrida 1982: 313) The system of representation thus functions to trace thoughts and ideas as a

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[1] Condillac's ideas about language have been discussed previously in Chapter Three.

means of making them present. Language supplements perception and action and writing supplements articulated language, with the effect that signs are constituted in a combination of imagination and memory. Both are then able to represent images as signs of ideas that have already been expressed (in dance, by actions, movements and words) without affecting the structure and content of meaning. The effect is that a continuum is posited which flows unproblematically between presence (the presence of sensation and perception) and its representation, without intruding on the process of signification.

This leads Derrida (1982: 314) to argue that Condillac's philosophical ideas are firmly located within a philosophical tradition that is dominated by the possibility of being able to constitute the idea as a self-present signified. Dependent on a strategic organisation which treats the vehicle of communication as able to represent in an unmediated way meaning, writing is thus treated by Condillac as another species of this process of communication.

Derrida argues that all signs are inhabited by absence and this applies equally to the language of action and to articulated language, writing. The condition of all language, in order for it to function as an intersubjective phenomenon, is that it is iterable. It can be repeatable in the absence of sender or addressee. Thus absence functions as a form of presence through the structure of representation. But Derrida argues that although language is characterised by *differance* in that it is constituted by division, delay, and distance, it is also marked by iterability. The latter implies codes and conventions which govern usage because it is these that enable language to function as a form of intelligible communication in the absence of the empirically determined subject. This then becomes the condition of all writing. From this perspective writing cannot, as Condillac argues, provide a modification of presence. Instead, as inscription, it ruptures the plenitude of self-presence.

Within the metaphysics of logocentrism, writing is differentiated from spoken language on the grounds that its signs function as a form of presence and thus it survives the absence of the empirically determined subject. Consequently the

structure of writing breaks with the context of intentionalism, the psychological, historical, social background of the speaker, which would "animate his inscription" (Derrida 1982: 317) because the character of writing is that it is repeatable in the absence of its sender.

Derrida (1994) argues that in all the arts one can find structures that have institutionalised the relation between discourse and nondiscourse.

> "Writing.... gives rise to an inscription in general, whether it is literal or not and even if what it distributes in space is alien to the order of the voice: cinematography, choreography, of course, but also pictorial, musical, sculptural 'writing'. " (Derrida 1974: 9)

Writing is thus the model for all linguistic operations because it refers to the distance or rupture of representation that the speech/thought relationship attempts to repress. All writing assumes that speaker and reader will not be present simultaneously, hence the need for forms of writing. Consequently all forms of expression which require an apparatus - such as the body and the camera - fulfil the definition of writing. This means that all forms of choreographed dance that use the apparatus of the technically trained moving body with which to communicate with an audience can be considered as a type of writing.

The Taciturn Dancing Body

Conventionally the movements of the body are perceived as if they, like speech, can represent thought in a direct and spontaneous way. Thus, they are treated as a form of origin in that they are conceived of as existing outside language and therefore are untouched by the problems of interpretation that permeate language. Dance is committed to both the ideal of being able to represent meaning as an absolute form of self-presence, and to the logic of logocentrism that provides the model by which this takes place. In the case of art the demand of logocentrism, which is underpinned by Cartesian thought, is that materiality is transformed through specific mediums into a geometrically disciplined form which "hardens

the distinction between inside and outside, between figure and ground, between the subject and the space it is not." (Nead 1992: 19) Once the movements of the body are contained within the domain of art, form triumphs over matter and style is privileged over substance. Therefore, in the context of dance performance which relies fundamentally on the body as the medium of communication and expression, it is necessarily the case that the movements of the dancing bodies are given a defining frame through the imposition of technique and style. These function conventionally to re-place the materiality of the body as form, thereby maintaining the authority of logocentrism which privileges meaning over appearance. The dancing body can then function as a series of actions and interactions that are deemed to be contained within the field of art and aesthetic judgement, and thus to operate in the absence of the choreographer to presence thought.

In the dance context, the body is both the instrument and medium of expression; it is the place from which movement takes place and on which it is inscribed. As such, the art form has been treated traditionally as if it is of a completely different character to words, as a taciturnity in the sense that although the body has the capacity for speech it chooses to remain silent. The fact that the body does not speak can be interpreted in two ways. Either it is completely heterogeneous to words and then can provide a basis from which a resistance to the authority of discourse can be constituted, a place where "words find their limit. " (Derrida 1994: 13) Or it is that the body is taciturn in the sense that it has the possibility of speech, but because it is located as the medium of expression for a non-verbal art form, it is constrained by the demands of logocentrism. In other words, the act of naming dance as non-verbal both differentiates it from the verbal whilst placing it in a secondary position to the verbal. But, as Derrida (Brunette & Wills 1994: 13) argues when discussing the spatial arts, all works that are categorised as silent are read and interpreted within the unavoidable context of logocentrism, as if they are potentially discursive. The effect of this is that the word is made powerful. The moving body then becomes an inscrutability that is inscribed with meaning which it becomes the task of the critic/historian/audience to recover. As a consequence,

the movement work of art is subordinated to discourse. Furthermore, discourse can be used to relativise meanings which are appropriated to emancipate the work in the sense that it is made to 'speak' more clearly. Thus to treat the dance work as taciturn is to assume the "effect of an untouchable, monumental, inaccessible presence," (Brunette & Wills 1994: 13) which marks a desire for the legitimating authority of speech.

For example, Arlene Croce's (1987: 247-51) dance critical writing often refers to the ways in which dance speaks to its audience. Describing Cunningham's choreography for Phrases (1985) she argues that the piece works from a fundamental foundation, "the dance phrase", that flows to the rhythm of "statement-and-response pattern" and "rambles on." It is, she says, "a thick set of pages torn from the Cunningham encyclopaedia." (Croce 1987: 247-248) Therefore, although she argues that she writes about "performing by dancers" (Croce 1974: ix), what she enacts in her critical writing is a strategy that hegemonically appropriates dancing as the place of the word. What is implied in this gesture is that although dance has a lack, the lack of speech, this can be made good, or righted, in writing about it. The significance of this example is that it illustrates a hierarchical organisation which subordinates the expressive capacities of the body to discourse. Consequently the dance work can then be read as carrying within it, as its necessary condition, a discursive virtuality.

The dance work is, however, a particular case because the effect of presence is complicated by the fact of movement and the relation of dance to the word. The specificity of dance is that it is foreign to the word, because even when words are used they are reinscribed within a specific use of the body which is not seemingly governed by the word. But what is interesting from a deconstructive perspective is the way in which discourse is inscribed or situated as a signifying structure in the work. The deconstructive reading in this chapter questions the oppositions on which thinking about the concept of dance has relied and in doing so prevents concepts and methods being taken for granted. A particular focus of this enquiry will engage with the ways in which dance, as a non-verbal art form that is body

based, provides a means to rethink the relations between movement and meaning in terms of silence and talkativeness.

The dance work is usually associated with the body as it is on the site of the body that the work is experienced and seen. This means that, however the work is signed or authorised in the attempt to appropriate it as evidencing something other than itself, the body has the potential to disrupt that organisation. Therefore, in order to protect and legitimate its status as aesthetic object, the materiality of the body is relegated to a site of absence becoming an experience that is founded on dislocation and rupture. The body, as a signifier of both presence and non presence, is an experience of "frames, of dehiscence, of dislocations." (Brunette & Wills 1994: 15) It therefore is dislocated in the process of performing in that, although it signs itself, this is set to one side whilst it inscribes. Thus, in order to achieve the effect of presence, the experience of the body has to be set aside and its absence re-marked. Once this has been achieved, the body is free to function as a trace and, as trace, it dis-locates its previous constitution. Consequently, the body is dematerialised to become an expression of organised form and in this process it is put to rights as embodiment.

Dance as Visible Embodiment

Derrida (1978: 279) argues that the philosophical ground for setting aside certain forms of expression as figural is the system of *s'entendre parler*. Based on the assumption that there is an unmediated relationship between speech and thought the system of *s'entendre parler* erases the distinction between inside/ thought and outside/speech and thus "is the condition of the very idea of truth." (Derrida 1976: 20) The conceptualisation of this relationship as an "undissociated unity, where the intelligible controls the sensible" (Culler 1994: 107), allows for all forms of expression other than speech , such as dance and literature, to be treated as a type of writing that the audience has to see and interpret. The problem that dance faces is that the figurality of the body (the body as configuration), like the marks of writing, mediates between thought and its expression, thereby

threatening the literality of that relationship. This is a particular issue for dance because the body as a signifier does not completely efface itself before thought, and therefore its materiality threatens the intelligible. Consequently, although dance performance complies with the logocentrism of metaphysics in that a differentiation is made between the body as natural materiality and its appropriation as performing body, the body is present to sight at all times. It therefore fluctuates between itself and its status as performed materiality, with the effect that the possibility of a rupture between choreographic thought and its expression is an anxiety that is constituted and repressed as part of the structure of dance performance.

Therefore in order to perpetuate the possibility of an unmediated relationship between image and referent, and maintain the purity of the choreographic thought as a form of self-presence, the body has to be set aside in order that the "mess of the body and its passions" (Barker 1984: 7) does not prevent dance from speaking for itself. Cunningham sums this up neatly when he argues that

> "the technical equipment of a dancer is only a means….(to)…the final and wished for transparency of the body as an instrument and as a channel to the source of energy." (Vaughan 1997: 60)

What he then proceeds to say is that, although the daily discipline of dance training is not a natural way of organising the actions of the body, the "final synthesis can be a natural result, natural in the sense that mind, body and spirit function as one." (Vaughan 1997: 60) Presumably Cunningham means that as an expression of unity, the body can naturally transcend its materiality and provide access to something other than itself. This position which is frequently stated in Cunningham's writings about dance, draws attention to the 'talkativeness' that inhabits dance as a movement based art form.

To accompany an exhibition at the Louvre which he curated Derrida (Dillon 1997: 196) wrote a text which explores the relation between perspective and

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blindness. In this context he distinguishes blindness not as a physical impairment of the eyes but as the gap between the thought, idea or pattern in the minds eye and its expressive embodiment. Thus, the gap between original and representation, between choreographic thought and its expression which marks presence, is theorised by Derrida (Dillon 1997: 194) as a spread of invisibility. It is through this that the choreographer's gaze must pass before creating the work. The choreographer, like the artist, reaches across this gap, anticipating the loss of the idea or thought which is not yet traced whilst trying to produce it as a finished sequence or work before it fades away. The work is then produced as a memory of the thought/idea (an 'afterimage' as Croce (1978) calls it) as the choreographer inscribes space and time with the dancing body. Perception, as creative thought, is then sacrificed within the process of inscription and represented as visible signs of the invisible. Choreography thus treated functions as a variant of writing, in that dancing which stylises the body's movements according to various conventions and rules, marks - locates - the point of view. Thus the placing of the body in terms of spatial pattern and temporal organisation thematizes the way in which the body, in its movements and gestures, makes visible the invisible - choreographic thought.

Discussing the constitution of blindness Derrida (Dillon 1997: 196) argues that the apparatus of the body which marks the idea or thought, operates as a trait. Whether it is the choreographer's body or the dancer's body, it operates according to a logic of transcendental blindness (Dillon 1997: 194), whereby it is used as an inscriptive instrument. But it does not belong in this capacity to the dance spectacle because it passes into the invisible space between the thought/idea and its representation and effects a disappearance. Therefore, as it is configured into representation, it also remains beyond representation. This enables, on the one hand, a differentiation between the way in which the individual performing body explores the space between an idea and its representation, and in so doing prepares the way for inscription. On the other hand it makes possible the way in which the body is used to figure a moment between thought and its embodiment. Thus, the choreographer traces the memory

of the idea with the body and the body functions as trait, in that it marks the experience of choreographic perception and what is visualised as scene. The thing itself, the idea, is thus produced in the mind's eye, and sight as perception - insight - is sacrificed to the shadow of the thing - the trait as embodiment. The system of representation that legitimates an immediate relation between thought and appearance, and which thus naturalises the homology of mind, body and spirit, takes over the individuality of the body; and what appears to sight - the body - is delegated to a position of absence and presenced by proxy. Embodiment is subsequently privileged and inscribed as the form of perception. This gives to the creator of the work the role of all seeing "I" (eye) in the sense that what appears to sight is negated and transcended by in-sight - as a form of perception which cites creative vision.

As a consequence, a transcendental quality is conferred on the invisible. It provides the condition of possibility of the visible and threatens simultaneously the possibility of a visibility of presence. In the context of dance this would be the embodiment of the present-to-consciousness of thought. Thus, in order for dancing to right (write) the blindness in perception, it has to reinscribe vision as visible presence. The stylisation of the body and its movement operates a perspective, a point of view, which traces what is invisible. As such, it is always signalling inaccessibility because, as it appears, it disappears to disrupt its own identification as presence (Dillon 1997: 199) What is identified as the essence of dance performance, whether that is Cunningham's synthesis of mind, body, spirit, or the Romantics' symbolic representation of the Image, is dispersed into traces of the trait. This is a double movement in which the materiality of the body is withdrawn as it approaches embodiment, leaving only traces of both itself and choreographic thought in its wake. Consequently, presence is produced as an effect which is centred on a nucleus of absence. What is then privileged as the origin of perception, via the effect of insight, is a generalised absence which is marked by traces. But despite this, the search for pure presence as origin, although it can never be realised visually, allows for a rhetoric of vision which offers pure transcendence - of expression to thought - on the basis of effacement.

The invisible becomes visible in dance performance through the metaphor of the body, which is understood as the site of transcendence. The body as stylised inscription is the focus of perspective that traces the impossibility of the trait. It does this because when it moves, although it bears the meaning of thought and signifies beyond its existence as materiality, its materiality as signifier still threatens to intrude and disrupt the plenitude of self presence. Consequently, although its movements embody a point of view, what is written is the invisible silence of language that constitutes the movements of the body as talkative.

Before leaving this point, it is relevant to return to the claim that dance is an ephemeral art which is inherently non-reproducible.

> "This impermanence of ballet suggests a certain scholarly function for the critic, one imposed on him by the evanescence of the art he serves. A ballet dies at curtain fall. It is resuscitated at its next performance, but unlike music or drama that are securely fixed in a printed text, which is an undeviating matter for interpretation, dance is eroded as performer follows performer." (Crisp 1983: 6)

The need to preserve what Crisp (1983: 7) calls "the shape and emotional momentum, the *raison d'etre* of the ballet" thus legitimates the function of the critic whose task is to make "the afterimage that appears in his writing match the performance." (Croce 1978: ix) In the case of dance performance, the movements of the body, which I have argued function as a type of body writing, are preserved and thus reproduced in the material effects of writing. As can be seen in these examples, both Croce and Crisp represent a view which treats critical writing as a type of literal writing whose figurality has been forgotten. They work on the assumption that, like speech, the words seem to disappear as soon as they are written. They are then left with an afterimage (Croce, 1978) which is reanimated in writing to convey to the reader "the real substance of what went on - namely, performing by dancers." (Croce 1978: ix)

To treat the real substance of dance as performing by dancers, and to argue apologetically for the role of dance criticism as having to "make the afterimage that appears in his writing match the performance", is to adopt two different but related positions simultaneously. The first is to maintain the system of representation unproblematically by arguing for the possibility of both afterimage and critical writing being able to reproduce ('match') the performance. Once this system is firmly and irrefutably in place, to assert that "dance speaks in inscrutable gestures" (Croce 1987: 188) is to claim secondly, that it operates as a taciturnity whilst simultaneously claiming that the condition of being taciturn renders it as impenetrable - unfathomable. Consequently, this is also a justification of the need to supplement the non-verbal with language in order that it will be intelligible. In other words, it is to imply the claim that dancing - gestures - cannot "speak" as clearly, or as plainly, as speech itself. For example, critical discourse, which always has more to say about the silent work because it is not possible to dance criticism, treats the dance work as indicative of a silenced presence which it becomes the task of the critic to reveal, or animate. From this perspective dance loses its status as an ephemeral art form that communicates through shape and sequence and is transformed into a taciturn form that speaks in other ways.

What is also implied in Croce's claim is that language can never be simply representational because it is constituted in and by a system of differences. In this sense, dance can be treated as inscrutable because it means nothing in itself and thus, as itself, as movement of the body, it is unfathomable. But when animated by the codes and conventions that organise the selection and combination of signifiers, the movements of the body are ordered and patterned to become intelligible according to the cultural and historical specificities of dance language systems. Moreover dance can no longer be treated as a type of self- presence because it is dependent for its intelligibility on its constitution as a form of writing that is constituted by *differance* and deferral.

However a closer examination of the relation between speech and silence from the perspective of deconstruction shows that what would seem to be a peaceful coexistence of facing terms - talkativeness and silence, verbal/non-verbal - is in fact a hierarchical ordering. A deconstructive reading of this hierarchy which places non verbal expression as subordinate to verbal demonstrates both a desire for, and a weakness in the authority of speech. Therefore despite the classification of dance as both silent and talkative, as both a natural language of the body, and a type of writing that is treated traditionally as the place of excess and contamination, a deconstructive reading demonstrates that it is writing that provides the condition of possibility of speech rather than the reverse. The possibility of meaning something by an utterance, or by a dance event, is already inscribed within the structure of language, but as has been argued in Chapter One, the systems and norms which constitute the structure of language are the result of prior events or speech acts. To establish a hierarchical ordering is an attempt to make meaning somewhere present but Derrida (1982a: 28) argues that what is marked as present is already inhabited by *differance*. Therefore prior to any dissociation between silence and talkativeness, between natural language and artificial language is a system of differences out of which these hierarchies are abstracted.

Furthermore, Derrida argues that the derived, supplemental and differential characteristic of language is constitutive of all languages, even those that are privileged as most natural, such as speech and body language. Thus, the hierarchical distinction between silence and talkativeness, natural language/artificial language, which is dependent on a model underpinned by the opposition between presence and absence, is reversed and displaced by a deconstructive reading.

Derrida's concept of writing enables dance to be inscribed in the domain of the textual, and it provides new insights into the relation between image and referent.

Refuting any claim in respect of the constitution of an origin, the Derridean concept of writing forces the reader to turn their attention away from origin as the controlling centre of meaning towards what is treated as marginal or supplementary. This shift of focus enables a consideration of how a text produces its boundaries and limitations, how it distinguishes between its intrinsic qualities and those that are extrinsic, and how it opens itself out, or closes itself off from other texts.

The Structure of Differentiation and Repetition in Dance Language

Derrida (Bloom 1979: 97-103) formulates the concept of invagination to discuss the fundamental division between inclusion and exclusion. Using as an example the vagina, which he treats as external tissue that is folded inside making an internalised pocket of externality, he argues that there cannot be clear cut boundaries between what is properly inside and what belongs to the outside. The distinctions that mark such a differentiation are always both inside and outside simultaneously. For example, to argue for the formal clarity of Perrot's choreographic structure, or to appeal for a return to dramatic development and the richness of emotional play that makes "the Kirov Ballet's present and peerless staging of <u>Giselle</u> so ideal in atmosphere and Romantic sensitivity," (Crisp 1983: 8) is to give to the critic/historian the role of

> "picture restorer faced with a canvas whose over-painting, added drapery, yellow "antique" varnish and improvements by previous restorers have all but destroyed the artist's original work." (Crisp 1983: 8-9)

The implication here is that there is the possibility of a definitive original to which all other stagings and revisions of the work refer and in relation to which they are evaluated. The issues surrounding critical writing, interpretation, and evaluation that allow the critic/historian to argue for an "honourable staging" (Crisp 1983: 8) and to relegate a staging that reduces the "radiance ….(of the ballet)….to a tinsel shine of short winded technical display" (Crisp 1983: 8) are thus displaced. What Derrida argues is that the principles of classification

operate by the means of "inclusions, exclusions, and the integrity of borders." (Brunette & Wills 1989: 47) In other words, to enable <u>Giselle</u> to "come(s) alive" (Crisp 1983: 11) and to legitimate it as what the choreographer intended, is to use citation and reference to identify common traits that can be reiterated and identified as the basis on which any production of the ballet depends for recognition. Thus the recurrence of a recognisable trait is dependent on a structure of repetition that posits an essential full presence which can be represented.

However, what Derrida (1977) demonstrates in his discussion of speech act philosophy, both in respect of Austin's work (1963) and in debate with Searle (1977), is that repetition is the mark of difference because it can never be simple repetition. Derrida points out that Austin's work, which describes the system which enables the differentiation between performative and constative utterances, privileges speech at the expense of writing. Furthermore, he argues that performatives, which Austin argues are differentiated from statements of facts, are used to perform certain kinds of rhetorical acts which assume a commitment of intention on the speaker's part. Thus, they acquire their illocutionary force from conventional rules involving features of the context. In other words, performatives are already in existence before they are used by the speaker. Therefore, in order for language to function as a form of communication between the individual and the collective, it needs to consist of repeatable units. The structure of repetition points to the characteristics of mediation and distance that inhabit all forms of writing by showing that iterability is dependent on, and conforms to, a "larger system of non-self-present signification." (Norris 1984: 110) Thus, the possibility of repetition disrupts a view which treats language as a transparent message carrying medium because, according to Derrida's argument, something can only be a signifying sequence if it is iterable, if it can be imitated or repeated in a variety of different contexts. Therefore, because performatives can operate in different contexts, their meaning cannot be limited by the self-presence of intention and thus they belong to writing which is structured by the economy of *differance.*

Derrida's discussion of iterability can be used to consider Giselle as a repeatable work, which differs with each repetition but can still be recognisable as Giselle without necessary reference to the original work. For Giselle to be recognisable, it must have certain features that characterise and produce its distinctive effects. For these to be recognisable, they must be able to be isolated as elements that can be repeated. Thus, it is the iterability manifested in derivations, such as Ek's Giselle, or the Kirov's production of the ballet which is used as the basis of critical discussion in this thesis, that legitimates the possibility of discussing Giselle as one would Hamlet, or Guys and Dolls, without having to address the ways in which each production is similar or different to the original, as seems to be the case conventionally. Furthermore, the fact that there are identifiable and repeatable features that enable a work to be recognisable as Giselle, also draws attention to the division and lack that is constitutive of presence, and thus to the impossibility of identifying an original ballet against which all other performances of Giselle must be interpreted and evaluated.

Using the structure of repetition, Derrida (1982: 307-330) demonstrates that what are categorised as origins are inhabited by derivation and difference. From this perspective, any attempt by the dance historian to control subsequent performances and restagings of works of the past by comparing them to an original can be seen as attempts to control the irreducible play of language from within a logocentric "hankering for presence and origin." (Norris 1984: 110)

One reason that Giselle was selected for discussion in this thesis is that it has been identified by the historians as an exemplar of Romantic ballet. But, using Derrida's discussion of iterability to consider the process by which some revisions and stagings of the great nineteenth century works are legitimated as proper examples, or not, of the original, one can argue that for a work to be treated as an exemplar of its kind, it must be inhabited by re-marks, by

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recognisable and repeatable features or traits, for without these it would be impossible to identify a work as itself.

The designation of <u>Giselle</u> as an exemplar of the genre of Romantic ballets marks the ballet as part of the genre but sets Romanticism aside as not belonging to that genre. Therefore, what is marked as specifically Romantic is deemed essential in order to differentiate Romantic ballets from other genres of ballet, such as Court ballet. But simultaneously, what constitutes Romanticism is set aside as supplemental to discussions of the ballets that are identified as constituting the genre. Moreover, to argue for the structural differentiation between the two acts of <u>Giselle</u> to be considered in terms of the differentiation between allegory and symbol as a specifically Romantic representation, is to assert that the work contains these distinguishing marks, whilst simultaneously acknowledging that, unlike the texts in which they appear, they will never belong to the genre of Romantic ballet. This is because, although individual texts can be classified according to declared categories, these categories will always belong to an external system of difference which is much larger than the text itself.

Every work participates in a number of genres, identities, and categorisations, but this participation is always divided from belonging because the traits that mark belonging are always divided in terms of what belongs inside and what belongs outside the work. Thus, although what constitutes a mark or a trait is treated as a plenitude, what Derrida's discussion of the speech/writing opposition demonstrates is that all forms of presence are effects of presence and consequently what is identified as intrinsic - as marked by presence - is always constituted by its opposite - absence.

Intention, Adestination and Dance

The concept of writing, which emphasises the decentred text and by extension the notion of unlimited contexts, derives its impetus from the idea of adestination which Derrida (1987) elaborates in his discussion of Freud, Lacan and

psychoanalysis. The model for the operation of the philosophical concept of the postal is the form of writing textualised by the postcard, an object that combines both the written word and visual image. In this text, Derrida also discusses the relation between technology and the media in terms of the opposition between nature and art in which the former is privileged and the latter is treated as an unsatisfactory derivation of it.

The post card refers to a system of communication which is constituted by the possibility of non-arrival. Discussing the event of addressing and sending, Derrida (1987:413-496) argues that this act cannot guarantee arrival, that is only possible when a message actually arrives. The postcard, like all forms of communication, is open to many different acts that can interrupt the journey between dispatch and arrival, such as loss, or theft. Additionally the material status of the postcard implies reproducibility, transportability, and possibility of carrying a message. Thus, it intervenes in a variety of ways in the process between sender and receiver, drawing attention to the divided character of the act of sending by introducing into what is treated as an unmediated process, ideas of distance, delay and mediation. The concept of the postal is characterised by Derrida as a form of spacing, because inscribed within this chain of communication are the notion of distancing and mediation that prevent the articulation of an unmediated process between sender and addressee. Consequently, all claims that are substantiated by an appeal to spontaneity and immediacy, are shown to be similarly divided. The concept of the postal provides a means of examining the differential claim between natural arts and media arts. The strategy that privileges the former as a type of purity that does not rely on the artifice of *techne*, can be then shown to be a claim that misrecognises the divided, artificial nature of all art.

Derrida argues that writing is treated in philosophical and scientific discourse as a technique for communicating truth and meaning and thus, like technology, has no life of its own. But, using the concept of adestination he demonstrates that the domain of the technical is also part of art in general - the Greek word *techne* is

also the word for art. (Brunette & Wills 1989: 173) Therefore, in the context of the dance film collaboration as it has been raised in respect of <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u>, to differentiate between the high cultural form of dance and film, which depends on technology, is to operate a logocentric strategy that privileges dance and treats film and video as supplementary or derivative.

As has been argued above, the dance film can be considered from within the same structural categories as philosophy or literature. Like the postcard, film, also reproducible, is considered as providing a support for a material message that is to be transmitted to an audience. A large amount of critical writing about dance film is committed to some form of address which is based on an identity that is constituted either in terms of choreographic intentionalism or in terms of an analysis that, largely produced from within the limitations of representation, reduces the film medium to explanations of how it limits, or not, the expressive capacities of dance. As Siobhan Davies (Jordan & Allen 1993: 182) says when talking about the dance/film collaboration in relation to her own work "..making work that's only for the screen.....forces the dance material to stand up on screen. You look at it on its own, in isolation, in that medium." The effect is that although discussions in respect of the relation between dance and film participate within a whole network of articulations about "perception, representation, signification, identification, figuration, interpretation and so on," (Brunette & Wills 1989: 188) film is still treated predominantly as a recording eye, as this example demonstrates. This placing positions the film image as secondary to the dance image and, in so doing, formalises and frames the interrelation between dance and film as a relation between intrinsic content and extrinsic support. This is to repeat a logocentric strategy which legitimates and confirms the sanctity of the original and the prerogative of choreographic intention, and thus enables artistic creativity and integrity to be differentiated from technological artifice. <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> announces this polarisation in its title. The title precedes the work and represents it simultaneously and, as such, is external to the dance film because it exists independently to what occurs within the parameters of the film frame. But the title is also included within the work, in that it inhabits the

space of the work and, in both of the above senses, the title of the work attempts to control the representation, to limit the effects of textuality. The tension within the title can be represented as <u>Beach Birds</u>/ <u>For Camera</u>, the inclusion of the preposition "for" implying a set of oppositional, hierarchical and supplementary relations. It indicates that what is made for the camera is governed by <u>Beach Birds,</u> a separate performed dance work, and thus what is implied is that the work should be read accordingly. The title also produces, both at the level of syntax and of meaning, a unity of parts. At the level of syntax, "for" links "Beach Birds" and "Camera", and at the level of meaning it links the dance work and the dance film. However, the idea of unity that is produced in the dance film collaboration is dependent on the camera being treated as a supplementary tool that is enabled by the choreographic consciousness of Cunningham.

Like all forms of signification, both dance and film are characterised by mediation and distance. Thus, to treat film as a supplement to dance performance is to define the film in terms of the principle of reproducibility, and dance in terms of its capacity to represent creative thought in an unmediated way. Reproducibility, in this context, signifies a certain death, the death of the original in favour of the copy. (Derrida 1987: 175-81) But, as has been shown, detachability from any original context - iterability - is a structuring factor in all works of art, whether they are classified as high cultural or mass cultural art forms. This allows Brunette & Wills (1989 174) to argue that technique, the technological and *techne* are dependent on the introduction of supplementary relations which modify, alter and detach contexts in the same way as repetition.

It is possible to argue that the relation between film and dance is inhabited by a double bind, which treats the dance as opposite to the film. But the textuality of the film dismantles this binary structure by showing that the opposed terms are permeated by each other. Dance does not speak the same language as film, nor does it necessarily obey the same conventions. But they do communicate with each other as a series of fractured effects, and this prevents the assertion of an

originary or the possibility of positing a mythical unity between elements and languages.

Taking the structure of the postcard as a model of disunity and deferral, a deconstructive reading would subvert what appears to be a peaceful coexistence of facing terms in the structure of binarism. The heterogeneity of the dance film, like the postcard, persists even when the figural leads and devices advanced by the text have been considered. Thus, one can argue that it is the structure of division, deferral and disunity which inscribes the relation between dance and film, and not the hierarchical binary logic which would attempt to organise film as secondary to dance.

To restrict film to the position of a recording eye which offers a window on the world of dance, is to restrict it to a logocentric ordering which presumes to know the film's address before it is sent. This is to impose a network of operations that moves unproblematically towards a particular destination. However, Derrida's articulation of the concept of adestination provides a resource for considering the dance film relation as dissemination thus preventing the possibility of a "hermeneutic deciphering, to the decoding of meaning or truth." (Derrida 1982: 329) This introduces two different but related possibilities which will be addressed in what follows. The first, is that the strategy which proposes and legitimates an originary is shown to be a strategy that is committed to the denial of heterogeneity. The second raises the issue of artistic intentionality, which has been important historically for establishing stable meanings in texts.

Within the televisual context - a context dominated by popular cultural forms - a different set of values are attributed to an explicitly aesthetic image. Distinguished from the narrative function of the mainstream television frame, which produces the illusion of opening out objectively onto the world, the dance film is given an imaginary value which both colludes with, yet is differentiated from this perspective. It operates as a work in its own right, but its placing within

the context of the television frame means also that the image produced is inhabited by a hierarchy which privileges dance as a creative practice, and places the filming process in a supplementary and essentially technological role as a recording eye.

The distinction between dance and film divides or frames an external supplement of film from the dance work that it describes. The screen frame marks the edge of the object image, its material boundary which, in the case of the dance film made for television distribution, is strengthened by what Aumont (1997 106) calls the object frame. This the physical frame of the television set which functions to separate the image from its perceptual environment. The object frame of the television set isolates a segment of a visual field and emphasises it as the space towards which perception is directed. Thus it acts as an intermediary between the interior and the exterior of the image. Together, the object frame and the frame of the image isolate and compose the image in the visual field. The effect is that framing operates indexically to inform the spectator that they are looking at certain kind of image - for example, a dance film - which, because it is framed in certain ways, should be viewed in relation to certain conventions.

The frame also gives to the image a spatial format. In the case of Beach Birds for Camera, the format that the television uses is a rectangular format which is dominated by the relation of the vertical to the horizontal edges. Yet by using the widescreen, Cunningham stresses the horizontal dimensions of the film image, which finds its reference in a cinematic tradition (Aumont 1997: 107) to articulate a more contemporary representation of space. Traditionally, dance is performed within the confines of the proscenium arch, which is deeper than it is wide. "Classical dancing…was coming from the back of the stage towards the front, ordinarily on diagonals, but opening out towards the audience." (Lesschaeve 1985: 173) What Cunningham identifies, is that space in contemporary society is used differently

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"recent stage spaces are almost always wider then they are deep. Your eye can jump from one point to another, you don't have to be led any longer from one point to another." (Lesschaeve 1985: 103)

His use of the widescreen in <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> allows Cunningham to stress the idea of using space as a field of possibilities, a "configuration of possible events, a complete dynamism of structure," (Eco 1985: 58) and thus to question the the conventional televisual transmission of dance representations that are dominated by a static, singular point of view.

The screen frame, by giving a common standard of measurement to things which do not have one, also produces, in the angle of framing, a point of view on the relation between elements within frame. The combination of elements within the shot, in order not to fall into an empty aestheticism, must be revealed as normal and regular from a perspective which is outside the frame but which refers to it. An example would be that of the close up of the male dancer in a held attitude (discussed in detail in Chapter Three) who is decentred by the angle of framing. The verticality of the body is cut by the edge of the screen, and the relation of this particular dancer to the rest of the cast is decentred by the angle of filming. This dancer would provide conventionally both a geometric centre to the piece, and a visual centre of gravity. Although this would function as secondary to the composition of the image according to conventions of narrative or theme, it would provide the reader nevertheless with a means to order and compose the plastic and figurative aspects of the image. However, by using the angle of framing differently, Cunningham attempts to destabilise the imaginary identification between spectator as a fantasised subject of plenitude and their image. As a consequence, the visible and legible functions of the dance film image are brought into conflict with each other in an attempt to subvert the hierarchy which privileges legibility above visibility.

Ergon and *Parergon* in Dance Form

This hierarchy has its basis in Kant's writings. Taking Kant's example of the frame, Derrida (1987b) introduces the logic of supplementarity to show that,

whilst the frame makes visible and boundarises the beautiful, what actually is enacted is an Enlightenment attempt to master excess, to bring that which escapes the aesthetic frame within the boundaries of reason.

The demand to separate and boundarise the relation between what is intrinsic and extrinsic to the work of art, Derrida (1987b: 53) argues, "organises every philosophical discourse on art, " and he looks to Kant's Critique of Judgement (1952) which examines the relationship between mind and objective reality, in order to investigate the framing structure at work in this text. Derrida's reading of Kant, which questions whether or not his Third Critique can be read as an example of itself, focuses on the development of the idea of the aesthetic as it emerges in philosophy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. (Rodowick 1994: 97) Critiquing the basis on which Kant claims that the art work has a conceptual identity, Derrida looks at how the aesthetic tries to define itself by marking off its borders.

Kant (1952) differentiates between *ergon* - the essence of the work of art - and *parerga,* which he identifies as supplementary to it. This distinction is based on the idea that form is the inner totality that constitutes the work of art and produces proper affect in the spectator. Effectively this allows Kant to argue that everything that is attached to the work, but is not part of its intrinsic content can be set aside unproblematically as extrinsic to it. For Kant *parerga* refer not only to that which frames or contains the work of art, but also to elements within the work such as costumes and draperies which clothe human figures, and the columns that support buildings. This means that the *parerga* which articulate a boundary space between the work of art and what is extrinsic to it can belong to the work. But because they are not identical to it, they are simultaneously set aside as supplementary.

In the Third Critique, Kant attempts to reconcile the Platonic distinction between form and matter. (Brunette & Wills 1989: 102) He argues that The Critique of

Judgement which defines an analytic of the beautiful, provides a bridge that surmounts the gap between Pure Reason and Practical Reason. Using the analogy of the bridge, Derrida (1987b) points out that this provides a way of arguing that there must be a gap between two heterogeneous worlds, in this case those of empiricism and abstract thought, which a third term is needed to address. Thus what is intrinsic and what is extrinsic at any moment is problematic, since the status of the frame is relational as it fluctuates between the two terms, ideas, worlds, etc. In other words, the *parergon* detaches itself from both the work and the wider background and context in which the work is located, but "in relation to each it backs into the other." (Derrida 1987b: 71)

For example, conventionally the dance/film relation is organised from a perspective that distinguishes between high cultural forms and popular cultural forms, privileging the former and treating the latter as secondary and derivative. The consequence of this is that dance is privileged as a kind of essential content - the *ergon* - and film is set aside as a container of this content. What is implied is that it is dance in the dance/film collaboration that will interpellate the spectator, and that film is inert in the process of mediating the liveness of performance. In this sense, the dance/film relation as it is explicated conventionally, accords with the Kantian explanation which treats anything that isn't essential content as supplementary to the aesthetic. [2]

This position, Derrida (1987b) argues derives a theory of value from the differentiation between the interiority of the vocal signifier and exteriority of the transcendent signified. Kant distinguishes between rhetoric which uses the figurative potential of language to limit the freedom of the imagination, and poetic language which is both free and playful. The vocal signified, once organised and articulated, and thereby distanced from having any "relation of natural representation with external sensible things," (Rodowick 1994: 109) can be treated as expressing form which links the external visibility of the aesthetic

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[2] For further discussion of differentiation between high and mass culture see Filmer 1998: 345-362; Williams 1974, 1985)

object with thought. From this perspective, the vocal signifier - the word - has only interior, ideal signifieds and thus a link is privileged between the intelligible and speech. It then is differentiated from external perceptions derived from nature, and thus there is a hierarchy in place which posits that there is a language in nature. Through its formalisation this hierarchy organises the apparent disorder of nature as legible signs. (Rodowick 1994: 108) It is this formalisation which allows the beautiful in nature to be intuited by the creative mind which offers from

" the unlimited variety of possible forms that harmonise with a given concept....that form which links exhibition to a concept with a wealth of thought." (Kant 1952: 53)

The judgement of pure taste then provides the means whereby one is able to read "the ciphered language that nature speaks to us figurally through its beautiful forms...it lets itself be admired as art." (Kant 1952: 4)

The legibility or readability of a work is thus organised in terms of an analogy with the lingustic signifier, which enables a movement in which the "empirical, the extrinsic, and the corporeal recede into the subjective, the internal and the spiritual." (Rodowick 1994: 111) In other words, the organisation and patterning of the material signifiers is set aside by a strategy that treats the process of signification as a vehicle of what is signified. This leads Derrida to argue that internal speech represents an invagination of the aesthetic. To treat the beautiful as a form of pure otherness that exists outside the interiority of subjectivity, and yet produces an internal dialogue between imagination and understanding which externalises itself as an expression of form, is to treat the work of art as a type of conduit through which the subjective and the internal can be accessed. However, to simultaneously identify the work of art as a formal arrangement of signifiers which demonstrate in their pattern and organisation, an inner finality that can only be confirmed through the contemplative faculty of judgement, is to reveal a non-conceptual lack in beauty. The invocation of the inner finality of form as the grounds on which an object can be considered beautiful acknowledges that there

can be no such thing as pure beauty which signifies nothing and has no determinable end. Beauty is figured through the organisation and patterning of signifiers, and it is the identification and acknowledgement of this through the faculty of judgement that gives order to the silence or "non-language" of forms in nature. (Brunette & Wills 1994: 110)

It is the faculty of judgement, therefore, which confirms and legitimates the status of the work of art and provides a category with which to determine what is intrinsic to the object. To add the faculty of judgement to the aesthetic as a means of confirming and legitimating its status is to argue that there is an indetermination in the aesthetic that needs supplementing. Effectively, the judgement of taste becomes "an external position from which to elucidate the whole in which it also figures." (Culler 1994: 199) Thus what is set aside as extrinsic actually gives an ontological presence, shape and priority to an essence. In other words, the frame gives intrinsic content and structure to the aesthetic object. However, the framing structure in the Critique of Judgement both produces and is produced by "a certain 'internal' indeterminacy...a lack of concepts within aesthetic judgement for a cognitive description of aesthetic judgement." (Derrida 1987b: 83) As Culler (1983 195) argues,

"at the moment that it (the frame) is playing an essential, constitutive, enshrining and protecting role...it undermines this role by leading itself to be defined as subsidiary."

The analogy to dance is pertinent at this point. The dance work of art, as a plastic and visual art form, is a taciturn form that speaks silently. In other words it becomes talkative by articulating the interiority of form visually through the organisation of its signifiers. However, it is the interpretative act of reading that enables the spectator to experience the ciphered language of art as if it were talkative, as if it expresses a signified, and thus to treat the process of significtion as a transparency through which that signified is communicated. Therefore, we read the non-verbal as symbolically expressive, as if it can speak figurally. Cunningham claims this when he speaks of the non-verbal - movement itself - as expressive of energy, or nature, or the force of life.) As expressive of something,

another frame is placed around what is intrinsic, movement itself, and this then provides an interpretative position that restricts and delineates the intrinsic. For example, Cunningham argues that Field Dances (1963) "implies country fields, and spatial fields", (Lesschaeve 1985: 100) and in doing so implies the impossibility of differentiating rigorously between form and meaning. The verbal, as interpretation, analysis, critical discourse, etc., operates as a framework that backs into the work, and into the background of context (Derrida 1987b: 72) to the work. Thus, at the moment that Cunningham places a frame around dancing by arguing that what is intrinsic to dance is movement itself, he is defining from outside the work what is inside it, and consequently claiming that the movement itself signifies something other than itself.

The structure of framing in Beach Birds for Camera encapsulates the paradox between intrinsic/extrinsic of which Derrida writes. The frame of the television set and the frame of the shot both name what is inside its borders - dance - and differentiate the work, as a high cultural form, from the wider context of either television entertainment, or the context in which the dance film is viewed - the privacy of the domestic interior. But the frame of the shot also opens out onto an other that is absent - the real - that the diegetic suture of film works to conceal. In this respect what is in the frame provides a space whereby an analogy is made between what the spectator imagines and constructs as the real world, and the world they see on screen. But also what is in the frame is subject to an outside - the conventions and codes that organise the frame, the conventions and codes that regulate live performance, the relation between high cultural and popular cultural forms, etc., - which becomes internalised through the structure of invagination. In other words, the dance film operates as the iteration of numerous diverse elements from the wider cultural context and it is from within these that it comes into existence as an other to them. The dance film is therefore always more than the film itself with the effect that any consideration of a specific film - Beach Birds for Camera - will depend on an infinite number of boundaries and exclusions that are brought to the work as the framework of interpretative positions.

As Deleuze (1994: 12-18) argues the act of framing forms sets which are constituted in the process of selection, differentiation and integration on a paradigmatic level. These are then combined in a linear movement which relates shots and images through principles of contiguity and association. This means that the *mise en scene* of each image is inscibed in a network of relations between framed images that precede and suceed it, and it is in the interrelation between the paradigmatic and synchronic axes that the movement of thought is produced. (Eisenstein 1977; Deleuze 1994) Consequently in Beach Birds for Camera the dance movement sequence and the movement of film is composed within and across shots. Thus, the image of dance which is posited as a self-sufficient presence is not merely visible as an unmediated representation, it is organised to represent a legible space which, as Rodowick (1997: 46) argues, is meant to be read as much as perceived.

The structure of legibility implies that the inside of the dance film - the dance - is, accessible to readers. Some interesting observations can be made in relation to this point. First, the film is treated, like writing, as an artificial but necessary vehicle in and through which meaning can be conveyed. The dance by contrast, is located as an accessible self-sufficiency that is enclosed and protected by film as its intrinsic content. The effect is that in Beach Birds for Camera, although Cunningham argues for the self-reflexivity of dance and thus attempts to disrupt the possibility of an unmediated relation between sign and referent, the structure of the dance film relation is such that the authority of the signified (that is both the signified content of the dance and the signified content of the dance film) is still kept intact within a hierarchy in which legibility is privileged over visibility.

But the film frame imposes a spatial limit that can be organised geometrically or dynamically. Information, then, can be organised spatially to stress strong compositional shapes, or it can be organised dynamically within the frame in the use of fades, dissolves, etc. In Beach Birds for Camera, the filming tends to stress the rigidity of compositional shapes and, in the angle of filming and framing, to provide a perspective on the represented image. The held long and medium shots

that predominate, emphasise the compositional shape of body to space relationships. What the example of <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> demonstrates is that visibility and legibility are constituted in a network of relations, but these are denied in a strategy that is committed to representing a version of origin. Thus, any claim to privilege dance as a legible plenitude, and to set film aside as merely concerned with making presence visible, is problematic.

This can be further clarified in respect of the ways in which the frame of the shot, and the relation between shots, operates a set of restrictions over the choreography. Like much of Cunningham's work, <u>Beach Birds for Camera,</u> presents a constantly shifting visual configuration where the dancers are subject to continual change in focus and status in relation to each other. Deleuze identifies an out-of-field in respect of the shot that is constituted as what is not seen but which nevertheless is present. This can be experienced in two ways. On the one hand the frame can enclose all elements and could be constituted as confining. In this sense it operates pictorially to produce the elements within it as an image. For example, the camera can isolate or enlarge space, as in the movement between close-up and long shot in the opening sequence of <u>Beach Birds for Camera,</u> with the effect that the information given in the image is either minimised or maximised. The space beyond the frame would then be treated as discontinuous and heterogeneous. On the other hand, the frame can impose a limitation which space and action exceed; when dancers move out of or into a continuous and homogenous space that exists beyond the limits of the frame. But in either case, the out-of-frame is suppressed as being less important than what takes place within it.

However, to enclose within the frame what would constitute content is to attempt to treat what is then categorised as intrinsic as a closed system. What Derrida argues (1987b) is that the frame is supposed to decide what is intrinsic, its ontological character, and in doing so to divide and exclude the outside from the inside, thereby controlling any engagement between them. Consequently, within this framework the out-of-field would be treated as a supplement to the system

which it augments. But every closed system also communicates with what exists beyond it. The seen (the framed scene) always communicates with other systems and discourses which exist beyond it and which inform its constitution and composition. <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> has an unseen dialogue with <u>Beach Birds</u> (1991) that wasn't for camera. A dialogue is put in place by the title of the work, and is supported within the work in the contrast between the use of black and white and colour film. This dialogue then gives rise to a new out-of-field, and this process forms an indirect, continuous relationship between, in this case, the present framed work and the rest of Cunningham's work - both danced and written. What Deleuze (1992: 11) classifies as the whole - a process which is open in that it refers to the duration of the film, which traverses what is framed whilst giving to each frame the possibility of interrelated communication - demonstrates the impossibility of the enclosed frame. The openess of the whole which is boundless, connects spatially what is framed to other systems and discourses whilst integrating and reintegrating the framed into its duration. This view disrupts a position which differentiates the concrete space of the image from an imaginary out-of-field, which becomes concrete when it is integrated into the field of the image. Consequently, the out-of-field has a relativity which is made visible in the differentiation between what is framed and what is imagined to be out-of-field. The latter designates what exists elsewhere which becomes visible when it is incorporated. But it also has an absolute aspect. The enclosed frames open out onto a process of duration which does not belong to the order of the visible and which exists outside of homogenous space and time but rests, like the *punctum*, (Barthes 1981; Derrida 1993) on the surface of representation and consequently threatens the hierarchy and stability of the hierarchical distinction between field and out-of-field.

Image, Space and Movement in the Dance Film

Movement in the context of the dance film is not a specificity that can be treated as if it exists in the present; it is a system of relationships between elements,

"a set of relationships...that cannot be seen in the represented object but are made visible and legible by the images which create the signs for them." (Deleuze 1992: xii)

Movement, in this context, refers to the unfolding of space in the movement of the camera, of editing as one shot replaces another, and the out-of-field which serves continually to produce new spaces. In this respect the constitution of the movement-image gives an indirect image of space, time and movement to the dance. This means that the possibility of experiencing dance as 'liveness' is constituted by the technology of film, but the organisation and structuring of the image which dictates the drive towards legibility is set to one side in favour of a transcendent - the dance. The effect of this is that difference and identity are exchanged continuously in the movement within and between shots.

For Deleuze, the movement-image articulates the attempt to concretize the relation between set and whole, between the paradigmatic axis and the synchronic axis, into an organic unity. This is a position that recognises difference, rupture and referral in the structure of both dance and film yet simultaneously places it to one side in favour of the desire to build a dance image of organic totality.

The space of the frame becomes the *mise en scene,* a site with symbolic importance, the locus of dance action, within which space and time are actualised and determined in the specificities of embodied choreographic actions. Thus, the transition from black and white to colour in <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> is embodied as a series of danced actions and reactions which function as a content. The focus on movement is preserved, and the discontinuities of technology that decompose and recompose the dancing image are denied in the process of displacement and transformation. The space of the image is then individuated by the dancers as determined space-time, as the body to space relations within and between dancers transform the milieu of the frame and the dancer's relationship to it. There is a continual shift between one situation and another as each situation, and image, is modified and transformed by the action of the dancers and the movement between shots. Therefore there is a tension between the state

of things as they are represented by film technology and the elliptical episodic character of the *mise en scene.* What the frame does, in this context, is to reconcile what are heterogeneous worlds within a hierarchy that makes a fundamental distinction between the artificial production of the film, and dance as a pure and free productivity.

The dance image, which is renaturalised as pure content, topicalises movement and space as the legible indices of form, and this functions to mark presence by legitimating the authority of the transcendent signified. But this position, which encloses and thereby privileges human choreographic creation, is dependent on setting aside the constitutive role of the process of signification as a process which is subversive to the purity of the signified.

The process of framing, which posits these relations, challenges the plenitude of the image by showing that the supplement of outside to inside is necessary to fill a fundamental lack within the system that it supplements. Thus, to frame dancing as the intrinsic action of the dance/film collaboration is to treat film as a detachable medium, as a simple exteriority, which defines the space of *parerga.* But Derrida (1987b) argues that it is the *parergon* that constitutes an internal link between inside and outside that is necessary to supplement the lack in the work itself. In this instance, it is film which bridges the gap which is opened, in the dance/film collaboration, between the liveness and spontaneity of dancing and the mechanical and reproductive character of film, and which images the illusion of real dancing bodies. Film enframes the dance from inside the dance film and, in doing so, makes dancing visible in its entirety, as both plenitude and lack.

The dancing body, as the seen (the scene) of dance, also operates as a frame. It is formally organised into legible signs and it is this organisation that allows for a movement of transcendence whereby disordered materiality is transformed to become a pathway between spirit and matter, subject and object, intrinsic content and extrinsic circumstances. But, the dance body fluctuates between itself as corporeality and its status as sign and therefore prevents the possibility of differentiating irrevocably between matter and form.

The dancing style inscribed on the body, operates as an indicator of an external, authorising presence. The Cunningham style of movement enacts strategically a visible control over the disorder of materiality, as the dancing body becomes an effect of the present-to-consciousness of thought. It therefore can signify as the aesthetic interiority of the framed image. The frame of the television and the frame of the image isolate and compose the dancing bodies, emphasising what is seen (scene) as the space towards which perception is directed. This becomes an important component in determining the establishment of the relationship between the spectator's own space and the plastic space of the image. This relationship necessarily incorporates, either directly or indirectly, the conventions of representation which dominate mainstream television. As a consequence, the collaboration between Cunningham's dance and its filming as <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> articulates a series of hierarchical relations which depend on the logic of parergonality for their coherence and integrity.

The Concept of the *Punctum*

Discussing photography, Barthes (1981) identifies the *punctum* as a focal point that does not depend solely on the internal orgnaisation of the image. The *punctum* is disseminative and unintentional and can be contrasted with the *studium* (Barthes 1981), which is a type of human interest and therefore aligns itself to intention. The *punctum* also is perspectival in that it punctures the direct system of signification to engage both desire and the viewing subject. It provides a subtle off screen, a remainder to the image which creates a desire in the audience to see beyond what is represented on screen. Therefore it punctuates the system of representation, operating as a supplement in the sense that it is added to the image but is already there. In this capacity it marks a relation between an absent and a present, and creates a rupture in the boundary between inside and outside.

The *punctum* contains the idea of inscription and consequently can be considered from a Derridean perspective as a type of writing. To treat the dance film relation as one governed by anchorage and relay, is to fetishize reference as essential.

In <u>Camera Lucida</u> Barthes defines the essence of photography as the structure that allows and explains the functions of the *punctum*. Like the fetish, it functions as a signifying absence, and as such it rewrites the relationship between the audience and the frame by placing them within a three dimensional image that extends outwards from the screen. The dancing body can thus be identified as *punctum* in that it is materiality that is patterned and organised conventionally to become the proper object of desire, and thus it is fetishised as the point of viewing. But, as is the case with all fetishism, the fetishised object both points to and denies an absence.

Freud (1977) defines the fetish object as a symbolic inanimate object that involves both an identification with the the mother and the imaginary phallus. Rooted in the pre-oedipal triangle of mother-child-phallus, the fetish object is put in place as a response to the threat of castration. It denies that threat whilst simultaneously acknowledging it in the need to substitute the trauma of recognition with the fetish object. As Freud (1977: 154) argues, the "horror of castration has set up a memorial to itself in the creation of this substitute." Thus, all fetishism is, on the one hand, a form of uncanny repetition that attends to denial and affirmation. And, on the other, the fetish is connected with sight or with the desire to deny that something is absent from sight. In this respect, blindness and the trauma of castration that is visibly represented in the mother's lack of a penis are conceptually associated with each other. The effect is that triumphing over anxiety is linked with making things present to sight. Consequently, in the context of the systems of representation which dominate the structure of both mainstream dance and film, the dancing body as *punctum* always points to the structure of repetition as denial, but simultaneously incorporates a necessary slipping away.

For Derrida, the *punctum* disrupts the process of conceptualisation because, as in the case of photography, the referent is always placed within the same system as death. Developing Merleau Ponty's (1964) ontology of visibility, Derrida (1993: 229) argues that "one always sees more than one sees...that consciousness has a

punctum caecum, ...that...visibility itself involves a non-visible." Referring to the anatomical physio-pathology of the eye, where the fibrous fleshy membranes of the blind spot on the retina connects to the optic nerve and the neurology of the visual cortex, he notes that the opthalmologist, when searching for the origin of sight, only finds this fleshy material. Furthermore he argues that the *punctum* cannot be reflected or thought but allows for reflection and thought by preparing them as vision. Examined from this perspective dance, which emphasises visibility, can be treated as remarked, as commemorating the invisible of the visible, in that the disciplined dancing body stylises, but what is written in this stylisation is an irremediable absence. This, for Derrida, is the function of the movement of transcendence which sacrifices the visible to operate as legibility. The materiality of the dance signifier legitimates meaning precisely because this meaning is located in "the transparency behind the sensible." (Merleau Ponty 1964: 150-151) This means that what is drawn or marked as meaning in the work cannot be consciousness because, as Derrida (1993) notes, the source point can never be thematised, it always falls away or is disupted in its journey towards its destination. Visibility, the possibility of being seen under the conditions of light atmosphere and distance, must always demonstrate that possibility with out ever appearing. Consequently, the visible is always an other but this is evaded in the point of view, the *punctum*.

Dancing as performance, which is the referent of the dance film, is visibly absent in that it is suspended as having-been-there. It disappears into the past time of the event. As has been argued, <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> makes reference to this in the syntax of the title. Consequently, although this work is remade and angled for the camera which punctuates the visible, what is implied in the inscription of dance as content is a type of legibility which re-marks the possibility of the irreducible having-been-there of a unique referent. Thus, in the dance film, there is a relation between technology and the referent which is reproductive, in the sense that the possibility of the dance film, which topicalises movement as a point of view, is provided both by the filmic apparatus and the structure of remainder. This point of view is always inscribed within the present time and

space of the film, and thus the dance film always carries within it a reminder of absence and death.

Integral to film is its insistence on a standard conception of movement. (Brunette & Wills 1989: 116) This, whilst being constitutive of the representation of film reality, masks the extent of the image's relation to death. In the psychoanalytic sense, what is masked in the fetishisation of movement is the relation between death and desire. The audience of the dance film, engaging with the system of representation which posits an unproblematic relation between origin and representation, are constructed to suppress the discontinuities that are constitutive of film - eg., of editing, of time, of space - thus enacting a form of desire, the desire for an imaginary plenitude, in which death is both represented and denied. The fundamental lack, that Lacan (1979) argues is fantasised as an imaginary wholeness at the mirror stage and is constitutive of all language, is repeated within the dance film as the condition of its identity.

Not only does this link with the previous discussion of the concept of the *techne*, in which death is inscribed as structure, it also links with the Derridean formulation of writing, whose structural possibility and production is dependent on the absence of its creator. Cunningham and Caplan, like many directors and choreographers using film adjust the dance to suit the requirements of the film or video.

> "These changes were made involving movement so that the dancing did not stop. In another section we asked how to cut from one camera to the other, making these cuts on the dance rhythms in such a way as not to interrupt the flow of dancing; a cut is a single instant." (Lesschaeve 1985: 190-191)

As this quotation illustrates, the dancing is an original that is modified to suit the video/film perspective in order to compensate for the loss of the immediacy of dance performance. (Vaughan 1992: 155) However the demand for immediacy means that the structure of death is visible on the representational surface of the image. Thus, there is a contradictory play between presence and absence that occurs within the dance film. The effect of this is that the concentrated form of

reference constituted by the dance film produces an intensification of the crisis of representation, rather than making representation a privileged form.

The operations of reference and representation which produce the legibility of the dance film necessarily relate to the problematic of the frame, because the process of reference and referral is the institutional support that enables the material signifier - the body in dancing, and the image in film - to be related to a referent which resides elsewhere. The body and film are frames that are assembled according to the logic of supplementarity. The way in which they are produced and manipulated raises questions about what constitutes the aesthetic object ontologically, with the effect that reference, as an authenticated form of presence, is folded in on itself, by the play of the *punctum,* to mark dancing as visible invisibility. Consequently the signifying surface of the representational process - the legibility of the image - is opened out to the full force of dissemination.

This combination of frames also sets up the divided structure of adestination, which points to a radical discontinuity, a heterogeneity, between dance and film, preventing the simple reduction of one to the other within a binary oppositional logic. In other words, the context in which the dance film is viewed cannot be determined by a version of destination that is controlled by the sender of the message. Derrida's conceptualisation of the postcard "allegorizes the catastrophically unknown of the order" (Derrida 1987b: 21) by introducing into the relationship between addressee and audience the structure of difference and deferral. This means that to discuss the dance film as a text which asserts the superiority of dance as the privileged aesthetic medium, is to ignore the possibility of disruption and difference that is inscribed within the structure of language and embodied in the structural relation between dance and film. Film, thus, marks an absence or elision that is written on the supposed fully present surface of dancing, in the sense that it recomposes and reproduces the illusion of dancing by technological means.

The division of meaning implied by adestination that is also formulated in terms of dissemination prevents a view of dance as simply performance, and likewise prevents film from being simply visual. Because dancing in the context of the dance film, always depends on and participates in the *techne,* it inhabits the same structural space as writing. This means that it can no longer claim the status of an originary or foundation of the dance film collaboration which it becomes the task of film to represent. In this context dance, like writing, is characterised by mediation and distance and thus proves itself to be an already complex construction. As Derrida (1982) argues, for presence to function it must always be inhabited by the qualities that purportedly belong to its opposite.

The Concept of Signature in the Dance Work: Deconstructing Intentionalism

Derrida (1987) addresses the issue of intentionality through the concept of signature, which he shows is a strategy that problematizes a reductivist concept of meaning. The signature claims to be unique, but to operate institutionally as a source of identification and intention, it has to be repeatable. This leads him to argue that the idea of a single unique signature contains an interesting contradiction that simultaneously claims and legitimates intentionality, whilst pointing, in its iterability, to the absence of a signifying intention.

In discursive or literary works the signature is a discursive act, it is a name belonging to a discourse which functions within the linguistic system, yet outside that system as a foreign body. (Derrida 1982: 317) And because it can be transcribed in writing it also shares a privileged relation with elements of the discourse - they both are written. In a dance work, the signature also functions to mark the act of commission. In Beach Birds for Camera, Cunningham is not in the work and therefore his signature is attributed to the work to function in his absence, within another system - that of language as a marker of presence and intentionality. However, in other works, such as Quartet (1982), he is both

performing within the work as material presence, and outside the work, giving it his signature as choreographer.

When it signifies uniqueness, the signature is treated as the essence of identity that, like speech, is supposed to efface itself, at the moment of its use whilst marking presence. But as part of the system of language, it stands outside the work to "frame it, to present it, authorise it." (Culler 1994: 92) However, in this placing as a proper name, it accumulates meanings which exist in the absence of its referent (for example when a choreographer is dead, as in the case of <u>Giselle)</u> and therefore it can be considered as a signifying element of the texts to which it is joined. For example, when Cunningham's work is seen in performance, it is easier to produce the illusion of presence which presupposes an unmediated relation between the work and its signatory. This is because Cunningham often dances in his own works, and because his choreography in his latter years places him "as his own subject." (Kostelanetz 1992: 183)

> "When Cunningham is in a dance, it tends to be 'about' him;....At least fifteen years ago, he began to set himself apart from the company, often taking the role of an on-stage director.....telling what it is like to dance and then not to dance, and showing what Cunningham's dances will look like without him." (Kostelanetz 1992: 183)

Cunningham is therefore presenced, either as himself, or as an absence which directs the future and as such assures the audience of the authenticity of the work by claiming it as his own.

This version of presence is problematised in respect of <u>Giselle</u> because the concept of signatory is mediated by a considerable number of persons who also sign the work. For example, it is attributed by historians and critics to contributions from Gautier, Perrot, Coralli, St Georges and Heine (Beaumont 1988: 18-27). Dancers such as Makarova, Nureyev and Baryshnikov, who have trained and danced with the great Russian companies and so can bring their

experience and interpretation to subsequent productions, also act as signatories: so do the notators and critics who articulate their responsibility to be "the guardian of a work's proprieties as he understands them." (Crisp 1983: 6)

The above examples demonstrate that whatever the choreographer, critic, historian, cite as the internal meaning and coherence of a work, this is guaranteed in part by the signature that is attached to it. Therefore the signature acts as a frame because it is a mark of intentionality. But, as Derrida (1994: 17) argues, the signature is more than just an act of commisssion. It becomes a performative act which confirms, in a performative way, that one has done something, and thus it exists as an exterior remainder to whatever in the work signifies. The event, or the work, is thus separated as a set of analyzable elements and it is affirmed as such by the signature which acknowledges the limits that boundarise its identity

When Cunningham appears in a work, he is pointing to the fact that he is writing with his body, and writing visually in the danced image. His body, therefore, marks a remainder, in the form of excess. It interrupts the unmediated claim of the signature, as a unique legitimating form of intentionality, by pointing to what mediates this relationship - the marks of writing. This disturbs the naturalising strategies of logocentrism by making visible that which marks mediation and distance.

As Dalva (1992: 183) argues, when Cunningham is in a dance he becomes his own subject matter "…the mere fact of his doing it is dramatic, his very presence a *memento mori.*" This can be generative of particular readings of individual works, such as Quartet (1982), where Cunningham is the uncounted dancer, or Pictures (1984), where Cunningham is the "figurative centre." (Dalva 1992: 183) Inevitably, the questions raised by the above discussion reach beyond the perameters of the signature effect of the choreographer's name because, as argued above, the play of signature describes the means by which the disseminative

functions of a work subvert the metaphysics of logocentrism by rewriting the constitution of authorship and intentionality within that dynamic.

What Dalva's writing demonstrates is that the idea of artistic intentionality is crucial to the appropriation of meaning. Identifying Cunningham as both presence and absence (as *momento mori*), she (1992: 82) argues that Cunningham is the initiator, director, and controller of meaning and tries to dispense with the disseminative possibilities of Cunningham's work within a system of representation that allows the possibility of being able to make an origin present by adequation. This is a familiar way of dealing with the anxieties that permeate systems of representation and one that Derrida addresses when he discusses intention as a textual product or effect. Showing that meaning is produced in a constant interplay of the elements within a work he argues that meaning must always exceed what the artist intended to say. Having formulated this position, he is able to demonstrate that intention is not something that determines meaning but the intention-effect is an "important organizing strand constructed in any given reading." (Brunette & Wills 1989: 65)

From a deconstructionist perspective, a work exists in its production and reproduction beyond what can be analysed. In other words it has a name - a function of the title <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> - and it is the process of naming that allows it to be considered as remaining. This allows for a work to be produced as an identity which is more than just a name. The naming signifies the event that takes place once only and is then nothing other than its own existence. The signature by contrast, enables the work to be repeated, reviewed, experienced and viewed as an existence which is more than all that it means after the analysis of meaning. But the play of signature does not deny intention; rather, it situates it as being produced by iteration, and thus introduces the impossibility of an *a priori*. In the example drawn from Dalva's writings, to identify Cunningham as *momento mori* is to argue simultaneously that the plenitude of presence is also a constituted image. But Derrida (1982) argues that the signature is context bound, because it is culturally, historically and conventionally specific, and in this sense

self reference is an important constitutuent in Cunningham's work. Moreover, he also argues that meaning as an effect of contextual possibilities and the play of signification is inexhaustible. This means that meaning cannot be reduced to the self presence of intentionality because attempts to determine meaning will always give rise to further meanings and contexts which destabilise attempts to specifiy limits. Therefore, although Cunningham sets aside as irrelevant certain ways of producing choreography, he never sets aside the possibility of being able to represent an essence - dancing as itself. But dancing cannot be itself other than in the system of representation which necessarily articulates the irreducible differentiation between a privileged essence and representation.

Similarly, Dalva and Kostelanetz both imply that the system of representation remains undisturbed when they argue that the choreography places Cunningham as his own subject. In other words, that the choreographic chain of signification is usurped by the possibility of correspondence - Cunningham as *memento mori*. The use of the adverb 'as' implies comparative equality. But comparative equality always implies difference. It expresses a demand to limit a quality or attribute by claiming a comparison between it and something else. In this example between Cunningham, memory, and death. In this respect it is possible to differentiate between an essence - Cunningham - and its representation - *memento mori* - yet, simultaneously to acknowledge that although there is an equality claimed between them, repressed withing this claim is the structure of deferral.

Furthermore, Derrida demonstrates that the signature cannot be confused with the name of the choreographer/producer of the work, or with the type of work because the work also functions as a performative statement. Once it is countersigned, it is legitimated institutionally and thus it is the act of counter signature that enables its constitution as a work of art. It is thus the societal conventions, institutuions and processes of legitimation which bring the work into being and provide its condition of possibility as performed aesthetic practice. This means that the very idea of an art work implies a type of legitimating countersignature. Although the origin of a work must lie with the

addressee, who is the point where the signature starts, the context which provides for presence as choreographic is the future of counter signature, which implies and acknowledges the addressee. Consequently the subjective idea that is legitimated by the structure of intentionality becomes public as the possibility of aesthetic practice is institutionally and societally conditioned.

For example, the Romantics claim the origin of art to be within the individual who is able, through the working together of imagination and understanding to perceive the nature of form. (Warnock 1976: 52) The possibility of thinking of aesthetic practice in this way is constituted by the institutions and conventions of society as a whole, which allow for the work to be countersigned in a virtual sense. It is thus the contextual framework of Enlightenment rationality which allows the shift from product to producer to legitimate the artist as the original producer of the work. However, every time that Giselle is cited, or performed, the act of naming it as Giselle acknowledges that it is more than what is analysable. Derrida (1982) argues that, as the signature is not limited to the name of the author, so the identity of the work is not necessarily identified with the title it receives. The act of signature turns the ballet into nothing more than its nonpresent existence, which means that it can be repeated, reviewed and analysed because it exists, even if it doesn't mean anything, or is exhausted by the analysis of its meaning. It remains in the public domain in addition to all that it signifies, in that it signifies the event of the work in itself.

What a deconstructive reading shows is that the dance work cannot exist as signature unless it is politically and scoially countersigned. In other words, in order that Giselle can be recognised as a work of art, as an exemplar of Romanticism, it has to be received and legitimated as such. This makes the signature a politico-institutional act. For Derrida "the signature doesn't exist before the countersignature, which relies on society, conventions, institutions, processes of legitimization." (Brunette & Wills 1994: 18) Therefore the idea of the work of art represents a type of countersignature, because a work only exists in the political and social act of signing.This means that it is only possible to

argue about authorship, or the original version of <u>Giselle,</u> or what is Romantic about the ballet, once the corpus of the work has been countersigned by the institution of dance history. The process of attribution only begins once the ballet is identified as a work that merits a particular kind of attention, and in that capacity it has already been countersigned.

Thus, to think of the dance event as an aesthetic intersubjective phenomenon depends on its performativity. However, Derrida (1982) argues that performativity can be clothed in many forms and in this respect is beyond what is expressed within the constraints of the dance language. The differential quality of the specificities of delivery and the way in which content is interpreted and addressed, informs and establishes the relation between author and addressee. This is then responsible for the identification and production of effects in respect of the work. But, as Derrida demonstrates, the origin of the work resides with the addressee who only exists at the point of countersignature. Although in the case of Romantic ballet the signature would be attributed traditionally to the person who produces it - the Romantic artist in the form of Perrot, Coralli, Heine, Gautier etc., the possibility of it being attributed as such is produced by the possibility of countersignature "which gives it over to the possibility of the signature. " (Brunette & Wills 1994: 19) Consequently there cannot be a private work. A work can only exist as a work of art if society has countersigned it in a virtual sense. To discuss <u>Giselle</u> in terms of the way in which it conforms, or not, to a version of origin, is to insist on the possibility of representing an imaginary presence which can be recovered in the historical process of recovery and retrieval, whilst simultaneously denying the authority of dance history, which brings the work into being via the act of countersignature.

Similarly, to treat the Romantic artist as being able to create like nature, bringing into being the inner finality of form through the faculties of imagination and understanding, is to argue that there is such a thing as a private work of art, which is unique and irreducible. But the Derridean concept of signature argues that what brings a work into being is a third phenomenon, society which countersigns it.

What then interrupts the unmediated relationship between the identity of the work and the intentionality of self presence to which the signature refers, is that the signature is repeatable. Thus, the idea of a single signature is a structural impossibility, and by implication, so is the idea of the self presence of intention as an essential part of its structure. Consequently, to discuss the Romantic work as being signed as such by the intention of the Romantic artists in terms of their use of the symbol as the guarantee of its internal meaning and coherence, is to acknowledge the signifying possibilities produced within the system of language whilst simultaneously denying that the work signifies beyond the constraints of pure reference.

The concept of signature is formulated by Derrida as the means by which authorial intentionality is disseminated within a work as a structuring force within the text. Derrida (1982) argues that the play of the signature can be used to describe various meanings and effects which arise from the work. Although the structure of the proper name sets this process in motion, there is a signature effect which, as a form of writing, questions what in the dance image produces effects of heterogeneity, and therefore escapes the dominant mode of representation. Derrida's reading of the signature effect, which also involves questions of the frame, can be used to raise interesting questions about Cunningham's work.

Cunningham seeks generally to articulate "the basic thing about dancing (which) is the energy, and an amplification of it which comes through the rhythm." (Lesschaeve 1985: 126) However a deconstructive reading of this position would acknowledge that, although there is framing, the status of the frame is put in jeopardy because, at the point where it it is put in place, it effaces itself. (Derrida 1987: 61) For example, Cunningham discusses working with the movement limitations of the human body as working with

> "Movement (that) comes from something, not from something expressive but from some momentum or energy.....a logic of movement.....the force of the particular movement itself" (Lesschaeve 1985: 68: 77: 103: 153)

And it appears that this is what he wants to bring to the spectator/reader of his works. He wants them to place the body to one side in order for the movement, the shape of movement, to be visible. Cunningham fetishises shape as the means of representing what, for him, constitutes the irreducible of dancing. He legitimates this position by claiming that there is an *a priori* relation between the body and movement. Movement which precedes the body is mediated by the body; it passes "completely into and through the body." (Lesschaeve 1985: 57) In his own words, movement is expressive of energy, or force, to which he gives shape, using methods of chance and indeterminacy. Shape, therefore, can be treated as organic because it arises from the organising and natural force of energy, yet becomes the means of representing artistic vision which transcends context. The nature of dance for Cunningham is like water, it is evanescent and has a fluidity (Lesschaeve 1985: 25-27) that is shaped "out of a sort of inspired and tireless curiosity on the part of the choreographer." (Franko 1995: 170) Dancing, therefore, seems to have a uniquely transformative capacity. It provides an amplification of energy which is shaped in movement by the interaction between the limitations of the body and the insightfulness of Cunningham. Thus, it would seem that when Cunningham talks about movement as shape, he assumes unproblematically that dance movement can mediate momentum and energy. And the dance which is seen (what is evidenced visually as scene) is given shape by specific choreographic procedures that privilege form over content.

However, what Cunningham is trying to challenge with aleatory methods and techniques, is the idea that dance must be freed from determinism, which he conceives as deadening, to become "nourished by motion." (Lesschaeve 1985: 129) Motion, "the passage of movement from moment to moment in a length of time" (Croce 1977: 51) is thus presenced as the truth of dancing which gives to it form, and movement style becomes the way of representing the self-presence of consciousness. Thus described, Cunningham's work, like that of the Romantics, is influenced by the subjective idea, and it is this which enacts a reconciliation of

matter and form, whereby the dancer and the dance conjoin in an organic, vital way. For Cunningham, embodiment is a form of transcendence, whereby life becomes art. This means that, although he uses aleatory techniques to avoid intentionalism he reconstructs "the movement and fullness of life itself" (Kermode 1986: 97), bringing form and matter together in the nature and quality of dancing.

Cunningham explores the autonomy of form in the tension between the abstract of method and the concrete of shape. There is a movement in his work, away from the preoccupation with metaphoricity, towards dancing as an objective taciturnity which nevertheless speaks for itself metonymically through the privileged dimension of form. Thus, he acknowledges in this position, a separation between the origin of presence which is form and the posibility of that origin being contaminated by the presence of the dancer in which movement is representative of energy, force, and nature in motion. But although it is represented within the limitations of the body which impose boundaries on its execution, the body is treated as a type of content that is subordinated to form. What is maintained, therefore, is a series of polar oppositions between nature/culture, concrete/abstract, inside/outside as nature, which has a representative energy and force is given concrete expression in movement via the concern with shape.

Cunningham's concern with shape conforms to the cultural ideal of modernism which is to rid the dance medium of all things extraneous to it in order that the work is expressive of its uniqueness and singularity. Consequently, the universality of form is fetishised and privileged as the embodiment of essence, and it is this that takes precedence over the textual circumstances of its production.

This repeats an opposition fundamental to European aesthetics that is generally found to have its origins in the eighteenth century, but can be traced back to the

roots of the western philosophical tradition. (Nead 1992: 23) The basic set of oppositions established in the Platonic concept of ideal forms, between form/matter, ideal/actual, mind/body also form the framework of Enlightenment thinking which was dominated by Cartesian thought. Descartes argued for a distinction between the spiritual and the material which enabled the mind to transcend corporeality. This differentiation provided the means whereby knowledge, produced by the rational scientific mind, could be treated as both an objective entity and as objectively acquired. Form, which orders the natural through the imposition of technique and style, is associated with the higher faculties of creativity and rationality, and privileged over matter and substance. Corporeality is thus produced as a complication that needs a defining frame. Conventionalised according to classical aesthetics, the materiality of the dance body is sealed up in order that its margins

" show a strict sense of balance and formal design which is serene and generalised rather than individiual....Thus the the lines and angles of head, body, arms and legs must be suitably related to each other and to the central line of balance in order to display a perfectly balanced pose." (Lawson 1979: 8)

The form/matter opposition governs the whole of Kant's *Critique*. Aesthetic pleasure that is experienced in an engagement with the beautiful involves a reflection on the object, and thus it is privileged and differentiated from sensuous pleasure because it involves the higher faculty of contemplation. Kant identified the aesthetic object as having a value in itself as a work of art. Consequently, aesthetic judgement is defined by disinterest in the sense that the spectator's desires are set aside in the act of contemplation. Furthermore, Kant developed a hierarchy of aesthetic experience which differentiated free from dependent beauty. Free beauty, usually found in nature, is rarely found in art because aesthetic experience usually involves some form of conceptualisation in respect of the subject. The pure object of beauty is thus free of interest in respect of " the material condition of the aesthetic object and the aims and desires of the spectator." (Nead 1992: 24)

Whilst Cunningham detaches movement from the body, he also speaks of the material body as providing a natural limitation to movement possibilities. In the Kantian sense, this separation of body and movement - where movement is seen to precede the body - poses a problem of delimitation. (Rodowick 1994: 194) It is evident that, in the case of dance, body and movement cannot be separated because the movement cannot exist without the body, which is instrumental to its representation. Therefore, the body must exist as a boundary space between what constitutes content - the body as container and limitation of movement, and what constitutes form - the relation between movement and its surroundings, which must include body to body relationships.

Like all forms of logocentrism, art depends for its identity on a structure of opposition which privileges rationality - the rationalised ideal, aesthetic body - whilst placing materiality to one side, outside of the aesthetic frame. The technically trained body is thus protected from contamination by another material, desirous and potentially subversive body. And it is this dissociative framing that enables Cunningham to distinguish unproblematically between what is intrinsic to the work, which he locates in the dynamic relation between movement, space and time, and what is extrinsic to it.

Cunningham's work is engaged in an attempt to frame what is intrinsic about dancing and to separate it from what surrounds and attaches itself to dancing, but which, in his opinion, is extraneous to it.

> "The subject of dance is dancing itself....I think it is essential to see all the elements of the theater as both separate and interdependent. The idea of a single focus to which they all adhere is no longer relevant." (Lesschaeve 1985: 140)

He examines this subject in different ways: in terms of what constitutes the irreducible content of dancing which enables him to address   intrinsically,

through body-to-space relations the relation of energy and shape; what constitutes dancing itself - the energy and force of movement ; the natural limitations of the individual bodies as a boundarising framework that limits choreographic possibilities. These all produce frames that are brought together by a lack in what constitutes the intrinsic limits of the frame, which is the lack of dance's conceptualisation of itself in movement terms.

In the dance context the body is both material object and emblematic of subjectivity. Yet simultaneously, as the instrument of dancing it is transformed into the negation of both. Cunningham acknowledges that he is interested in the physique and way of moving of individual dancers, their "wide latitude of shapes" (Lesschaeve 1984: 69), which allows for the possibility that they can do the movements required of them slightly differently whilst trying to find ways to make the movements work. The tension within this position is that the materiality and the subjectivity of the dancers both produces the frame - provides the substantial basis for what interests Cunningham - but this also is produced by the frame - is organised and regulated by the conventions of dance and Cunningham's interpretation of the modernist aesthetic. Therefore it is the frame that gives the dance body aesthetic content, allowing it to structurally embody energy, force and shape, as the logic of movement. Thus, the identification of what is intrinsic to the object is dependent on a categorical framework and it is this that marks what is pure dancing, what is idealised as form. What is suppressed in this context is the lack which both inhabits and protects the aesthetic ideal, and which leads Culler (1994: 195) to describe framing as a "frame up." At the moment that *parerega* are set aside as supplementary to what is intrinsic, they are, according to the logic of the supplement, playing a constitutive role. Thus, the differentiation between form and matter, that depends on a separation between the frame and what it frames, repeats not the identification of an essence or purity, but a necessary dislocation. And Cunningham's formulation of what is the real nature of dancing, the intrinsic constitutents of energy, of nature, of motion, is dependent on what has been marginalised or set aside as supplement to supplant a lack in the original.

This lack within the frame is also produced by the frame, in that it only occurs when dance as a movement based art form is considered from a conceptual perspective, because it is the frame which gives the critic an intrinsic content or structure to consider. The possibility of determining what properly belongs to dance depends on a critical and categorical framework, which allows distinctions and differentiations to be made between the formal, pure and intrinsic content of dancing, and the material, impure and extrinsic. At the moment that Cunningham uses dance to be reflexive about itself, he is producing constitutive and boundarising conditions that undermine this role. Thus, to place the body as marginal to movement, via the logic of the supplement, makes the body central by virtue of its marginality.

The opposition between what is termed natural energy of movement and art - shape - is inverted because shape is constituted as an effect of body-to-space relations. Movement doesn't precede the body, rather the natural limitations of the body provide the condition of possibility of movement, and shape. However, talking about what interests him in a dancer Cunningham admits this position;

> "I have some idea as to how they will do a certain gesture. Then they do it, and it ends up being more than I expected, its longer and goes further than I anticipated. That's a pleasure and I am always amazed," (Lesschaeve 1985: 69)

But he sets this interest to one side when he treats energy as both motivating and constituting movement. This is a claim that is substantiated by a view that sets aside the technique and the technical as having no life of its own. Discussing technical issues he questions,

> " how to solve technically the problem of going abruptly from one speed to another, how to do a rapid movement followed immediately by something

slow......So it becomes a technical problem. What kind of exercises to evolve that might be useful for this situation?" (Lesschaeve 1985: 142)

The technique evolved for training the Cunningham dance body to move in the required ways, and the technicality of movement problems, raise issues of mediation and therefore they are set aside, like writing, as part of a technology of communication in order that the body in movement can communicate content, value and meaning. unproblematically. As Cunningham (1997: 60) argues, the body "under the discipline the dancer sets for himself" becomes a transparent instrument that provides "a channel to the source of energy." The logocentric opposition governing the placing of technique, the technical and the technological is the opposition between nature and art which, for Cunningham, are distinctly separable.

"An art process is not essentially a natural process; it is an invented one. It can take the actions of organisation from the way in which nature functions, but essentially man invents the process. And from or for that process he derives a discipline to make and keep the process functioning. That discipline too is not a natural process.....the continued keeping of the elasticity of the muscles, the continued control of the mind over the body's actions, the constant hoped-for flow of the spirit into physical movement...in not a natural way....But the final synthesis can be a natural result, natural in the sense that the mind, body and spirit function as one." (Vaughan 1997: 60)

Consequently, like the Romantics, Cunningham locates his version of nature, dancing itself, as an *a priori* that can be embodied as form. The appeal to a transcendent effectively by-passes the chain of signification, and in doing so transforms dance into a type of writing that can then be appropriated as a derivation of the essence of dancing.

For Derrida a structural constituent of any work of art is its iterability, its detachability from any *a priori* context. But to treat the discipline of technique as a device with which to accomplish the modification and alteration of the natural context of the moving body is to assume that technique and the technical can be

treated as supplementary "prosthetic relations" (Brunette & Wills 1994: 174)
Moreover, the artistic event is a form of writing in the sense that it is destined to
function in the absence of its originator. It operates, thus, as remainder whose
meaning and sense cannot be constrained to a specific intention, or a version of
an *a priori*. In this context the body operates as a paradigm in that it is both itself
and not itself. As itself, the natural body is a context which is refashioned through
the discipline of technique and dance style. It is therefore no longer a natural
materiality; it is a "fac-simile." (Derrida 1987b: 194) It is an effect of writing that
is signed by Cunningham. Thus Cunningham's system of training, and his
writings about dance, put order into the body, as a type of narrative that is
inscribed in the work in which it is active. Inscribed in this way, the body
operates as a *cartouche* which, like parergon and the signature effect, is "put to
work and forms part of the work by inscribing (itself)... as the performative of
the signatory." (Derrida 1987b: 219)

But the body is radically heterogeneous to the paradigm which it is supposed to
engender. The body has a naturalness, a materiality, which conventionally
endows it, like speech, with a priority which, as fac-simile, it does not possess.
Within a Cunningham work, the more the body distinguishes itself as a priority
the less able it is to function as a fac-simile:

> "for that very reason, the dancer strives for complete and tempered body-skill,
> for complete identification with the movement in as devastatingly impersonal
> fashion as possible.....to transmit the tenderness of the human spirit through
> the disciplined action of the human body." (Vaughan 1997: 60)

In other words, the more the body distinguishes itself as a human body, the less it
is able to become something different from itself - the embodiment of an
otherness - which Cunningham articulates as the human spirit. Thus, in a dance
context that emphasises the irreducibility of dancing as dependent on the
limitations of the natural body, it must lose its identity as "the synthesis of
physical and spiritual energies." (Vaughan 1997: 60)

In Beach Birds for Camera, Cunningham fetishises space and time in body-to-space relations. The movements of the bodies spatialise time, and this spatialisation is valued in the way in which it gives shape to the natural energy of motion. In this context, shape implies a number of things. It can be the external form of a material object, the body, which is organised into constant relations of position and proportionate distance among all the points composing its outline or external surface. But it can also be the appearance of general form, an imaginary or ethereal form, an attitude which represents or embodies the nature of some idea, or concept. Cunningham's use of the words 'shape' and 'form' are interchangeable and can embody all, or any, of the above meanings in appropriate contexts. However, all uses have in common the feature that, as shape or form, the body demonstrates the produced qualitative character in terms of which the dancing body resists being itself. Thus, the body as paradigm evokes the play of time and death, inscribing those structures within the dance work. The movements of the body spatialise time, turning it into a complex stratified notion that shows it to be a synthesis of body-to-space relations. Time is thus not an autonomous given, but is constituted as a product of certain relations that are fetishised as shape. Furthermore, the relation between the real - the material subjectivity of the body - and the image, is not one that can be founded on presence. It is inhabited by *techne,* which is essentially iterable and which, in its very structure, marks lifelessness. Consequently, the threat that underlies the logocentric attitude towards art, as a type of *techne*, is the threat of lifelessness.

The Concept of Desire in the Dance Body-Image

The dance body then becomes a harbinger of death. As performativity - as fac-simile - the surface of the body is the site of disjunctions. It marks the death of the utilitarian, everyday body, whilst remaining in the guise of a stabilised, living body. In other words, it is dissimulated and ossified by the limitations that dance, as an aesthetic practice, sets in order to give the appearance of self-representation. Once this is achieved, according to Cunningham, the dancer is freed to become a

symbolic substitute of the flow of the spirit. In other words, the body exists outside temporality, in its lifelessness, whilst functioning as a sign of facticity.

As has already been argued in this chapter, the dancing body operates according to a logic of transcendental blindness that allows its incorporation into the dance spectacle on the condition that it effects a disappearance. Consequently, what appears to sight is negated and transcended by insight, and the trauma of desire is displaced into the body in its fetishisation as form.

Lacan (1979) defines the concept of desire as being unsatisfiable because desire is not related to a real object, it is addressed to an imaginary object. If the fulfilment of desire is always thus deferred, then the simultaneous death and preservation of the object of desire stabilises the relation between desiring subject and object, while producing a situation of eternally controlled deferral. The body as fac-simile, as an imaginary identity that is dependent on a misrecognition of the real body, stages the death of desire whilst maintaining the eternalisation of desire. This death points to the initial death at the heart of subjectivity, the death of the real in favour of an imaginary identity, whilst pointing to a replacement which, in the dance context, is kept perpetually in sight in the form of body-to-space relations. This confirms the function of the fetish, which is to preserve what has been lost - the lost object as a representation of an ideal, in this case the possibility of pure embodiment - which is and always will be, absent from any real experience. To deny loss in terms of a substitute acknowledges both the loss and the inadequacy of the substitute. As a consequence, the fetish allows its creator, and its spectator, to retain a belief that threatens imagined pure embodiment. If the body can be 'castrated', or rendered lifeless, then so can the trait as the trace of in-sight. But simultaneously, the existence of the fetish object allows the fetishist to relinquish this fear by transferring it on to another site.

In the dance context, the body is treated as problematic because it is the locus of potentially uncontrollable, and therefore subversive, desires which need to be repressed. Once a body is transferred to the dance context as part of the scene, it enacts symbolically and conventionally a renunciation of its materiality. It is

framed as scene. It becomes the representation of an other original (other than itself), and is thus inhabited by what Freud calls "a duplicitous blindness" (1977: 154) The moving body then gives the experience of pleasure which in this context is dependent on a disavowal or a negation of the system of difference and referral which underpins the possibility of representing an imaginary plenitude. Thus, "the exhilerating moment that this exposing of bare energy can give" (Vaughan 1997: 86) which is fetishised by Cunningham, is an image that is already dead in the sense that it is a desired image which, as Lacan demonstrates, is unsatisfiable. In referring to "the ecstasy in dance as the possible gift of freedom" (Vaughan 1997: 86) Cunningham fetishises the image in an attempt to preserve the possibility of acess to an imaginary origin. He can then conceive of himself as a facilitator who opens the way for the body to be "infused with energy that can be released in movement.... to extend its manifestation into space" (Vaughan 1997: 86) Thus, the image is always a desired image. It represents the desire for something that is unsatisfiable and has to be detached from the real object, in order that the fantasised image can be substituted for it. However, the fetishised dance image is also figuratively dead because the possibility of pure embodiment is dependent on and interrupted by the need to rely on materiality as the carrier of form, which has been renounced.

Derrida's reading of the logic of parergonality enables a reading of Cunningham's work which shows that what is explicitly detatchable and arbitrary, is implicitly necessary and constitutive. The claim for form as the privileged content of a work is thus structured by the misrecognition of the relation between form and matter. Consequently, although Cunningham argues for a distinction between movement and body which privileges movement as a presencing of energy, at the point that movement becomes visible as dancing, as shape, the body is reintroduced as essentially structuring.

In the case of the dance body, the transformation of the utilitarian everyday body into an ideal aesthetic object is concerned with a transformation of value which inhabits this process. So a transition takes place from a particular example - the profane body - to a particular ideal example - the aestheticised and

conventionalised dance body. The performing body then becomes a better example than the example, but also becomes an example for the example.

This strategy of displacement and substitution can also be seen at work in the narrative of Giselle. In Act One of the ballet, Giselle is selected by Albrecht and identified as an example of spontaneity, expressivity, and naturalness who demonstrates her appeal in her ability to dance. Although, as has been shown in Chapter Two, her movement style is more freely expressive than that of any other character, it is interrupted by the use of dance gestural language, particularly in her encounters with Albrecht. During the course of the work, Giselle evolves into an expression of the Romantic image as it is symbolised in a female body. As image, she expresses the truth of a different order, whilst simultaneously maintaining the physicality of presence. In this condition Giselle, resurrected as a Wili, embodies a reconciliation between form and matter. Thus, the transition between the allegorical use of dance gestural language and the symbolic use of dance language is exemplified in the character of Giselle who, in Act One of the ballet, functions as the starting point for mediation. As the ballet culminates in the symbolic imagery of Act Two, proportion, movement and meaning are drawn together - for example, they are organised in the shape and patterning of the Wili's movements - to visually embody symbolic reality as the reality of the imagination. Chosen as an example, Giselle becomes, in her resurrection as a Wili, an examplar of the Romantic image. What suits her for this transition is that she shows her particularity and her uniqueness in Act One through her ability to dance.

This reading demonstrates that the example, Giselle, is always ready to be an exemplar but what dictates the extent to which this is achieved is the boundarising of Act Two as the embodiment of a different, better, more pure use of language to exemplify the exemplar. Thus, through the selection of examples, it is possible to address the way in which what is constituted as intrinsic is inhabited by lack, and to examine the ways in which the logic of parergonality is committed to repress lack, whilst making it visible.

Considering Derrida's discussion of the identification and structure of the exemplar from this perspective, it is possible to show that the strategy which identifies an ideal is a strategy that is based on an imaginary fantasy of wholeness, and cannot therefore claim the law of universality to validate it. As Lacan demonstrates in his categorisation of the development of subjectivity, all language strives towards the representation of wholeness, but this is a fantasised identity because it is based on a setting to one side, of rupture, division and dislocation. To identify a hierarchical relation between *ergon* and *parergon* is to claim a completeness, or essence, for the former which cannot be sustained. It is shown to be a fantasy which is dependant on repressing the lack at the basis of identity, and displacing it as *parergon*. The logic which then appropriates the work as a plenitude, and differentiates it from both the frame and what is enframing, is constituted by lack that cannot be seen; that cannot be represented as the dance scene. Thus the dance body is experienced as an effect - the effect of the *parergon* - which offers an identity to the work as an essential plenitude.

Cunningham confines dance within a framing of movement, and movement within the framing of the body, and in this sense the frame operates an interpretive limit which restricts an object by establishing boundaries. But, as Derrida claims (1987b: 93), the frame does not exist. It is a disappearing figure. In both of the above examples the body is treated as a figure - a materiality which is conventionally organ-ised to figure against a ground. Whether that ground is narratively representational, as in the case of Giselle who figures the Romantic image, or whether the ground is space and time, which is given depth, dimension, and actuality by the transversing body, becomes a matter of conventions: the conventions of Romanticism that dematerialise the body to become symbolically expressive; or the conventions of Modernism which dematerialise the body in favour of capturing the essence of dancing. In each case, the body is treated as a materiality which fades before the eye, to become expressive of something other than itself. Thus it can only operate as a frame in the context of being dissolved, dematerialised. In this sense what is framed as extrinsic - the body - actually

functions as the most intrinsic element of a dance work, because it is the body that marks off and contains materiality, whilst being reconstituted as form.

There is a dual process that takes place in relation to the body in both of the above instances. First, the body is rationalised and disciplined by technical training to become a performing body. It is purified according to rituals which are collectively agreed in order that it can become a properly organised aesthetic object. Secondly, the authority of logocentrism demands that, in the aesthetic contexts of Romanticism and Modernism, the body is further marginalised to the point that it becomes a figure whose materiality has been forgotten. Doubly bound, every attempt is made to repress its instinctual, individual and therefore potentially subversive nature and to re-place it as the embodiment of free creativity or aesthetic productivity.

Furthermore, to assert the authority of what is deemed external is also to subvert the metalinguistic authority of choreographer, critic, historian, whose externality depends on the convoluted structure of parergonal division. For example, dance critical discourse, speaking from within the specificities of cultural and historical context identifies essentialising claims for meaning - in Giselle the differentiated movement style, and in Beach Birds for Camera the body-to-space relation which conveys through spatialisation the dynamic of energy in motion - and the works are used to legitimate the authority of discourse. This means that, in order to establish the privilege of culture over nature, of art over materiality, of thought over expression, the dancing body and its movements are continually re-naturalised within critical discourse. In the case of the Romantic body it is re-naturalised within the framework of organicist language, and in respect of Cunningham's work, the body is re-naturalised as expressive of what is natural and proper to life. (Vaughan 1997: 86) Thus, the claim for dance in respect of these two examples is that it always speaks for itself. But, because dance is received and read as meaningful, it cannot be treated simply as if, like speech, it can give unmediated and spontaneous access to thought. Although treated conventionally as a silent art form, it is, according to Derrida, a taciturn art form that operates as a type of writing. This is the "other" of dance, that points to the

lack within dance which needs to be suppressed in order to present dancing as representative of a meaningful, self-sufficient originary.

Symbol, Structure and Sign in the Language of Dance

It is helpful at this point to return to Derrida's reading of Kant to explore further the framing of <u>Giselle</u> as an exemplar of Romantic ballet. To exemplify the symbolic use of language by differentiating it from an allegorical use of language in the examples of the two acts is visually to display, hierarchise and privilege the good example from the bad example of language. The division of the ballet into two acts is used as a means of separating both as distinct entities that are related. That division functions as a *parera* which produces identities, whilst organising those identities in terms of status and hierarchy. (For further discussion see Chapter Three) Within the structuring context of the narrative of the ballet, the juxtaposition between the two acts locates the first act as extrinsic to what constitutes the proper dance expression. This reading is enabled through the existence of other disourses and knowledges, such as the development of German Romantic thought and the way in which it impacts on French Romanticism; or the Romantic critique of the Enlightenment, which condemns the universalising constraints of rationality as productive of an empty, deadening classicism. But what is shown in Chapter Three is that all Romantic ballet is allegorical; it always appeals to something other than itself, and thus articulates something other than itself. Consequently, it is necessary to appeal to a schema that is extrinsic to <u>Giselle</u> in order to legitimate and confirm its status as an exemplar of Romantic ballet. The identification and separation of what is extrinsic to the work of art is therefore fundamental to the organisation of that which is integral to it.

In the narrative of <u>Giselle,</u> Albrecht is given as the example of the purposive, humanist subject and Giselle is used, symbolically and by example, to represent his imaginative faculty. Albrecht is thus the organising principle of this example. As argued in Chapter Two, Giselle in her identity as Wili, is used to express the culmination of the Romantic image, and as such she is placed as the apparent extrinsic of the story of the Romantic search for expression. Between the end of

Act One and the opening of Act Two, Giselle is denied her vitality as a living being and is resurrected as an image, as a supplement to Albrecht's subjectivity. Thus, there is a separation between the interiority of the Romantic artist/hero and the exteriority of expression, which is the model for the relation between the frame and the enframed that is enacted in the Romantic critique of the allegorical use of language.

The conjunction of a beautiful feminine body with death is used to depict the expression of imagination which is given an identity, as life in death, through the patterning and organisation of the Wilis. Thus, the privileging of symbolically expressive language is dependent for its power on a forgetting or disguising of the fundamental characteristic of the allegorical, which is that the sign, rather than becoming itself, represents something other than itself. In Act Two, Giselle, fetishised as image, becomes the site where the gazed at object merges with the object desired by the desiring subject. As Romantic image she confirms the power of the imagination, with the effect that imagination and desire are reconciled in a fantasised image of plenitude.

In the above discussion of <u>Giselle</u> the aesthetic rendition, although similar to the object it re-animates, always emphasises its difference from it. There are clear distinctions between sign and referent which work to undo the the possibility of an unmediated relationship between them. Giselle embodies the transition from materiality to image as her movement style is developed and differentiated. And in this respect, the Romantic emphasis on the signifying process, which is visibly enacted points, to the impossibility of an unmediated relationship between the sign and its referent. This is then overidden in the Romantic privileging of the symbolic use of language, where the image is defined as infinitely expressive. The inner finality of form is then abstracted as an image of organic unity in its mode of organisation. The Romantic assumption is that the symbolic mode of expression can presence unproblematically the logical structure of thought and, thus, that the extent to which the referent is present in the sign is offered as an indicator of proper meaning. Consequently, the dancing body as symbol is treated

as signifying being whilst giving life, in the material form of the dancing body, to what it designates.

The potential to symbolise becomes a significant issue in respect of <u>Giselle</u> and <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u>, whether it is evaluated in terms of the Romantics evocation of the symbolic use of language, or whether it is pursued in the way in which Cunningham engages the relation between the metaphoric and the metonymic planes of language to produce a statement of contradiction and disaffinity. When Jakobson formulates the competitive relation between the selective and the combinative axes of language, he does not attend to the dichotomous character of all semiotic systems beyond claiming that the bipolar structure of language is of primal significance for all human behaviour in general. However, Eco (1985) argues that language, as a system of symbols, is a system of conventional meaning-giving devices which enables the audience of a work to identify significant sequences and relations in their experience of it. Any claim to a referential use of language has to be based in metonymic chains of association, whether they are of a temporal, spatial or movement character. The implication of this position is that it is possible to conceive of metaphor only because language is a complex interrelationship of metonymies which can be explained by cultural convention rather than original resemblance. (Eco:1985)

Cunningham's writings have recourse to an analogical, and therefore metaphorical, explanation of the way in which dancing operates. He identifies (1997: 86) the metonymic chains that support his position, such as "the balance of the weight, and the shift of that weight in space and time, that is, in greater or smaller areas, and over longer or shorter lengths of time." But he then (1997: 86) gathers this "each thing-ness" up into an explanation which identifies the relationship between movement, space and time as a reality that is not abstracted from anything but is "the thing itself." In this case, the problems of dance language are reduced to a description of intention that articulates a model of binary oppositions. For example, the opposition between metonymic chains and metaphoric meaning which focuses the audience's attention on the language itself. However, in distinguishing between "each-thing-ness" and "the thing

itself" Cunningham prevents an engagement with dancing as a process of "unlimited semiosis", (Eco 1985: 68) introducing an appeal to an *a priori* as a boundarising framework which prevents the play of semiosis. The effect of the latter is to induce a search in the work for metonymic connections which can be read as a representation of something that exists outside the process of signification. In this process, issues of language as they are raised by the work itself are placed to one side as matters that are less serious than the idealist search for origin.

To discuss either of these works from the perspective of structural linguistics is to repeat the logocentric strategies already discussed, because they attempt to reduce the textuality of a work to explanations of origin. However, to introduce a deconstructive reading of the works is to point to the issues raised by two distinctly different works whose makers, critics and historians refer the audience, through different means, to 'dancing itself'. What is enacted in respect of both works is the desire for transparency, the transparency of the body in order that it does not infect or contaminate the danced representation. In Giselle, this is achieved in the system of representation which is organised by the structure of narrative. In the case of Cunningham's work, by contrast, this takes place in the transcendence of matter into form which is then fetishised as a reconciliation of mind and body in the shape that the movement takes. (Vaughan 1997: 86)

However, both works operate within a system which is structured by a play of repetitions and replacements. This has a double effect. First, the effect of enacting a triumph over temporality by repeating the representation of some version of origin that, in the process, fragments, alters and reformulates the body into new versions. The displaced or negated material body then serves to figure loss and displacement. In Giselle it is the loss of the morbid, deadly restraints of Enlightenment society, which are replaced in the liveness and spontaneity of the other world of the Wilis. Loss and displacement are thus embodied in the processes of death and resurrection. In the context of the narrative, Giselle's collapse into madness and her subsequent death, resulting from her betrayal by Albrecht, highlights the bodiliness of human existence because it gives

corporeality to loss and absence. What is exchanged is one loss for another, as Albrecht's mourning for Giselle is transformed into an allegory for artistic renewal. Her death and resurrection enact a transformation of her representation as a corporeally present individual into a mitigated image. As the image of ephemerality that is based on her natural presence, she transcends the problematics of her former existence to become an effect of presence - an absence. As Image, she embodies the capacities of the Romantic Imagination that is shown narratively to emerge from the decay of an other world. The shift from presence to absence is embodied in the gesture of the fetish, which has the effect of opening up the space for aesthetic sensibility . Thus, the resurrection of Giselle, as an effect of presence, creates a "monument to the body of materiality and desire which it also tries to deny." (Bronfen 1992: 360-371)

As soon as recurrence becomes constitutive, whether its through the narrative of death and resurrection giving rise to the Romantic image, or through the discipline of dancing which gives rise to form, the problematics of repetition emerge. This is because the structure of repetition and replacement belongs to the logic of the trait. The structure of repetition, as it is formulated within Western metaphysics, implies the possibility of being able to represent unproblematically a differentiatable origin that is fully present to itself. But Derrida (1982) argues that the trait is paradoxical in that it functions as a re-mark. It marks presence as what is absent, and therefore it signifies the impossibility of a differentiated and distinct moment of complete self presence. In Giselle, the trait is constitutive and therefore necessary, because the differentiation between Act One and Two, on a number of different levels, is expressive of a moment of non-sight which allows sight to take place. This occurs both in terms of the faculty of Imagination which is a form of in-sight, and in terms of citing, defining at the level of signification, what properly belongs to the realm of the Imagination and what does not. Thus the process by which the trait works to establish presence can only operate by means of a contradictory movement of inclusion and exclusion.

The trait, for Derrida, is defined as a purely graphic element, like writing, and therefore, like speech, it is divided between inside and outside, by *differance,* and

thus always constituted by its opposite. Consequently, the spacing that is characteristic of writing points both to the lack of an imaginary plenitude, and to the constitutive character of the mark, whose effects are produced within a a structuring logic that is marked by difference and deferral. In this respect, writing can be considered in a similar way to the symptom (See Chapter One), which is constitutive of effects whilst marking simultaneously a lack, the lack of the forgotten trauma.

Cunningham's view of dancing is that there is no need to look in movement for anything more than what we see in it. Treating the body as the natural limitation of movement possibilities, Cunningham claims that the essence of movement is a force or an energy that he attempts to reproduce choreographically. Yet he claims simultaneously that, by emphasising dancing as itself, he is trying to avoid the problem of intentionality. His use of aleatory techniques and computer graphics to organise the material of the dancing bodies is often cited, both by Cunningham and by critics and historians, as evidence that he has avoided the pitfalls of intentionality. For example, when working on Coastal Zone (1983)

> "the choreography and camera movements were made with chance operations. That is, the sequence and overlap of movements and the number of dancers to be seen at any given moment, and the space the dancers were to be in as well as the changes of camera positions….how many close ups, middle range and back shots there would be… were initiated by chance means." (Cunningham 1997: 220-221)

The moving body is transformed by this process into the image of movement. It is attached to executed movement and the actions and reactions between the movement of the dancers are located within the conventions of dance, as form. The model for this conception of movement seems to be taken from the materiality of the body which consists of molecules, atoms, organs, parts etc., that are in a constant state of action and reaction. (Lesschaeve 1985: 129) Cunningham argues that it is the canalization of rhythm and energy that gives fluidity to the body in movement, and thus that his concern with shape in the transition from one position to another is his means of "trying to get them (the dancers) to do something about the spirit." (Lesschaeve 1985: 128) Cunningham

can claim, therefore, that this set of interrelations that give energy to the body, is the absolute identity of the dance image and movement. This does not mean that he is arguing for each dancer to conform to the representation of a particular image. On the contrary, his interest is in the way in which each body dances, as he says: "I don't expect one flower to be exactly like the next." (Lesschaeve 1985: 129) Movement, from this perspective, is established between the parts within a system - the body and its relationship to other bodies in space and time - but the way in which this is produced is between one system and another, for example, the system of dance technique, the system of film/video, and, in his later works, the system of information technology. Therefore, the parts - the bodies and the parts of the body - are brought together and subjected to conditions which prevent them from being completely closed.

In his interview with Lesschaeve (1985) Cunningham makes a differentiation between making positions that move from one to the other, as is the case within classical ballet where the stress is on position, and emphasising the energy and the movement that positions then punctuate, where the stress is on the dancing. For Cunningham, dancing exists in itself on a plane of immanence, and it is this that allows him to treat dancing as a continual process of action and reaction. His aim is to release dancing from its conventional positioning, where the body is a vehicle for movement which acts out the authority of subjectivity.

Incorporated within the collaborative medium of dance film, Cunningham's aim to produce energy as motion sits in tension with the mechanism of the image, which reproduces movement as movement-images that consist either of a collection of lines, or figures of light that are reflected on an immobilised receptive plate at regular intervals. (Deleuze,1994: 61) Beach Birds for Camera is filmed from the viewpoint of an eye that remains external to the work in the sense that the mobility of the camera does not work to anticipate and develop character or to link a linear succession of images in a narrative chain of events, or to set up an interaction between observed and observing, as in the conventional use of shot-reverse-shot. The camera locates the dancers within the wide screen frame and films them from a distance, at times moving across the space, or

slightly closer into the action, but remaining predominantly outside them. For example, in this work there is no use of the close up to focus on facial expression. The opening shot of the film, which is a close-up of fragments of arms moving in a wave like manner, in conjunction with the title and the costuming, could be viewed metaphorically as a way of homogenising the cultural systems involved. But the disruption of the process of repetition and the use of held long shots which wait for the dance to take place, for dancers to enter and exit the frame, focuses audience attention on the *mise en scene* of the image. This has the effect of drawing the viewer's attention to the heterogeneity of the spatial relations between the dancing bodies. Effectively, the Cartesian subject, who thinks and expresses thought simultaneously, is fragmented into the film which, in the movement of the camera and between shots, is given the perception of an independent aesthetic consciousness.

Moreover, the film apparatus executes (kills off and re-places) the moving body as an expression of a centred subjectivity and reframes it as moving object, and this enables the dancing to be seen (scene) as reciprocal actions and reactions of pure energy which is shaped. The shaping and organisation of the image, whilst maintaining an aesthetic distance between the viewing subject and the object, works to recompose or execute performed movement as it transforms the 'character' of dancing. There is, then, a tension between simply being given the vision of the dance performance, which is implied in the subjective/objective interplay of aesthetic distance, and the imposition of an-other vision which transforms and reflects the first as an autonomous vision of content. Thus, the fantasised position of privilege that identifies dance as pure content in the dance film collaboration is shown to be structured by lack, but this lack is repressed as the camera takes over the role of consciousness, fetishising the movement and shape of the dancing.

Derrida's formulation of the frame as defining the integral being of art and aesthetic subjectivity can be applied to explicate the collaboration between dance and film. Film is assembled like a supplement to dance because of the lack which it enframes. The frame of the screen, the frame of the shot, executes the dancing.

It decomposes it and recomposes it. The frame, as supplement, is both constructed and constructing and therefore what it frames as essence - the dancing - is dependent on the frame for its identity. Thus, the film frame gives an ontological presence and shape to the absent centre of dancing, and provides the condition of its visualisation as such by producing an imaginary fantasised identity of presence and autonomy. Within the process of framing, the film frame functions as an invisible limit which identifies the dancing as the interiority of meaning. But it is also functions as supplement to make right (to write) the lack in content. The dance film is never without a frame: it is explicitly framed, and although the dancing is given a privileged position as content, characterised by immediateness, spontaneity, liveness, it is mediated nevertheless by an apparent, detachable relation, which in this collaborative context is treated as a simple, and therefore 'forgotten', neccessity. The limits of the frame, which are dictated by the constitution of the shot, limit the interior of the image whilst connecting the specificities of individual shots with other shots, and what is out-of field, to produce a version of dance of which the image is a trace.

The dance film relation, as it has been formulated, is structured by a metaphysics of presence which takes dance as the elementary constituent, and film as its record or description. But what proves to be the elementary given is also a product, a representation, that within the collaboration is denied its authority as presence. Dancing is treated as continuous movement, whether the body is still or in motion, yet it is the film frame which fixes instants and creates the illusion of an unmediated relationship between sign and referent. The apparatus of film denies the representation of the single instantaneous moment and as a consequence has to recreate this experience for the viewer. Thus, movement is never present: it is always constituted by the logic of the trait which re-marks its lack as an imagined form of self-presence.

To presence dance, in respect of the dance film collaboration, as pure movement content, on the basis (implicit or explicit) that film is added to it as a supplement, is to treat it as a pure, autonomous given. But when looking more closely at the specificities of the film medium, what can be seen is that the possibility of the

relation between movement, space and time that Cunningham argues for, can only be produced in this context by the effect of a generalised absence. Instead of dance being treated as an authentic version of presence, and film its supplement, the possibility of framing dancing as presence is produced within and by the apparatus of film. This can only be done on the grounds that, if movement is privileged as a form of presence, and film its representation, then presence must also be treated as a concept that is determined, and its effects reproduced, within a system of *differance.*

Saussure argues that the possibility of a representation being meaningful is inscribed in the structure of language, but that representations are necessary for the system to establish itself. But structures are historically and culturally specific, and therefore are always determined by their engagement with other prior structures. In the case of the dance film, the apriori, dancing, which is supposedly present to itself, is marked by difference. It marks the effect of presence, but the possibility of the effect being produced as presence is dependant on a hierarchical contrast between signifying elements, dance as an originary mode of signification, and film as its representation. However, a signifier is given presence because it is inhabited by the traces of forms which are present in the inner storehouse of language, but which are not present at the moment of utterance. To represent dance as an *a priori* form of presence is first, to acknowledge that it is inhabited by a death or absence which is made plenitude within the supplementary practice of film which represent the trace of movement. And secondly, to acknowledge that the addition of a supplement is needed because what is constituted as an *a priori* form of presence is itself a complex, differentiated signifying practice. As Derrida argues (1982: 28) to attempt to differentiate and hierarchise the relation between *langue* and *parole* is impossible because they are reciprocally reinforcing. Using the writings of Saussure, Derrida explains that the defining feature of the linguistic system is that it is relational; there are only differences without positive terms. Prior to any process of framing - which produces differentiations between positive and negative terms - is the production of a system of differences whose effects can then be abstracted and distinguished. As all elements are inhabited by the trace of

other elements either within the sequence, as in *montage,* or in the system, the process of signification consists only of traces of traces, of differences. (Derrida 1981: 26)

CONCLUSION

This thesis began by addressing two dance works, <u>Giselle</u> and <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u>, from the perspective of structural linguistics. This mode of analysis, which addresses the engagement between language and meaning, constitutes a set of relationships about both theory and dance practice which have been used to examine two issues that have been raised in dance studies. The first is that, until recently, dance studies has treated the introduction of concepts from other disciplines as threatening, as if these might somehow be used to dominate dance thereby undermining its aesthetic autonomy. Secondly, what is implied in this view is that dance has an essence or identity that the traditional programme of dance studies, which was committed to elucidating the meaning of dance, could both protect and reveal.

Still committed to the traditional interpretative project of hermeneutics, dance studies has resisted the radical force of the structuralist project which shifted the focus of critical thinking, away from the subject of the text or work being reviewed, towards its conditions of signification: the structures and systems of codes and conventions that operate in the discourses of any practice. The consequence of this resistance is that that the different approaches to language and meaning that were developed by structuralists such as Barthes, Todorov and Jakobson, and post-structuralists such as Lacan, Derrida and De Man, were treated as if they would inevitably lead to a rationalisation of the phenomenon of the aesthetic object. To this extent, dance studies is participating in a general resistance to the innovative demands of structuralism and semiotics. Traditionally, the subject of critical investigation in dance studies has been the explication and appreciation of thematic content. Consequently, the focus of the structuralist project, the investigation of a text's relation to rhetorical structures and processes, was criticised from within dance studies as threatening the authority of the authorial self, or consciousness, that underpins traditional views about the identity of art, the creator, and the perceiving subject.

From the point of view of this study, structural linguistics provides a means to counter the tradition of dance historical writing, which is still predominantly concerned to perpetuate the influence of intentionality as a means of controlling the disseminative and thus threatening possibilities inherent in any work. Used as a starting point from which to describe the systems of norms that determine the form and meaning of dance sequences, the work of Todorov and Jakobson emphasises structural differentiations in order to treat meaning and reference as effects of the play of language.

Todorov's model is used to treat Giselle as a text that is determined by a structure of figuration - the Romantic differentiation between symbol and allegory - which functions at the various levels of stylistic detail and thematic content. The ballet is then treated as an intertextual construct that is read in relation to various writings about Romanticism as they are identified and collated by Todorov with the effect that language is topicalised as constitutive of meaning.

Jakobson's writing, which applies the techniques of structural linguistics, is used to address the modernist and refractory character of Cunningham's work. The Jakobsonian differentiation between metaphor and metonymy as axes of the linguistic system that exist and compete with each other, thus provides a means of engaging with the material and syntactic dimensions of Beach Birds for Camera as worthy of attention in their own right. Consequently, in respect of both works, the reduction of meaning to versions of an *a priori* is challenged by a mode of analysis which identifies different kinds of structures and processes involved in the production of meaning as a way of accounting for the relation between the work and its enabling conditions.

The limitations of structural linguistics as a mode of analysis, and the engagement between literary theory, as it is evidenced in the use of the linguistic model, and dance as a movement art form are explored further using the strategies and practices of deconstruction. Using the writings of Derrida which focus on representation, the sign and the frame as a limiting condition of the relation between what is intrinsic and extrinsic to any work of art, this study

critiques the "metaphysical forces that structure and smother *differance*" in the dance works discussed. (Johnson 1995: xvi) In other words, having identified the unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another using the work of structural linguistics, this thesis then focuses on the practices of Derridean deconstruction to analyse the underlying necessity that induces, for example, dance historical writing to differentiate between discourse and truth, leads the Romantics to privilege the symbol and condemn allegory, or for Jakobson to privilege metaphor as innately poetic, and set metonymy aside as referential. In this process, various questions have been raised about the relation between theory and practice.

History as Reading Dancing

The first issue that has been addressed is the way in which dance historical writing organises its own stories of reading. It does this in two ways. By denying its rhetoricity in favour of an appeal to intentionality, and by appealing to the empiricist-idealist belief in the possibility of accessing or revealing the truth of meaning about dance. As has been suggested in Chapter Two, the experience of dance as it is articulated in language is mediated in the form of narrative, which treats recounted events as if they could lead unproblematically to an *a priori* meaning. (White 1990: 2) Therefore this study addresses narrative critically as a structure that is used to generate knowledge about dance works.

The Western tradition of history writing is rooted in the correspondence theory of empiricist idealism which assumes that truthful meaning will emerge naturally from archival data by means of objective research and inquiry. Underpinning this position is the idea of the historian as a craftsman who through rational, independent and impartial investigation, will know history as it really happened. (Elton 1991; Stone 1992; Marwick 1989) The meaning of a work is then reconstructed from primary sources where possible, and these historically concrete forms of evidence are offered to the interested reader as intelligible interpretation. The form that the interpretation takes is set aside as supplementary to the serious task of historical research and inquiry. (Munslow 1997) As a result of the work of the French *Annales* school and Marxist historians such as

Christopher Hill and E. P. Thompson, historians today accept that the historical past is mediated through shared categories of analysis and ideological positioning. This view, coupled with developments in social history, has particularly affected new dance historical writing which demonstrates an increased awareness of the ways in which traditional historical accounts have operated previously to marginalise particular groups and ideas. (Foster 1998, Franko 1996, Jordan & Thomas 1998, White 1995)

However, much dance historical writing is still produced in the form of narrative, with little attention being given to the specificities of its form and structure. The effect is that narrative form, as a discourse which produces an ordered and intelligible series of statements about past events, experiences and actions by organising them into a temporal logic of causality, is not topicalised critically. Furthermore, the system of representation by which narrative orders and patterns historical events, and which provides the possibility of representing a version of origin, is taken as an unquestioned given. Consequently, matters of style, figurality, and rhetoricity are marginalised and historical writing is still treated as a message carrying medium. This implies an uninterrupted flow from an originary to its representation, which collapses evidence and its representation together in favour of producing the definitive story of the past - a story which offers unproblematically a correspondence between factual evidence and prescriptive, non-interpretative truth.

As has been argued in Chapter Two, the grounds held by authors of empiricist-idealist accounts of historical phenomenon which claim that truth can be produced as an *a priori* that can provide the model for subsequent interpretations of works of the past, can be shown to be problematic. However, there are grounds for dance historians and scholars to be self-reflexive and self-conscious about the methods that they use to interpret and represent the past. Structural linguistics and the practices of deconstruction have been used methodologically and interpretatively in this thesis as a means to think reflexively about the relation between dance practice and critical theory. The intended effect is not to produce an interpretative account of <u>Giselle</u> and <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> to end further

interpretation, but to stimulate further critical debate and analysis by topicalising dance language as constitutive of meaning.

Although there have been developments in new dance historical writing which address the issues raised above, (Morris 1996; Foster 1996) much dance history also engages with the ideas advanced by new historicism. (Veeser 1989) Developing initially within literary studies, the writings of the new historicists provided a set of resources for restoring a historical dimension to the analysis of literary texts by relating text to context. The new historicism challenges the empiricist-idealist paradigm in two ways. First, it recognises that description is representation, and thus all history is committed to representing "events under description." (Munslow 1997: 31) Secondly, that historical writing is itself a literary form which is interpretative, and therefore cannot claim to essentialise relations of causality. Arguing that all accounts of meaning are based on previous interpretations, the new historicists claim that there cannot ever be a universal or transcendent account of the reality behind the representation whether that be historical reality, or the reality to which a work refers. Therefore, their work opened up historical analysis to both a consideration of the conventions underpinning representation, and to deconstructionist questioning of the distinctions between literal and figural language, by arguing that all language is a form of writing.

It is from within the perspective of deconstruction that history is recognised as a form of writing which defines itself in opposition to the characteristics that identify it as such. In other words, historical writing is organised strategically within the context of the metaphysics of logocentrism as a privileged expression of an undissociated unity between material signifier and a non-material signified. As a consequence, this relation is naturalised as indicative of self-evident presence and all other forms of representation, such as writing, are set aside as derivative or secondary. However, Derrida argues that the effacement of the signifier as a condition of the idea of truth is a strategy that denies the process of signification. Furthermore he demonstrates that all meaning is constituted in the differential play of signifiers and therefore all language, whether it is history or

literature, is textual in the sense that it has the possibility to exceed the limits of interpretation. Aware that history which is written in the form of narrative is a formal re-presentation of historical content, deconstructionist historians draw attention to language by arguing that history, like all writing, is structured by distance and *differance*. This perspective prevents the stance of objectivity and authenticity that enables historical sources to be offered as a form of presence which speak for themselves.

As has been argued in Chapter One, the work of Saussure fundamentally affected ways of thinking about the relationship between reality and language and it is within the context of structuralist and semiotic thinking about language that deconstructionist objections to traditional history developed. The Saussurean differentiation between the arbitrary and conventional character of the sign is important to the study of the function of narrative in historical writing in two respects. First, it draws attention to the problems associated with treating language as a near transparent, message carrying medium. And secondly, it provides a set of resources for treating dance historical writing as a structural or synchronic text which is organised according to grammatical or syntactic structure. However, despite this development, dance historians continue to fall back on their investment in referentiality. The consequence is that narrative is continually and unproblematically appropriated as an enabling vehicle for the historian in the quest to access the truth of the past.

A deconstructionist reading which raises questions of referentiality and representation in relation to the epistemological basis of history, provides a set of resources with which to reconsider both claims of objectivity in dealing with sources, and disinterested interpretation. Consequently, historians who operate the practices of deconstruction, such as White (1987), Jenkins (1997), and Appleby (1996), argue that historical writing should explicitly acknowledge and explore it's form, and thus should undertake an analysis of the rhetorical devices that structure both a historian's sources, and their written interpretation as representation. Dance historians and critics remain suspicious of this approach to history however, because they cling resolutely to the absolutist idea that, although

writing is a flawed medium of communication and interpretation about the past, there still exists the possibility of uncovering, or revealing the truth of the past.

A deconstructionist reading also draws attention to, and explores, the methodological significance of using narrative form to structure historical interpretation. To claim an unmediated relation between evidence and interpretation whereby they are united in a plenitude of intelligible meaning, is to enact a strategic organisation that is characteristic of logocentric metaphysics. In the hierarchical relationship between speech and writing, writing is set aside, in its literal sense as a derivation of natural language, as the other of language. The strategy by which this is achieved is the paradigm for all linguistic operations. A primary form of it is the logic of supplementarity. This enacts a tension between a view of the supplement as an inessential extra that is added to something that is complete in itself, and a view of the supplement as a necessary compensation for a lack in an original. In both views, the supplement is treated as marginal to the essential nature of that to which it is added, or for which it is substituted. (Culler 1994: 103)

All forms of origin are constituted within a structure that differentiates between what is essential and what is inessential. Historical writing as a form of literal writing is thus differentiated from rhetoric, a form of writing that is contaminated by figurality. Using the practices of deconstruction to explore the work of Rousseau, Derrida (1976) demonstrates that what is strategically set aside as supplementary, in this case interpretative writing, comes to replace and supplant the originary term. As has been argued in detail in Chapters One, Two, and Five, all writing is figural and to identify historical writing as indicative of presence is to set it aside as a special case of writing. But as Derrida demonstrates what is produced as presence is always inhabited by *differance* with the consequence that any identity that claims the fullness of presence cannot be sustained. This means that what is treated as an essential given is a product that is dependent or derived, and consequently, whenever the concept of presence is evoked, it articulates the effect of a generalised absence; a lack that necessitates the construction of a supplement.

Accepting that dance history, like any other history, takes the form of narrative, is to accept that an entirely pure historical account of meaning about the past, is impossible. Dance history is a construction that is enabled by the constraints of narrative structure and technique. Narrative entails "ontological and epistemic choices with distinct ideological...implications" (White 1987: ix) and thus cannot be treated as a neutral discursive form. As has been argued in Chapters Two and Three, the dance historian constructs a story which utilises the creative genius of choreographers, poets, dancers, composers as a means of guiding the reader through the literary patterns of "exposition, rising action, climax and denouement." (Brunette & Wills 1989: 35) This sustains the teleological project which underpins much dance historical writing, which is to organise the disparate, dynamic, historical forces that constitute a historical period and/or a work, into an organically produced, unified version of events, as if this reading was an inevitability.

Whilst this thesis has topicalised narrative from the perspectives of structuralist and post structuralist thinking, and therefore has implications for the ways in which dance historical texts are read, it also raises questions about the way in which narrative form is approached in dance studies generally, particularly in respect of the traditional nineteenth century works which rely on narrative as their structuring form. Conventionally, narrative is treated, like the older dance works, as 'old fashioned,' as an inappropriate form within which to represent a more contemporary sensibility. Effectively, this collapses into, and confuses with one another, two distinct, complex areas of discussion which raise fundamental questions about the character of dance scholarship. Narrative is either criticised as problematic by more contemporary choreographers such as Trisha Brown, (1996) or it is referred to indirectly:

> "The dance has been made to the piece of music, the music supports the dance, and the decor frames it. The central idea is emphasised by each of the several arts...the forms...used were nineteenth century, that is, each work built to a climax from which it fell away...(dance) is not meant to represent something

else, whether psychological, literary, or aesthetic." (Lesschaeve 1985: 137-139)

The effect is that narrative is problematised on the grounds that it is experienced as restricting the autonomy of dancing. The implications of this view are left unexplored whilst narrative, as a structuring form, is set aside as inessential to the choreographic process. This leads to a situation where dance is treated as a series of material signifiers which disappear as they are performed, in favour of an appeal to a transcendental signified which it then becomes the task of the historian to reveal. In either case, issues of language, and issues relating to narrative form as an organisational code, are set aside as secondary to the larger task at hand - the explication and interpretation of content as evidence of intention. Whilst this is only one example, it nevertheless is typical in that it refers to, and then forgets to attend to, the structures and processes constitutive of signification both within dance works and within writing about dance. This thesis topicalises the need to address in detail the relationship between narrative structure and signifying systems, and to address the ways in which narrative structure appropriates differences that are produced by specific forms of social and discursive organisation as natural and universal. (Belsey 1980: 56-84)

Dance historical accounts of meaning characteristically cite <u>Giselle</u> and <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> as representative of either Romantic ballet, or Cunningham's work as a dance modernist. However the tension at the heart of such citations is that each work can be identified as a uniquely important, independent yet related event; as both typical yet simultaneously unique. Recurring themes, patterns and structures are thus identified to make sense of the complexity of evidence, interpretations, connections etc., of the past. The effect is that the plenitude of details of centuries of dance is reduced to essentialising historical explanation, and any work that exemplifies these patterns and structures is treated as an example in demonstration. (Derrida 1982a: 24) Differences within works are then recast as differences between them as historians argue to fix chronological, formal and stylistic borders between movements and periods. Thus, to classify <u>Giselle</u> as a Romantic work, which demonstrates certain identifiable features

which can be evaluated and found repeatedly within and between works, is to commit an essentialising operation in terms of general characteristics.

To assert the norm of Romantic ballet and to establish its boundaries necessitates involving the historian/scholar in a series of empirical investigations, in this case using structural linguistics as a means of identifying and describing the structures which detail its significance as such. The value of identifying certain structures as essentialising and significant is then to be found in the analysis of <u>Giselle</u>. This analysis unites empiricism and theory unproblematically, giving priority to one over the other. But in the process it enacts the recurring crisis of logocentrism. For example, in this thesis, Todorov's structural linguistics offers a theoretical means of approaching <u>Giselle</u>, enabling the work to be treated as a specifically Romantic ballet in Romantic terms. But identifying and analysing <u>Giselle</u> in this way requires a methodological support from other disciplines, historical interpretations, classifications etc., Once selected, these valorise the work as significant and exemplary, and combine to construct a story about the ballet called <u>Giselle</u> that can be read univocally in order to support the essentialising demands of dance critical and interpretative practice.

Although history and structural linguistics are evoked as grounds that determine meaning, all discourse, meaning and reading are historical; history is part of a general text which has no boundaries. (Culler 1994: 128-130) However, the function of critical interpretation is to make determinations of meaning which interrupt temporarily the continuum of the general text. Thus, although critical interpretation is built into the system of history, meaning cannot be restrained by the attempts of such determinations. Derrida (1978) explicates the impossibility of controlling the effects of signification or the forces of discourse within the boundaries of codes and contexts, whilst pointing out the need to contextualise and boundarise discussions of meaning in order to be self reflexive about the issues raised by them. Hence, all interpretation must oscillate between attempts to define determining contexts - in this thesis the use of structural linguistics to define the perameters and conditions for the performance of the argument - and recourse to versions of intention when the description of contexts fails to exhaust

contextual possibilities. For example, in the discussion of <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u>, the emphasis on Jakobson's structural differentiation between metaphor and metonymy is validated in part by an appeal to Cunningham's writings about dance, and critical and historical writing about Cunningham. In relation to this, the attention drawn to the signifying process that is articulated using structural linguistics is set aside in favour of an appeal to presence - the presence for example, of Cunningham as a legitimating authority. Therefore, the structure of intentionality, which is differentiated from intentionality as the determining force of meaning, articulates a relation between system and event, between the world and the work, that is circumscribed by codes and conventions.

Deconstructionist Reading of Dance

The discussion of the two works from the perspective of deconstruction, practices a style of reading which both identifies special themes and critical concepts, and encourages the identification and production of certain types of structure (Culler 1994: 213), such as the signature effect, the logic of the supplement, the identification of the hierarchical oppositions on which each work depends for its authority. Each of these are treated as one of a number of structures in the process of reading that contributes to, rather than reductively determines, the play of meaning.

In all works there may be found disparate elements that escape the essentialising demand to organise them into an ordered pattern. For example, in dance works, the movement between and within bodies always escapes reduction to method. This can have two outcomes. The first, discussed in detail in Chapter Five, is that the body and its movements can be set aside as recalcitrant because they exceed the dictates of preconceived thematic or structural outcomes. As Lacan demonstrates the desire for an imagined plenitude - in respect of dance, an imagined unity of mind, body and spirit as Cunningham describes it - is always directed towards an other, and is always condemned because the ideal is structured by rupture and lack. Subsequently, any elements that threaten to exceed the drive towards a unified narrative of organic relations are necessarily repressed because they threaten an epistemological violence. Secondly, the

consequence of the desire for plenitude locates critical interpretation as the means by which meaning can be made present. But collapsing the process of signification into the desire for a transcendent signified, and setting aside the language of dance, draws attention to the necessity of the system of representation to validate stories of meaning. However, at the same time it points to the instabilities within the system of representation that prevent stories of meaning from ever achieving their goals. As Johnson (1995: 13) argues, this "recalls the fundamental scandal of language, which is that signs can neither avoid referentiality nor be referentially reliable."

As a movement based practice, dance engages with this issue by raising, either explicitly or implicitly, questions about the limits of reading. To interpret a part or the whole of a dance work, and to read the organisation and patterning of moving bodies as a type of wordplay, is to raise questions about the extent to which a dance work depends on suturing with its outside. Dancing, like any art work, is always more than its reduction to theory, method and interpretation, because it always exceeds the contextual limitations that frame it. But, as Lacan (1979) argues, the speaking subject is caught in the processes of ennunciation at the moment that it accedes to the symbolic order. Therefore the subject is no longer operating language, they are constructed in and by it. Consequently, to construct a tension between movement as a bodily form of expression and critical discourse, is to enact a double movement. First, to privilege dance as expression is to locate it as being able to articulate an intelligible or spiritual ideality - its signified or expressed. Secondly, to treat it as preverbal is to assume that what is expressed can be dissociated from the process of signification. The tension within this position lies in the desire for dance to 'speak' its truth as pure meaning and the demand that it maintain its identity as a uniquely ephemeral art form that is preverbal and therefore differentiatable from verbal discourse. Both positions rely on the belief that meaning can be made visible. Therefore from this perspective, the dance work is treated as being able to make meaning visible, to "translate it, transport it, communicate it, incarnate it, express it, etc." (Derrida 1982: 32) This view of meaning - as exteriority - sets aside "the relational and differential tissue which would make of it...a referral, a trace, a gram, a spacing " (Derrida 1982:

32) in the attempt to treat language, the language of dance, as evidence of interiority. What is conceived of in Lacan's terms as meaning, is produced in and by language, and therefore what is posited as meaning-full is already a network of textual referrals in which the presumed interiority of consciousness is already worked upon and constituted by its own exteriority. In other words, to assume the possibility of expression, the interiority of consciousness must already differ from itself. Thus, meaning is constituted in the process of rupture and suture before the formalised act of expression, and it is only on this condition that dance can signify because "there is no signification unless there is synthesis, syntagm, *differance,* and text." (Derrida 1982: 33)

A deconstructive approach makes it possible to identify strategies that function to repress difference and deferral, and thus, to topicalise repression as an essentialising strategy of critical theory. In this respect, critical theory is a necessity, which like all interpretation, is engaged with a rewriting (re-righting) of dance movement. But deconstruction does offer an-other (to traditional interpretative approaches) possible means of multiplying textual effects in the hope of pointing to the excess of writing. Critical interpretation must then always be more than simply "bringing one coherent and integral body of knowledge to bear upon another coherent and integral body of text." (Brunette & Wills 1989: 155)

Any claim to origin that specific works and choreographers articulate is structured by repetition in the sense that, if a work has a recognisable form and content, it cannot be considered as present to itself because form and content "share the capacity to be repeated, to be imitated in their identity as objects…in their ideality." (Derrida 1982: 296) In conventional historical and critical accounts of meaning, style and form compensate for the absence of choreographic intention by repeating the event of pure presence. But making a distinction between source and origin, on the grounds that origin is an imaginary and the source is the fact within which the origin is proposed, Derrida (1982) argues that the spontaneous can only emerge as the initiality of the event on the condition that it is treated in the Lacanian sense as a symptom, and not as an

irrevocable presencing of itself. It is an effect of a system of representation which allows for a relation between sign and referent - it stands in for something else - but what is demanded by the symptom is a repression of difference. What has been repressed by the unconscious, in the Lacanian formulation of the symptom, can only make itself felt through its effects, it never can be present to consciousness. Thus the symptom articulates the impossibility of an unmediated relation between thought and its expression as consciousness: it is a repetition that fails.

By implication to treat the possibility of representation as a denial of difference is to argue that the Cartesian subject who assumes an idealised mastery transforms "heteronomy into autonomy." (Derrida 1982: 297 The difference between the "I" that hears and myself, in the system of *s'entendre parler* which strategically enables me to hear myself speak, repeats, at the level of language, the division which is at the heart of subjectivity. Driven by the desire for an imaginary plenitude, difference is repressed and this leaves the subject free to hear what they want to hear. The authority of a narcissistic absolute, which denies the desire for an Other in order to be become their own sole source of pleasure, is legitimated and the desire for an Other is thus transformed into the desire for no-one. Within this structure the symbolic order of language is treated as a transparency through which external alterity can be linked with internal alterity. The other of dance, the material signifier which can be the body, the text as writing, the structure of narrative etc., - is placed to one side as less important than the primacy of origin which is identified in the appeal to a transcendent signified.

Dance representations, like all representations, operate as a surface spectacle that is constituted by systems of coherence which figure - in the sense of organising and patterning - the image produced. This always implies a distortion of and a division in the image, which the system of representation masks through a series of displacements and substitutions. It is in this process that the materiality of the body can be set aside to be resurrected as form; a displacement that enables materiality to be substituted for thought. What has already been argued from the

perspective of Derridean construction is that all representations repress what they purport to reveal, and they articulate what they hope to conceal. Thus, any dance representation will be allegorical in the sense that it articulates something other than it is. It is an expression externally added to another expression and, like the supplement, it both adds to and supplies a lack.

But, Derrida's (1992) analysis of Mallarme's writing on mime, argues that there is no simple reference. What mime mimes is imitation. There is no original that can simply be copied. For example, as discussed in Chapter Three, dance gestural language mimes verbal language and, in that movement, it also mimes a belief in the possibility of an unmediated relationship between speech and thought. As all meaning is produced within the irreducible play of signification, and there can never be an origin to which the model refers. The relation between signifier and signified, between image and referent, between thought and its expression whilst claiming "faithful representation when the voice of truth is lacking" (Derrida 1992: 175) is disrupted by the possibility that it is incomplete. The space of dance representation always carries mediation within it and this exposes supplementarity and difference. In this case the intransitivity of the symbol can never be. The image can never be itself because it always is image; as Mallarme argues, it is like mime, a medium of fiction. It is an ordering and patterning of material signifiers to produce an unproblematic relation between interiority and exteriority and thus functions as a type of writing characterised by mediation and distance.

The Romantics' claim for the symbolic use of language is dependant on setting the allegorical aside as impure, because it demonstrates mediation and distance and the possibility of contaminating the relation between signifier and signified. It is therefore treated like writing, as carrying the threat that materiality might obtrude into the direct contemplation of thought. Consequently what occurs in the Romantic engagement with language, which problematizes the sign, is a displacement whereby one view of language is replaced with another, without disturbing the possibility of an unmediated relation between signifier and signified. As Culler (1994: 92) argues, what characterises logocentrism - the

rejection of the signifier - is necessarily a rejection of writing, because logocentrism takes as its model the unsubstantiated hierarchical relation between speech and thought, in order to put speech in a direct and natural relationship with meaning.

All reading practices are sets of strategies devised for a particular text. In a textual analysis, all reading necessarily uses the resources of the text and relies on certain organisations of the textual material as a means of grounding the analysis in more than "a hermeneutic impulse to save it from reducing to a further, more arcane elucidation of an always present coherence." (Brunette & Wills 1989: 157) The strength of a deconstructive reading that treats dance as a generalised form of writing is that it both recognises and refuses the establishment of a new centre of coherence. As Culler (1994: 225) argues, deconstruction enables the reader to understand the phenomena of textuality without ignoring and escaping from "the play of forces of the object that...(the critic).. seeks to describe." But deconstructive readings which attempt to show how the treatment of meaning is undermined by the theory on which it relies, are also open to question because of their own involvement with the "tropological and transferential strategies" (Culler 1994: 225) that they claim to understand. Therefore, like all critical readings, deconstructive readings are open to analysis, criticism and displacement and as such give rise to further acts of reading.

Johnson (1980: :xiv) writes that the deconstruction of a binary opposition is an attempt to "tease out the warring forces of signification" within a work and to show how the subtle, powerful effects of differences are already at work in the illusion of a binary opposition. By identifying and questioning hierarchical oppositions in relation to Giselle and Beach Birds for Camera, this thesis raises certain theoretical issues which prevent a reading of these works that "blindly submits to the teleology of controlled meaning." (De Man 1978: ix-x) The critical categories produced by a reading that is predominantly reliant on structural linguistics provide a means whereby the interaction between text and concept can be explored from the perspective of deconstruction.

As has been mentioned previously the popular and conventional view of dance is that it is an ephemeral art form, it is short lived and transitory. As a consequence, it leaves nothing behind and therefore "the afterimage becomes the subject of dance criticism" (Croce 1978: ix) - an impression that is retained after the external cause is withdrawn. Thus the analogy between dance and writing can be drawn. The material signifiers of dance, the movements of the body, are treated as if they, like speech, efface themselves before meaning, and dancing is then considered as a purified form of communication. The differentiation between the live performance and the after image can be considered as a difference which associates performance with life, and the effects of performance with death. Therefore, like all signification, dance is based on a split between signifier and signified that is mediated by using a system of signs that are rule bound and conventionalised. Thus dance is like all language to the extent that it cannot communicate thought spontaneously and, as Croce implies in her reference to the afterimage, what is communicated is constituted within a logic of repetition by *differance* and deferral.

The Language of Dance

The possibility of dance expressing something - that material movement signifiers are translatable into signifieds - underpins and regulates its significance as an aesthetic practice. Croce articulates this position when she claims that the dance critic has to make the afterimage match as nearly as possible the performance, the possibility of which is naturalised as the ideal to which all dance critics would aspire. In other words, the movement of the body is the signifying substance given to consciousness that mediates unproblematically between the preverbal - thought - and its expression as meaning. As has been argued in Chapters One, Three and Five, the foundation for this is provided by the system of metaphysics which treats movement - the language of action - as an original language of the body. The consequence is that movement is experienced as a transparent message carrying medium whose material signifiers acquiesce to the demands of a signified. This process is naturalised, allowing meaning to be an expression of an *a priori* transcendental signified - thought. The effect is that the

process of signification, the exteriority of the signifier, is set aside by a system that, in its appeal to presence, authorises the dancing body to speak by proxy.

A central discussion which is focused on language amongst Romantic writers is the contrast between mechanism and organicism. By contrasting two ways of experiencing the world in the differentiation between the two acts of the ballet Giselle comments on the relation between perception and understanding. For example, by privileging the unifying powers of the symbol and constituting the symbol as the image produced by the Imagination. As has been argued in Chapter Three, the freedom and creativity of poetic Imagination that finds its fullest expression in the symbolic use of language, and which is differentiated from the mechanical processes of allegory, also comments on and organises the relationship between referentiality and expression. Thus, it can be argued that the symbolic mode of language is based on relations of similarity, and the allegorical on external relationships of contiguity.

In a number of ways, the differentiation between symbol and allegory corresponds to the differentiation between metaphor and metonymy. As Jakobson (1962) argues, although these two poles of language are in competition in all discourse, one or the other will dominate in specific discourses; for example, he posits that the poetic function is distinguished by its use of metaphor and Realism by its reliance on metonymy. Looked at more closely, it is possible to argue that Giselle does not enact its claims of privilege. Characterised by intransitivity, the symbolic use of language displays organic form and because, as Coleridge argues (Abrams 1953: 173), it shapes as it develops itself from within, it identifies sign with referent thereby articulating the power to make the referent present. By contrast, the allegorical use of language is condemned as a figure of discontinuity. It articulates a gap between form and meaning and thus rejects the nostalgia for metaphysical origin (Johnson 1995: 13) by always referring to a text that precedes it. This means that the structure of allegory makes the identification between sign and referent unstable by drawing attention to the gap between sign and referent which is filled by the signifying process.

However, a rhetorical reading of Giselle shows that the assertion of the symbol owes its power to the structure of allegory. It can only claim an unmediated relation between sign and referent by setting aside, as derivation, the constitutive power of language. In other words, in order to maintain a metaphysical continuity between sign and referent, and thus to privilege a transcendental signified, allegory has to be set aside as an Other, as the place where the disruptive powers of signification are located.

Thus allegory is, like writing, set aside as a technique for recording speech because its inscriptions can be repeated and circulated. Analogously, dance gestural language as a codified language of the body, refers to verbal language, and in order for it to be meaningful and repeatable, it is necessary that both dancer and audience know that certain gestures stand for certain words. From this perspective, dance gestural language, like allegory, repeats logocentric operations of contiguity by displacing one form of language with another, and can therefore be conceived of as functioning as a type of writing. In both contexts, iterability is produced as the disenabling condition.

However, iterability is the function of all signs whether they are allegorical or metaphorical. Thus, a sequence of movements can only function as an imitation and translation of verbal language if they can be repeated and recognised as the same in different circumstances. Therefore the fact that sequences can be repeated as meaningful by the dancer without any reference to intention, cannot be offered as a condition for setting aside this use of language as derivative. As Saussure has shown, this is a condition of all signs; they are conventionalised within the system of language and it is this that makes them perform in specific ways. For example, in Act Two of Giselle, the Romantic *ports de bras* is used to convey style, but also,

> "the arms are the framework to the head and body. They play a vital part in conveying expression and meaning. Without sensitive hands and arms the dancer is dumb." (Lawson 1960: 135)

Thus, in this ballet "the dancer's movements were to express logically the dramatic situations arising from the plot." (Lawson 1960: 137) The Romantic *ports de bras,* therefore, denotes Romanticism, facets of character, and allows a "continuous development of dance and plot from beginning to climax and end." (Lawson 1960: 137

Writing as inscription is the iterable production of signs; it is only within writing, therefore, that the arbitrary character of the sign can be institutionalised as a condition of the relationship between sign and referent. Consequently, to isolate the symbolic as expressive of freedom and spontaneity is to make the symbolic a special case of writing whose iterability has been forgotten.

The speech/writing opposition operates according to a structure that Derrida calls the logic of the supplement. Within the logic of supplementarity, which differentiates between an essential interiority and an inessential, or supplementary exteriority, the allegorical use of language has been set aside as an inessential extra to the symbol. For example, the second act of <u>Giselle</u> is complementary and consequential to the first (Poesio 1994: 563) and thus Act One provides the condition of possibility for the second act. However Act One is also characterised by its reliance on the use of dance gestural language and this provides the grounds for setting dance gestural language aside as inessential to a use of language that signifies like nature and therefore can be considered as a natural plenitude. As has been argued in detail in Chapter Three, the symbolic use of language insists on an unmediated continuity between Image (sign) and Idea (referent) with the effect that, the allegorical use of language, which disrupts the continuity between them, has to be set aside in order to preserve the illusion of an underpinning symmetrical and unified relation. From this perspective the symbol can be seen as an attempt to restore the presence of speech through the processes of substitution.

However, to set aside one form of language as supplementary, reveals an inherent lack in the symbol which must be completed by the allegorical use of language. In other words the allegorical use of language which is evidenced in the first act

of the ballet in the use of dance gestural language is fundamental to the production of the symbol as privileged term. The allegorical narrative of the ballet depicts the power of the Imagination through the consciousness of Albrecht. This depiction is dependent on the first act of the ballet to locate the difference between the morbid constraints of the world that is, and the other world in which the symbol is active. Thus the work can be read as reconciling in the world of appearance what is unreconciled in reality, by granting freedom to the Imagination to move beyond reality to a world of unrealised possibilities. This means that the language of <u>Giselle</u> fluctuates between two positions. The first is the desire to deny difference in the use of the symbol which affirms the power of the Image. The second is a recognition, in the rejection of the allegorical as having no place within the world of the Wilis (a rejection that is enacted in the expulsion or death of all mortals), of the structural and differential relation between the present (of Act Two) and the past (of Act One).

The identity of the symbol is thus dependent on setting aside the constitutive powers of language, which are considered as disruptive to the relation between thought and its expression, as belonging to allegory. The result is that the allegorical use of language, which draws attention to the structure of difference and deferral that is constitutive of all language, is set aside as supplementary to the desire for an imaginary plenitude. And as Lacan (1979) argues, this is a means by which representation addresses its constitutive lack.

But Derrida argues that the presence of referent to sign is always deferred by the chain of signification, and that supplementation is possible because of an originary lack in the signifying process of the symbol. Thus, in relation to <u>Giselle,</u> it is possible to speak of a process of generalised substitution whereby what is privileged, Image for Idea, is constituted in an endless chain of supplements. This happens in a number of ways. The Image, which is a figuration of Giselle, functions in her absence - an absence that is caused by her death - as a substitute for her presence. Thus, what Albrecht summons through the power of the Imagination, and what he desires to possess, is something that is different to itself. The figure of Giselle in Act Two of the ballet is a substitute for the

Romantic image, and thus is a mediation. As mediation she therefore recalls a number of other substitutions: spirituality for materiality, the other world of the Wilis for the world itself, Imagination for perception, Idea for image.

Through these substitutions, another series of mediations are produced in the signifying chain. Movement is transformed into meaning, and thus the signifiers are erased in favour of the signified. Consequently, it is in the relations of contiguity within the signifying chain that the sense of the symbol as present to itself is constituted. Thus it can be argued that presence is always deferred by the chain of signification, and that supplementation is possible only because there is a lack in what is constituted as presence. The logic of the supplement, therefore, questions a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic, between presence and absence, as it is marked in the differentiation between the symbolic use of language and the allegorical use of language in Giselle. The symbol, thus conceived, operates as a lure in the sense that its claim to express itself is dependent on a denial of the structure of representation which enables it to constitute itself as such. Yet, simultaneously, it finds its identity in its differentiation from allegory. Thus, what it suppresses in this differentiation is the need for the authority of referentiality that is provided by the system of representation to ground its privileged status.

An exploration of the relation between the symbolic and allegorical use of language suggests that they are both dependent on an appeal to a transcendent principle. But to treat the relation between them as oppositional, effects a position whereby the symbolic is protected from what might taint it. Therefore, by setting allegory aside as supplementary, the Romantics were able to set aside the allegorical aspects of the symbol. This enabled them to produce and privilege a norm for aesthetic activity - the theory of the Imagination whereby the symbolic use of language demonstrates that "nature is made thought and thought nature." (Abrams 1962: 551)

Furthermore Abrams (1962) argues that that the sustained interaction between nature and thought is produced by their metaphoric continuity. In respect of this

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De Man (1983) argues that the structure of the relation between mind and nature, which the Romantics claim finds its truest expression in the symbolic use of language, is that of "descriptive and metaphorical language." (De Man 1983: 203) It is this relation between metaphor and symbol that will now be explored because it provides a means of linking Romanticism, structural linguistics and the analyses of both <u>Giselle</u> and <u>Beach Birds for Camera.</u>

Symbol, Description and Metaphor in the Language of Dance

Figurative language has since the first century A.D. been classified into figures of thought and figures of speech. Following Aristotle's lead, classical theorists analyse rhetorical discourse as consisting in three components, invention, disposition and style. (Abrams 1985: 180) The latter has come to include classifications and analyses of figurative language and thus, according to the model articulated by Abrams (1985), metaphor, metonymy and the symbol are forms of figurative language.

As Abrams (1985) argues, the symbol in its broadest sense is anything which signifies. But in the literary context the symbol is an element, word or sequence that signifies an object or event which, in its turn, signifies something else. It is the Romantics who clarify the term, theorising how the symbol signifies. Unlike allegory which represents a pair of subjects, an image and a concept, the symbol represents only one, the image alone. Also, the symbol is indefinite but suggestive of a signified, whereas allegory is specific in its reference.

In contrast, the metaphor is structured by implicit relations of comparison or similarity that serve as a filter through which the metaphorical topic is viewed. (Abrams 1985: 68). Thus, it is possible to argue that, generally speaking metaphor and symbol are produced in relations of substitution - for example, the image of the dancer can be substituted for the idea or concept - but that allegory and metonymy are produced by contiguous relations whereby there is a relation of application between closely associated terms.

Romantic critics, like the Russian Formalists, were interested in the familiar. They sought to evoke a freshness of sensation in response to familiar objects whereas the Formalists foregrounded the function of artistic devices to produce "the effect of freshness in the reader's sensation" (Abrams 1985: 274), to defamiliarise by disrupting the modes of ordinary discourse. These deviations or artistic devices that effect a reorganisation of language are analysed by Jakobson, who attempts to outline the structure of linguistic functions by identifying, within the matrix of language, six functions which any speech event can implement in any act of verbal communication. His primary interest is in the poetic function, which he argues is the predominant function in the constitution of the work of art as an aesthetic, self focusing expression. What distinguishes the poetic function is "the palpability of signs and the deepening of the fundamental dichotomy of signs and objects." (Innis 1985: 146)

Jakobson asserts that the six basic aspects of language - the conative, the phatic, the emotive, the metalingual, the referential and the poetic - are hierarchically ordered in any message. This leads him to argue that, because art is about itself, the focus on the message, the act of communication, for its own sake, is the poetic function of language. Although the poetic function is not the sole function of verbal art, it is its dominant determining function, in that it foregrounds the speech act. Moreover, the poetic function is proposed as essential: it is the component which sets in motion and gives direction to the other components. But whilst he admits that there are supplementary functions in the aesthetic work, Jakobson places those to one side in favour of an explication of what he considers central.

Following the view that language like all other sign systems has a twofold character, Jakobson extends Saussure's differentiation between *langue/parole*, *paradigm/syntagm,* code/message into the axes of selection and combination. He argues that in any symbolic process there is a competition between metaphor, based on selection and substitution, and metonymy which is based on combination and contexture. For Jakobson, metaphor and metonymy are opposed because they are generated according to opposing principles. This bipolar

structure is characteristic of "all varieties of language since language shares many properties with some other systems of signs, or even all of them." (Jakobson & Halle 1956: 93) Consequently, poetics are not confined to verbal art because the structural features of what constitutes the verbal can be transposed into "music, ballet, and graphic art." (Innis 1985: 148)

Metaphor is generated within the process of selection and operates solely at the level of *langue*. It involves the perception of similarity and the possibility of substitution, selected from "a filing cabinet of (equivalent) prefabricated representations" (Jakobson & Halle 1956: 72) within the vocabulary of language. There is an awareness of difference in the process of selection, and particularly substitution, but this is suppressed by the demands of similarity which enable the metaphorical operation to function. In the axis of contiguity and combination, what has been selected is combined into units of a higher degree of complexity - sequences, or *syntagms* - according to the rules and conventions of the system of language. Metonymy therefore operates at the level of both message or code, or solely at the level of message. (Lodge 1981: 77)

In Jakobson's scheme the poetic is homologous with the metaphoric mode of expression, which is opposed to the metonymic. Although he proposes that all texts are constituted in the interplay between these modes he argues that one usually dominates. For example, in a narrative ballet movement, mime, music costume, design etc., are combined to forward and explain the action and describe the setting. Thus, narrated events are constituted according to a logic of causality which is dominated by the principle of verisimilitude. Giselle has a smooth, logical, homogeneous dance style which naturalises meaning, and thus Jakobson might argue that a kind of foregrounding occurs which anticipates nineteenth century Realism, acting as a cover for another type of foregrounding associated with thematic patterning. Realism is dominated by a linear logic of cause and effect, the intelligibility of which is produced in the contiguous and continuous relation between elements, whereas thematic patterning is concerned with foregrounding and thereby privileging the symbolic use of language.

Consequently, in Act Two of the ballet, the symbolic use of language is given priority over metonymic contiguities.

The effect is that the linear and chronological structure of the ballet is maintained in the emphasis on the thematic echoes and parallels between the two acts through the reference to, and development of, choreographic sequences, musical leitmotifs, relationships between characters etc. These function to produce a symmetry between the acts. Thus, in accordance with Albrecht's developing sensitivity, the use of language becomes more poetic, and the pace of the work is slowed down. This produces a sensuous, dream-like atmosphere, in which boundaries between the real and the imagined, between materiality and the Image, are fused.

In Beach Birds for Camera the relation between the metaphoric and the metonymic modes is differently articulated. In the content of the dancing, relationships are dominated by other than a strictly linear, causal logic. For example, partnerings are defined, in terms of movement relations, as relations between dancing elements, and the dance action is not dominated by chronological relations of past, present, future. Consequently, although the elements of dance remain, the movement between bodies, the rules and conventions that dictate the placing and alignment of both individual bodies and bodies in relation to each other, are systematically and self-consciously challenged. In other words, at the level of the chain of signification the codes of combination and the syntax of dancing are articulated differently. The effect is that the expressive capacity of the dancing body, which traditionally functions to articulate some kind of transcendence, is transformed.

As a film, however, Beach Birds for Camera does produce conventionalised contiguities of contextual coherence and continuity. The filmic codes of combination and syntax enable the reader to follow the work in an untroubled way. Action, as a series of body to space relationships that are articulated and fetishised as form, is framed and controlled and the reader is able to use the differential relation between the title, the movement and the filming to exert

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control over the dance play of meaning. The effect is that the work can be read as a reworked version of an original dance work. This gives a conventional role as a recording eye to the film medium, diminishing the consciousness of the camera in favour of the choreographic "I", and so the innovative and modernist impulses of the work are prevented from spilling into anarchy by structure. Structure, in this respect, articulates a principle of aesthetic order that is expressed as the spatialisation of time. The metonymic contiguities which enable Cunningham to direct the reader to what is unique and irreducible about dancing, by foregrounding body-to-space relations syntactically, are undermined by the use of filmic codes and conventions. These produce contiguously a linear, chronological, and causal set of relations that capture dancing as the embodiment of form. The effect is to treat film conventionally, as a representational medium that is projected over dance relations of contiguity, and this encourages the reader to see this work as expressive of the choreographer's concept of dancing: dance form as the expression of the energy and force of life.

Jakobson identifies the constitutive device of the poetic function as the principle of equivalence. Identifying empirical linguistic criteria in sequences of poetry he shows how the relation between equivalence and combination is constitutive. Using the example of poetry, he equalises syllables within the same sequence, word stress and unstress, long with long, short with short, word boundary with word boundary, no boundary with no boundary, syntactic pause with syntactic pause, no pause with no pause. As has been shown in Chapters Three and Four, symmetry, equilibrium, and measure as the reiteration of equivalent units, are some of the criteria that are identified and described conventionally as constitutive in dance. For example, in Giselle it is possible to discuss the interdependence of dance and music both within sequences, and symmetrically across the Acts - as in the use of musical motif in Act Two to remind the audience of the action and emotion of the first act. By contrast, in Beach Birds for Camera, the conventional interdependence between dance and music is consciously disrupted.

However, when Jakobson develops empirical criteria of equivalence, repetition, symmetry, etc., with which to demonstrate the poetic function of language he is appealing to things that exist outside of language. For example, metre or classical principles of placing and alignment, which subject the body to the visual realisation of metrical or geometrical principles, conventionalise symmetry as a value. For example, the Romantics emphasised the visuality of the body, interpreting it as a self conscious, autonomous entity. Within this context, ballet becomes an expression of the visual ordering of the body, which can be apprehended as sensuous surface whilst simultaneously being intelligible at the level of thought. Articulated in the dichotomy between surface sexuality and the energy of the image, the romanticisation of classical technique gives form to the energy and inner life of the imagination, and in so doing unites perception and imagination. By contrast, Cunningham's style of moving consciously subverts the correspondential relation between the body and the world that underpins classical technique, whilst maintaining the stress on visuality in his fetishisation of form. Thus, to maintain that the poetic function of language is a focus on the message for its own sake is to repeat a logocentric ordering, which differentiates unreflexively what is intrinsic to the work of art from what is extrinsic.

For Jakobson structure is determined by a teleological end. To discuss <u>Beach Birds for Camera</u> in terms of the structural differentiation between metaphor and metonymy is, to start with a meaning or set of meanings about the work, about Cunningham's way of working, about the relation between dance and film etc., and to identify structures that are responsible for these interpretations. This inevitably leads to certain structures, patterns, configurations being set aside as marginal or irrelevant. What is happening in this case is that these prior readings of the work, legitimated by reference to the choreographer, director, practices and institutions, function as a starting point and a limitation which founds and organises the subsequent structural reading. Similarly, to read <u>Giselle</u> in terms of the differentiation between allegory and symbol is to use the critical writing of the German and French Romantics as both a starting point and limitation from and around which to structure a reading of the ballet which engages with the issue of language.

Dance finds its identity as an aesthetic practice in the pure translatability of the signifier. Thus, although the shape, the progress and form of the work are forwarded by contiguity, the possibility that the dance work means is dependent on treating the totality of the work as a metaphor, as the vehicle of expression for a series of signifieds.

In some ways this is reminiscent of the Romantics dilemma. The symbolic use of language, like the poetic, produces a focus on the message for its own sake. For the Romantics this focus is articulated in a use of language which unifies sign and referent, materiality and Image. In this way they anticipate at the level of language the issues that structuralism and semiotics raise. They challenge the allegorical use of language on the grounds that it is motivated, transitive and bound by convention by arguing for a structural, unified relation between signifier and signified. Furthermore, the Romantics provide criteria by which it is possible to identify the symbolic use of language, and to differentiate it from other forms of language such as the allegorical. The symbol, which is produced as intransitive and unmotivated, is primarily representative of itself. But, although it does not indicate in itself that it has another meaning, it nevertheless is available to both intellection and perception because it produces an effect through which it signifies. It therefore signifies both spontaneously and indirectly. Thus, the Romantics draw attention to language as a signifying process by focusing on the work of art as production.

Dance as Transcendental Signification

To maintain a belief in the possibility of a transcendental signified that exists anterior to the chain of signification is to reduce the interplay between *langue* and *parole,* metaphor/metonymy to the interests, observations and intentions of the choreographer. In other words the irreducible play of differences must be made subservient to and controlled by intention. And it is only if this is the case that selection can lead to higher units of complexity which must then erase themselves before the substituted meaning of the signified.

The argument has been made in this thesis, using Jakobson's structural linguistics, that Cunningham exploits the metonymic mode in the systematic foregrounding of selected detail, the particulars of dancing. But there is a retreat in his work to the transcendental signified, as the metonymic mode is recovered and assimilated into the metaphoric. What is unique and irreducible about dancing thus becomes a vehicle for the signified form and body-to-space relations which shape form are used to express the energy and force of life. This leads back to the issue of the pure translatability of the signifier. Once the act of reading is instigated and the reader looks to interpret a dance work, the work becomes the vehicle for the signified. Traditionally, the reader examines relations of selection and combination using them to reveal the concept, meaning, values which the dance work conveys as communicative practice. But, as Derrida has pointed out, all creation, reading and criticism takes place within the tradition of metaphysics, which maintains a belief in the possibility of translatability and thus naturalises the system of representation.

In other words, it is not possible to talk about a work without a metalanguage, and consequently the concept of interpretation and the act of reading must always yield structurally to metaphor. The critic selects details from the work and produces a reading, which is inevitably an interpretation of the original work. However, Cunningham explicitly tries to resist the act of interpretation as a fixed relation between sign and referent by foregrounding contiguity. Such a strategy is subverted by the fact that dance cannot write itself. As Derrida argues, dance is always taciturn, it speaks by proxy and therefore it is the relation between how it speaks and what it speaks that must become the subject that is addressed by the practices of deconstruction.

To assimilate symbol and metaphor and metonymy and allegory is to link them on the basis of similarity. Derrida's formulation of the logic of the supplement, shows how the privilege of either metaphor or symbol is an effect of their oppositional counterparts. The traditional and conventional distinction made between figures of thought and figures of speech offers a perspective from which

to consider the assimilation between metaphor/symbol and allegory/metonymy. To treat metaphor/symbol as figures of thought is to emphasise their cognitive legitimacy and to locate them in the gap between sense and reference. Effectively, this locates both as instances of general cognitive processes at their most creative and makes it difficult to distinguish between the literal and the metaphorical. Therefore, it is possible to make substitutions on the basis of resemblance: the Giselle of Act One, for Giselle as Wili in Act Two; image for concept; movement for beach birds; representation for origin. Inevitably what is being discussed is the way in which the system of representation enables an unproblematic elision between speech and thought that is dependant on setting aside or erasing the chain of signification in favour of the transcendent concept. Thus, it is possible to argue that language originates in figure and is essentially metaphorical, and to treat language as being able to literally re-present an original is dependent on setting aside its rhetoricity. Culler (1983: 203)

However, all figures discussed assume their privilege in respect of another term that has been set aside as supplementary or derivative and all depend on the supplementary term for their condition of possibility. Thus they all become special cases of the figural which refer in their constitution to a pre-existent signified. For example, Cunningham's stress on relations of contiguity to give form to body-to-space relations which, in turn, articulate the natural energy and force of life, articulates two positions. First, that the utilitarian material body can be set aside to become representative of form through combination of the discipline of technique and choreographic procedures. Secondly, that dancing, as a silenced talkativeness, must always refer to something other than itself. But how it does this is a matter of language, because, as Lacan argues, it is language that disrupts or displaces the desire for an imagined plenitude.

Consequently, to locate the figures discussed as figures of speech could be seen as a means of inserting them into the gap between sign and referent, making language speak for itself. But, although all language speaks through an interrelation between substitution and combination, and thus all language is constituted on the differential play of *differance,* to locate the figures discussed as

figures of speech is to repeat the logocentric strategy that places sense and voice and thought and speech in an unmediated correspondential relation that requires figurative language to be differentiated from literal language in order to organise the act of interpretation.

As has been shown, the differentiations between metaphor and metonymy and symbol and allegory behave in similar ways. They are both structured as binary oppositions which, in privileging one term, repeat the logocentric demand for the authority of presence. In both cases, the supplementary term is set aside in order to protect the privileged term from contamination. However, in each case the repressed term both inhabits and conditions its opposite.

Dance as Writing

The value of treating dance as a form of writing is, first, that it draws attention to an issue that is significant in respect of all language, which is the issue of mediation. The aesthetic practice of dance, like all language, is conditioned and constituted by material signifiers that are repeatable and which operate between the choreographer and the spectator. Therefore, although dance has been conventionally considered as a natural and spontaneous form of expression, in the wake of the structuralist and post structuralist projects it is impossible to continue to conceive of it as directly expressive. It is always written in the sense that the dance event is always constructed as a series of movements on specific bodies and thus is organised in relation to various codes and conventions. To claim that dance is a natural and direct form of expression is to claim that it is a transparent medium that erases itself as performed, giving direct access to a signified. Simultaneously, to treat it as a medium of communication and expression is also to emphasise the materiality of the signifier as essentially constitutive.

No doubt the ephemerality of the art form makes the 'writtenness' of dance harder to 'grasp'. Because dance movement cannot be detached from the body, other than artificially by means of technology, it appears to manifest from the body without any effort. This gives the illusion to the spectator that the visual is primary and implies a hierarchy similar to the speech/writing hierarchy whereby

the first term is conceived of as more natural: a strategy which allows the visuality of embodiment takes precedence over what is embodied. Yet by requiring the body to express and communicate, dance as an art form fulfils the definition of writing. The body is trained and disciplined to become a performing body and, as such, it is able to execute different styles of movement which are systematised according to their own codes and conventions. Thus the dancing body and the systems of spectatorship that govern its constitution as a legitimate body of performance, deny their status as writing in favour of the fullness of vision. However, dance is an aesthetic form which is produced for consumption, and what is implied in its constitution is that there is something to be consumed that is beyond the movements of the body. It is framed as a certain form of practice, aesthetic practice, and this framing places it as a vehicle of communication and expression. This has two effects. First, it assumes that dance is inhabited by a virtual talkativeness. Secondly, in order to maintain a focus on the essence of dance - 'the dance itself' - this knowledge has to be set aside. This then allows the dance historian, scholar, critic to place to one side a larger problem which is the impossibility of an unmediated form of expression. Thus dance visually embodies the impossibility of logocentrism. As Johnson (1995:68) argues, as a type of language it can "neither be referentially reliable nor avoid referentiality," but as it is impossible to stand outside the logocentrism of western metaphysics it is necessary to show how the supposed ground of argument in any work is undermined by its own rhetorical operations.

To inscribe dance in the domain of the textual is to refute the possibility of an unmediated relation between origin and representation and thus to show the structural impossibility of treating the dance work as a plenitude which it becomes the task of critical analysis to reveal. What has been argued throughout this thesis is that, through the careful suturing of the body and movement, movement and language, dance and film, dance is offered as an illusory wholeness in which intentionality draws together sense and meaning. However, to formulate dance as a type of writing whose disseminative possibilities "move outward in all directions at once, resisting closure, always in process, always being written and rewritten" (Brunette & Wills 1989: 64) is to continually

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topicalise, in a self-reflexive manner, the interrelationship between the elements of the work as they are engaged in the irreducible play of meaning.

End Note: Directions for Further Work

Deleuze's ideas have been developed in this thesis as a means of discussing the dance film collaboration in the context of Cunningham's work. A project for future development could be a detailed exploration of Deleuze's ideas about the "vicissitudes of movement as concept" (Rodowick 1997: 194) and their applicability to the work of those choreographers who engage in a reflexive exploration of the relationship between dance, film and information technology as a process of theatricalisation.

For example, Deleuze identifies as the dominant logic of the movement-image the overarching linear structure of cause and effect. He argues (1992; 1994) that, as this weakens and breaks down, a new set of possibilities opens in the film image, producing a series of conceptual changes in relation to the schema which direct the spatial and temporal relations of the movement image. One important aspect of this shift is that space is conceived of as a disconnected space (Deleuze 1992: 192) that functions as any-space-whatever. The effect is that duration, which in the dance context is treated conventionally as a spatialisation of time, can be considered instead as an indeterminate set of contingent possibilities. Thus, the dancing space becomes an "emptied space" (Rodowick 1997: 175) in which the function and the potential signification of the image is changed, and as a consequence, the organising logic of the work is governed predominantly by chance rather than a motivating action or intention.

Another area for development is the relation between description, narration and meaning as ways of locating the body. The dance body is treated conventionally as if it stands between thought and itself and therefore needs overcoming to reach thinking. Deleuze (1994) argues that in experimental cinema, movement, rather than the logic of narrativisation, becomes a profound expression of theatricalisation. Discussing the relation between the everyday body and the ritualised body as it is constituted in experimental cinema, Deleuze (1994) argues

that it is here that the body is relinquished from its dependence on pre-existing plot, or action-image. In other words, the ways in which characters are constituted gesture by gesture and movement sequence by movement sequence, so that the development and duration of their movement in space and time coincides with the development of the film or the narrative, is challenged in the attention that New Wave cinema gives to the body. (Deleuze 1994:196) His work on the time-image provides a means of challenging the body's determination in relation to goals and means which would unify its incorporation into the wider whole. Deleuze introduces conceptually the means whereby the undecidability of the body, as a "plurality of ways of being present in the world...all incompatible and yet coexistent" (1994: 197), can be engaged critically. For example, in <u>Solo</u> Trisha Brown explored the potential relations between body, movement and the camera when she strapped a camera on her back and filmed whilst dancing. Deleuze's work on both the movement-image and the time-image could provide a framework with which to examine critically, rather than descriptively such work, by allowing the body to become its own bodily attitudes, movements and conditions as energy, flow, dynamic, weight etc., are theatricalised.

Both Merleau Ponty and Derrida critically engage with the western philosophical tradition of presence, which is committed to seeking or revealing a universal truth of being and which denies the "shifting material, historical, political and cultural context in favour of claims to certainty and adequation. " (Mazis 1997:168) Both theorists articulate different but related views and it is to the relationship between them that a further study of issues of meaning in relation to dance could be directed. Derrida's main area of concern is language, and more precisely writing. In contrast, Merleau Ponty's project, which consists in overcoming the mind-body duality, interrogates the visible, as experience and being.

Sheets-Johnston (1979) draws on Merleau-Ponty's work in an initial approach to the phenomenology of the body. But her analysis of the relations between body and dance are limited by her particular interpretation of phenomenological intentionality. Her approach focuses exclusively on choreographic intention,

whereas in this study the argument exposes the grounds for focusing on the structure of the dance text itself.

The ontological difference between Being and beings that has haunted continental philosophy since Heidegger (Dillon 1997) has been addressed by Derrida's conceptualisation of *differance* and Merleau-Ponty's conceptualisation of *ecart*, both of which interrupt the unmediated relationship of thought with itself that underpins western metaphysics and thus gesture towards a differentiation between sign and referent. Although both Merleau-Ponty and Derrida provide different ways of considering these relations, the differences between them, and the implications of these differences, could be usefully examined in the context of dance as an aesthetic practice which constitutes and is constituted by the relation between movement, space and time.

In view of the attention that has been given to the work of Benjamin on the relation between art and film, it is worth considering his arguments in relation to Cunningham's works that have been made specifically as dance films.

Benjamin (1969: 224-5) proposes that "photography and film are the most serviceable exemplifications of …(a) new function" of the work of art, alongside which its "artistic function…may be recognised as incidental." In other words, technology which provides the condition of possibility for the reproducibility of works of art produces a qualitative transformation of their auratic character. The effect being that the cult value (Benjamin 1969 223-4) of a work of art has been displaced by "an absolute emphasis on its exhibition value."

However it is far from clear in Benjamin's writings why the choreographing of dance specifically for the filmic medium is not a manifestation of the liveness and changeability of tradition when he insists, paradoxically, that film liquidates the value of cultural heritage, whilst maintaining that the fabric of tradition is thoroughly alive and unchangeable. Neither is it clear why Benjamin neglects to reinstate the analytical distinction between the aesthetics of film and the political economy of mass communication (a characteristic of the Frankfurt School

theorists but also other non-Marxist thinkers of the period opposed to the apparent threat of mass civilisation (Leavis & Thompson 1933).)

These issues could be addressed in terms of the ways in which they provide for a critical consideration of Cunningham's work with both analogue and digital technology. This would allow for a consideration of Cunningham's work as both a response to the 'thoroughly live and extremely changeable' tradition from which he has emerged and in which he seeks to locate his work on its own aesthetic terms, and in response to and in correspondence with modern levels of technology. Also it would provide an examination of Benjamin's writings on his own terms.

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