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THE DANCING BODY

Clara Khudaverdian

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Sociology and Anthropology

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
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ABSTRACT

The Dancing Body

Clara Khudaverdian

This thesis investigates the ballet culture's conception of the body. It explains how the ballet dancer uses the body, sees it, and talks about it. It analyzes their discourses and practices and renders a description of "The Dancing Body". Thirteen retired ballet dancers were interviewed (7 women, 6 men) about their experiences in this milieu, and three months were spent observing their daily rituals and practices. Through the analysis of the dancers' lives and the ethnographic notes, it was concluded that "The Dancing Body" is not only a vehicle through which dancers express themselves on stage but that this conception of the body is weaved into the dancer's identity.

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DEDICATION

In memory of William Shiha.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis intends to make a contribution to sociology of the body by bringing to it a study which supports the notion that the body is somehow shaped, given meaning, and invented by society (Shilling 1993:70). There are numerous conceptions of the body which vary from culture to culture and which have changed overtime, indicating that the body is "socially constructed in various ways by different populations" (Synnott 1993:1). Therefore, from this point of departure, this thesis will demonstrate how the body is conceptualized, one way or another, and why. It will, therefore, study a specific culture with a unique conception of the body and with unique practices. More specifically, what will be studied is the ballet culture, its members, and their collective conception of the body. We adopt Michel Foucault's argument that the body is constituted by discourse and structure our research around this theory. Hence, we analyze ballet dancer's discourse on the body in order to demonstrate how they conceptualize the body, and why. In appropriating Foucault's theory of the body, as constituted by discourse, we also adopt his notion that discourses are not linguistic systems or just texts but, rather, are practices (Foucault 1983). In order to bring this abstract notion down to a more concrete level where we can produce an empirical work, we will study the dancers' everyday practices, that is, the way they learn to use the body, and learn to understand it. The data which will be examined and evaluated comes in the form of in-depth, life-story interviews and also from notes acquired through participant observation. The style of this thesis will take the

form of a kind of journey where the readers will travel through the dancers' world and experience their unique and interesting conception of the body. Furthermore, the accumulation of this data, will allow us to draw out from it the dancer's cultural conception of the body. It should be noted that throughout the thesis we will be repeating the word 'dancer' and, therefore, state from the onset that it will be referring to classical ballet dancers specifically, unless otherwise indicated. There are many styles of dance, however, this study will deal specifically with ballet.

Classical ballet is a formal technique that smoothly combines strict rules for body placement into harmonious, controlled movement; the "danse d'ecole"- the motion, postures and steps that make-up the dancers vocabulary- stems from more than four hundred years of work by teachers, dancers, and choreographers. Like actor's vocabulary of words, the dancer's language is always changing and developing but it always remains part of its long history. This form of dance has established approximately 40,000 bodily positions, in their various combinations, and when movement is added the number of possibilities exceeds 1.5 billion (Steeh 1982: 8-10). The ballet dancer who is also an artist will inject feeling into ballet's form in order to elevate it above the level of gymnastic exercise. What we are exactly dealing with here, is an art form which relies heavily on the use of the body. Furthermore, we are also presented with a culture whose main concern is the production of ballet dancers, therefore, out of necessity, requires a specific conception of the body in order to insure the production, and reproduction, of these performing artists. Before proceeding to outline this thesis, we will first clarify what dance is, what classical ballet is, and why the ballet culture is the focal point of this study.

This thing called dance can be described as motion or movement which arises from emotions. On many occasions the word 'dance' has been used metaphorically to describe forms of motion other than human movement, for example: dancing particles, dancing moonbeams, and boats dancing over the waves. Birds, animals and insects are said to dance when courting; many young animals dance from the joys of spring; young and growing creatures overflow with energy that cannot be contained and is expressed in impulses, the repetitive pulsation having the appearance of flow or rhythm.

The human body has an appetite for rhythm, reflecting the wave characteristics of pulse and propulsion. It is that undulatory response to pulse energy that comprise the act of dance: not only does the body of a dancer vibrate in the dance action but this action, by its rhythmic character, also spurs the watchers to a vibrating response. Through such vibrations of energy, the transmission of emotion occurs. This transmission of mood evokes a visceral response from the watcher and ignites a desire to respond and perhaps mimic the action of the rhythmic mover, or dancer. This infectious response is part of dance- the two way process of motion and emotion. A person may become aroused by perhaps a gesture of good-will and break out into a dance of glee. The emotion of pleasure or happiness may be recaptured by repeating that particular action- that dance of glee- and, thus, dance motion and emotions become interchangeable. The capacity for such an interchange and build-up of feeling is at the root of the hypnotic and intense power of dance. It is due to this power that dance may serve as a tool to unite individuals, or societies. This function was adopted from time immemorial by the religious sects like the dancing dervishes of the Middle East, who have sought to induce a state of ecstasy

through organized bodily movement in order to achieve union with the divine. Rhythm not only makes the individual whole but also links individual dancers by a common emotion. This linkage is further emphasized when dancers join hands in a chain or ring, or dance in pairs, each moving with the same energy and thus evoking the same emotions.

The ability for dance to unite people and to convey emotions to its watcher, validates its power to communicate sentiments. The ability to express with the human body, and through it, deep inner feelings which others responds to, endows the human body with a powerful rhythmic quality which has the capacity for being a solid and efficient vehicle with which one transports their emotions from their inner selves onto the surface of their being, and in so doing, generates physical signs, or actions which can be read and experienced by the watchers.

The goal of the dancer is to transmit feelings and emotions through motion or movement. This is an art which is acquired through training the body and learning the technique of dance. Dance has many techniques, forms, styles and coded languages but nonetheless, the body must be trained in order to master the art. To dance professionally requires not only learning a technique but also mastering it through many years of rigorous training. A dancer must become extremely comfortable with their bodies and extremely aware of their emotions in order to facilitate the evocation of their sentiments through the movement of their bodies. They must, in a sense, become 'one with their bodies' and in so doing, their bodies become the vehicle with which they transport their inner feelings. That is, in order for a dancer to be able to combine both the technical aspects of dance with the artistic aspects, they must train for many years to be able to master the physical and

emotional language of this art. They, in fact, train their bodies to work in unison with their feelings and, thus, use this practice in performance.

An art such as ballet is not a spontaneous dance form, rather, it is a trained technique appropriated by the dancer and called upon when performing. This kind of training requires a language, one which teaches the dancer to understand the various bodily movements. It is for this reason that a dance vocabulary was created. The dancer learns the vocabulary and techniques of dance which serve as a device to communicate moves from their minds to their bodies. The dancer then incorporates their emotions with these moves and through this interplay between their emotions and their movements, are able to captivate the audience. Although, the audience members are not familiar with the dance vocabulary they, nonetheless, experience the dance through their bodily senses. Dance is a visceral thing and it is this physical response which has the power to course through the bodies of the watchers. It stimulates and excites their bodily senses and, in effect, elevates them from their stationary positions and transports them into the movements and onto another plain. The dancer draws the entire audience into their movements and their emotional journey, thus, creating a sort of fusion of energies, or spirits. It is a magical process one which is both exhilarating and captivating, and which require years and years of demanding and rigorous work to perfect.

Ballet dancers use their bodies in a unique and interesting way and it is for this reason that they are the main focus of this thesis. They are a rather curious group of people who spend most of their lives and waken hours training their bodies inside a dance studio. Isolated from the world, the ballet dancer trains incessantly and learns how to tap into the

natural rhythmic quality of their bodies and ,thus, uses their bodies as their primary means of self-expression. They are a people who are actualized by the intense pleasure of moving their bodies to music, performing on stage, and touching others. The art of ballet is more than just movement; it is movement created and performed intentionally to touch others- touch them emotionally that is. Hence, the dancer's body is their 'voice' and is the means by which they express themselves.

Ballet dancers, in order to communicate effectively, become extremely aware of their bodies and become conscious of every move they make. They have a heightened awareness of the body which makes them a fascinating group to study. They hear every beat of their heart, feel every breath they take, and become highly sensitive individuals. They are in constant dialogue with their bodies. That is, they consciously speak to it and demand perfectly executed moves from it. They not only communicate to their bodies but also communicate with it, and through it, thus, making them a very body conscious and body centred culture. They work hard at developing a body which will effectively serve them on stage. They are artists and like any artist, they require years and years to perfect their work- a perfection which is never really attained. The art of ballet dancing, then, is an endless learning process for the dancer, where the end result is to become the dance. Hence, the ballet culture has a long history of producing dancers, and of using the human body as an instrument of expression.

Rooted in the ballet culture's identity is a conception of the body as an artistic medium. The dancer is taught to become a dancer through the traditions and customs inherent in this culture. They work hard at learning the inherited conception of the body by adopting

the daily rituals and practices developed to produce dancers. As a result of their very specific learning process, the dancer's experience of the body is different than that of the average person. The ballet culture is developed out of the unique way they use, see, and talk about the body and, therefore, out of the way they conceptualize it. To study this culture, then, would require an unravelling of the dancer's bodily experiences. That is, it would require that we expose the method in which the dancer comes to understand the body, in other words how they learn about the body and, furthermore, to also expose the forces which are at work in the development of this culture's conception of the body.

The concern, therefore, of this thesis is to understand how a different set of discourses on the body, such as those which emerge from the dance world, can generate a different conception of the body from that of the larger society. By showing an alternate conception of the body, we can demonstrate how it is conceptualized, and why. Hence, for the purpose of this thesis, we shall refer to the ballet culture's notion of the body as "The Dancing Body". We will, therefore, explore the rituals and practices of the body in this culture- in other words their cultural discourses- by demonstrating how they use, see and talk about the body. In so doing, we will be able to render a picture of "The Dancing Body" and to come to some conclusion on how and why a culture might hold a particular notion of the body.

Although, Michel Foucault has made a substantial contribution to the study of the body in the social sciences, and we have structured this thesis based on his notion of discourse, other theorists such as Mary Douglas, Erving Goffman and Marcel Mauss will also be addressed. First, however, we will briefly explain the changing status of the body

beginning with the Greeks until present. Next, through Douglas, Goffman, Mauss and Foucault, we will discuss how the body is socially invented and how its conception varies from society to society. By demonstrating that there are differing conceptions of the body and, therefore, differing practices of the body, we can suggest that, as a result of it, the body has the potential to be experienced in numerous ways. Its experience, however, is delimited by specific cultural practices and, therefore, managed and maintained by them. A culture's specific conception of the body, that is, maintains one particular way of using, seeing, and talking about the body, therefore, one specific way of experiencing it. Hence, the boundaries which are assigned by a culture, delimits the parameters within which the body can be experienced. Change in conception, then, results in the change of how the body is used and, therefore, experienced. We do not contend, however, that the body's experience is more limited by certain conceptions but, rather, is experienced differently. In order to illustrate this, we will proceed to study the customs, the rituals, and the practices of the ballet culture. To generate a description of "The Dancing Body", we will journey into their world and describe how the body is used, seen, and talked about. We begin this journey of discovery by firstly, explaining how they learn to use their bodies and, therefore, how they come to understand it. Secondly, the fact that ballet is an aesthetic experience, we will journey into the dancer's vision of themselves. Here, we will describe the visual experience of the dancers and their interesting relationship with the mirror. We will refer to the works of Mikhail Bakhtin in Art and Answerability, Charles Horton Cooley's "Looking Glass Self", and Foucault's notion of the 'Gaze', in order to explain this phenomenon. Finally, after having explained the dancers' learning experience, and visual

experience, we will conclude by analyzing the dancer's talk on their bodily experiences as ballet dancers. It will be shown that the dancer's body is generated by their cultural discourses and everyday practices, and is weaved into the ballet culture's collective conception and, thus, cultural identity. The data acquired, will explain and evaluate the following: how and why the dancers entered the ballet world, the physical and emotional pains of the art, the joy of performing, their training experience, their work as dancers, their relationship with their bodies, the evolution and growth of their art, and their triumphs and defeats. What will be shown is that all of the above are weaved into their cultural perception of the body and, thus, their cultural life.

Chapter One

METHODOLOGY

I entered the building where I had danced for many years of my life. As I stepped through the doorway I heard a familiar sound coming from the third floor. The hall ways were filled with music and in an instant, memories began to invade my body. I struggled to climb the three flights of stairs as my knees began to weaken from the sound of the music coursing through my veins and through my entire body. As I got closer to the third floor the sound of the music intensified and my body began to react with an intense tingling sensation which shot up my spine- eight years of absence from this place had instantly disappeared. My body was home again.

It was not strange for my body to remember this place, this environment, this world, and was longing so much to once again partake in the rituals being practised in these spaces. For twenty years my body had participated in, and experienced, the daily work ethic of the dancer. It came as no surprise to me that my body would respond to the sounds, the smells, and the movement amongst these spaces. The energy of dancers working their bodies, and struggling to become 'the dance', filled the air with a familiarity that was so strong and so intense that I was overwhelmed by the bodily sensations I was experiencing. It took but a brief moment for the memories of the past to invade my body- memories of the many years I trained to become a dancer and to become 'the dance'. I was transported back in time, a time when I too engaged in the rituals of this world, and in so doing, became part of this unique culture of people. I had forgotten what it meant to be a

dancer and what it felt like to use the body that way. This entire era of my life was obliterated with my disengagement from this culture. For eight years I no longer used my body the way I once had, nor did I see or talk about it as a dancer would, and as a result, I no longer felt like a dancer. In a sense, I felt like I had detached myself from this world and from its practices, and never once imagined my memory being jarred in that one instant when I reemerged into the spaces where people became dancers. Here, my body seemed to be awakened from a deep slumber by the magical energy of this world and by this thing called 'dance'.

The above story is meant to convey to my readers the connection I have to this project. Although, this research is an exploration of dancer's discourses and practices of the body, it is also for me, a journey back to my roots. I have returned to this familiar place in order to gather data which will help us understand how the body is conceptualized, one way or another, and why. My main thesis, as already stated in the introduction, addresses Foucault's contention that the body is constituted by discourse. If this is true then we would expect to find the ballet culture's conception of the body rooted in their discourses and, thus, their daily practices. I refer to this group of people as a 'culture' because they have their own language- one which is non-verbal- and their own set of customs, rituals, and practices, which have been in place for four hundred years. As a result of these traditional practices, ballet dancers have their own cultural conception of the body, which is weaved into their identity. Hence, their uniqueness emerges out of the distinct way they use the body and, therefore, conceptualize it. It is, then, for this reason, that I have selected this group to be the focus of my research.

My intention, then, in this thesis is to transport my readers out of their everyday world for a brief moment and lead them on a journey through the interesting and magical world of ballet. As they read this thesis they will experience the dance world- its rituals and practices- through both an 'insider' and 'outsider' perspective. Being the author of this study and by virtue of my connection and disconnection to this milieu, I am both an 'insider' and 'outsider'. I make no claim of being a neutral observer simply recording my observations from an 'outsider' position. I have an obvious connection to what is being observed and from this position I bring myself to this project by openly discussing my relationship to it. I undoubtedly play an important role in producing this study and my readers are guided through my insights. I do not wish to conceal this fact nor do I make any claims of impartiality. It is for this reason that I begin my writing of this thesis with the above story.

The body in this thesis is being looked at as socially produced and maintained through discourse (this will be discussed in chapter two) and, hence, is studied through the analysis of dancer's accounts of their lives as dancers. Here the dancers' everyday practices will be explored in order to unravel and, thus, render an image of their culture's conception of the body. The accounts of the dancers' lives will reveal to us how the members of this cultural group learn about the body; how they learn to use it, and how they come to understand it and, thus, learn to appreciate it as their medium of self-expression. By producing this data, we will be able to see how an actual culture transmits their notion of the body from one generation to the next and, furthermore, show how the body is constituted by discourse.

The readers will travel through a world where the body is conceptualized as an

instrument with which dancers express themselves to audiences. They will hear the dancer's personal accounts of their lives and not only gain an understanding of their unique conception of the body but also gain an understanding of what it is to be a dancer. Hence, what will emerge from the data is knowledge of how dancer's use, see, and talk about the body and this knowledge will offer a new cultural experience to the readers. In the following section, then, I will explain the two methods of data collection used in this study- participant observation and interviews- and explain why I have chosen this method.

Participant Observation:

My concern for rendering an accurate picture of this culture's conception of the body has led me to select two methods of data collection: in-depth interviews and participant observation. Since, my goal is to represent as accurately as possible the cultural life of dancers, it seems obvious that one would expect the data to speak from the point of view of a participant. Although, I have left the dance milieu for over eight years and re-emerged into the spaces where people become dancers, I was able to quickly shift my perspective from the position of 'outsider' to that of an 'insider'. To my surprise, many of the members of this culture, who are still very much active in this milieu today, remembered who I was and what my accomplishments were in the dance world. They almost instantly treated me as someone who had left the culture for a while to pursue something else and who had now come home. I did not remain an 'outsider' for very long and, thus, was quickly re-integrated as one of the members.

Much of my observation took place in the studios which once housed the contemporary ballet company, and school, of Le Ballet de Montreal Eddy Toussaint, and where for many years I had trained and danced. These studios are now rented out to some of Montreal's best teachers and well established choreographers, and it is one of the main centres for dance in the city. I selected this space to conduct my observation because almost every dancer in the city, at one time or another, will take class in this local. Dancers who train in ballet, modern dance, jazz and so on, will present themselves here on numerous occasions as a method of staying in touch with what is going on in the milieu. Furthermore, many dancers take class here because this is where they are most likely to be seen by independent choreographers and thus, might find employment. It is a place where people train, rehearse, and network and meet other members of the dance community. These studios have been located at 555 Mount-Royal East for over twenty-five years and the phone number has remained the same through-out this time. Although, the name of the studio has changed at least four times since Eddy Toussaint has left Montreal, members of this culture still refer to it as "chez Eddy". It should be mentioned that Eddy Toussaint was one of the founding members of Les Ballets Jazz de Montreal as well as his internationally acclaimed Ballet de Montreal and, as a result, had a huge impact on dance in Quebec. A new generation of young dancers now inhabit the locals where his once 22 member company was housed, however, these young dancers are still very much aware of who this man was and what he accomplished for dance in Montreal.

Entering the studio and the daily lives of the dancer, brought back many memories of this milieu, however, entering this place as a Sociologist, I found myself moving back-and-

forth from the position of 'outsider'-documenting what I see from the point of view of a social scientist- to that of the 'insider' who sees the milieu from the point of view of a dancer. I spent many hours at the studio watching the movement and interacting with the dancers, and feeling nostalgic about the flashbacks which invaded my thoughts. After only one week I felt as though I had gone back in time and realized that nothing had changed except that now new young bodies occupied the studios, and Eddy Toussaint was replaced by several other choreographers. The work was the same, the rituals and practices the same, and so were the goals. People were here for one reason- to become dancers. I on the other hand, was here to watch and take note of the dancer's daily work. I spent many hours informally conversing and laughing with the dancers, having lunch with them, and discussing everything from performances to ballet shoes. Oddly enough none of them ever questioned my being there. They were more interested in talking about Eddy Toussaint and my experiences working for him than they were interested in my research project. I explained what I was doing there but no one seemed to care. They liked having me around to share their everyday experiences with, but they did not show any sort of curiosity in what I was writing, nor did they question what I was doing there. I have to say this puzzled me for a while until I remembered how detached dancers are from the rest of the population. This group is generally closed and difficult to penetrate from the outside unless you 'speak' the same language. Many non-dancers who I spoke to during my research explained to me that whenever they entered the studio to take either their aerobics or yoga class the ballet dancers made them feel really uncomfortable. Most of them could not explain what it was that intimidated them, but they all said that ballet

dancer's are difficult to approach and, furthermore, difficult to understand. Hence, my ability to penetrate this culture with ease was crucial to this study. I, therefore, found a comfortable medium between my work and my connection to this culture and learned to navigate between my role as researcher and my role as a retired dancer. I was there to observe but often found myself working with the dancers who would ask me to help them with some technical problems they were having in class or rehearsal. I spent approximately three days a week for approximately three months visiting the studios and writing down my observations. After a while what I was observing became so familiar to me that I gradually stopped visiting. I realized that my past life as a dancer was still very much part of who I am today and my perception of the body, although I no longer use it as a dancer does, is still a product of that culture. Initially I was not going to include my observations, however, I realized that they were rich with information and should not be ignored. Hence, in this thesis, I incorporate examples of my observations in story form, in order to help render the most accurate picture of "The Dancing Body".

Life-Story Interviews:

The second part of my data comes in the form of in-depth life-story interviews with dancers who have spent most of their lives dancing and who are: almost retired, retired, or who have stopped dancing yet have managed to stay in the dance world by teaching or choreographing. The dancers who I selected to be interviewed are dancers who have had a long enough history in the milieu and who have had professional careers as dancers. The

most important criteria in selecting these dancers was for them to have lived the life of a professional dancer in order for their stories to legitimately represent this culture of people. In accordance with this criteria, all the thirteen dancers, seven women and six men, whom I interviewed, trained in classical ballet and had careers as professional dancers: three of them eventually became modern dancers, eight of them teach and choreograph now, and ten of them, at one point, danced in a ballet company. It should be mentioned that almost all the dancers in Montreal today who made a career out of dance in the past twenty years, and who are now retired or almost, would have at one point in their careers danced for one of the following dance companies: Les Grands Ballet Canadien, Les Ballet Jazz de Montreal, or Le Ballet de Montreal Eddy Toussaint, therefore, would have had to study classical ballet as part of their training. Hence, all the dancers in this study are trained in classical ballet.

The dancers in this study were interviewed for approximately one hour. They were asked to take me on a journey through their dance careers. As the dancers spoke I listened and probed for certain things which were relevant to my research goals (a copy of the interview guide will be included in the appendix). I encouraged the dancers to lead the discussion and I would only ask questions in order to guide the discussion towards specific areas of interest to this study. I generally wanted to hear the dancers' account of their lives and their experience as dancers. The dancers freely told their stories and, in so doing, I was able to uncover some valuable information. My personal experience as a dancer helped me to formulate insightful questions which generated valuable information. Furthermore, I believe that my connection to this culture was a great asset to this project

because it allowed me to engage in a somewhat informal dialogue between two dancers rather than a dancer and a researcher. The interviews were very relaxed and the dancers seemed comfortable enough and, thus, divulge some of their most intimate thoughts and feelings to me. They easily communicated their stories to me and appeared to enjoy the whole interview process. It should be mentioned, that the dancers were given the choice to be interviewed in French or in English, and although all of the dancers I interviewed were of French Canadian origin, all but two insisted on being interviewed in English. Hence, as a result of this, some of the quotes used in this thesis will have some grammatical errors which, for authenticity sake, are not corrected. Nonetheless, the data generated from the interviews is rich with valuable information and the quality of the interviews are not hindered by these grammatical errors. All of the interviews were tape recorded and then transcribed for analysis. In total I have accumulated over six hundred pages of transcripts and more data than I could analyze in a masters thesis. Still today, I receive phone calls from dancers who want to be interviewed. For the moment, I have postponed interviewing dancers because I have more data than I know what to do with, however, the interviewing of dancers will resume after this part of my project is completed.

The data accumulated through my observation notes and through the stories told by the dancers, constitute this culture's conception of the body. The observation of the dancer's daily practices and their life-story accounts, bring to the surface the internal dynamics, or inner workings, of this culture. Simply observing the rituals and practices of this culture is not sufficient because it lacks the dancer's inner thoughts and feelings. After all, we are interested in exposing the dancers' perception of their bodies and which are best

described by the dancer's themselves. Through these interviews we bring to the reader
`inside' knowledge of the ballet culture's conception of the body and through the
observation notes, we bring to the readers my perception of this culture which is both an
`insider' and `outsider' point of view.

Chapter Two

THEORIZING THE BODY:

Various conceptions of the body have arisen and changed overtime. They have "imposed layers of ideas, images, meanings and associations" (Synnott 1993:1) on the body and have also influenced the way we manage and maintain it. Many thinkers have debated what the body is and have developed numerous theories which have assisted in shaping our understanding of the body. By virtue of their thinking, numerous practices of the body have emerged overtime, and throughout different cultures. From thinker to thinker, and from one society to the next, the prevalence of varying conceptions of the body has produced the idea that the body is somehow symbolic of the social, and of a people's thinking. The body, then, means different things to different people. Each conception of the body generates a meaning which is specific to a particular social arrangement. What is interesting about these various theories, or conceptions, is not so much that they construct differing ideas about the body, rather, that they allow one to raise the question of how the body is conceptualized one way or another, and why?

In this chapter, then, I intend to explore how the body is a social invented and how it is constituted by discourse. Through the elaborate work of Michel Foucault, I will explain his conception of discourse and the complex interplay between power and knowledge. In so doing, Foucault's conception of discourse and its link to power and knowledge, will set the theoretical position by which this thesis is structured. Furthermore, I will also look at

various other social theorists who support the fact that the body are socially generated.

Contemporary social theorists have generally worked with the premise that 'the body is a receptor, rather than a generator, of social meaning' (Shilling 1993:70). That is, the notion that 'the body is somehow shaped, constrained and even invented by society' (Shilling 1993:70) has been the theoretical scaffolding under which theorists such as Mary Douglas, Erving Goffman, and Michel Foucault have worked. They share the idea that the body is more than just a 'biological phenomenon' (Shilling 1993:70) and is, in fact, a social product. Although, their conceptions vary, what they do have in common is the belief that the body is given meaning by society and that each society produces their own conception of the body. Hence, by studying these theorists one can gain a better understanding of how we conceptualize the body, one way of another, and why. I will, therefore, discuss the works of the above contemporary theorists, as well as the work of Marcel Mauss. This discussion will lead into a further discussion on how the emergence of a cultural conception of the body is not an arbitrary thing but, rather, is the product of social forces. I will argue that any conception of the body within a culture is coercive and, thus, delimits the social experience of the body by managing and maintaining it. That is, I will make the claim that a culture's conceptions and experiences of the body are limited by the discourses which constitute them. First, however, I shall begin by addressing the changing status of the body throughout various societies and throughout time.

The Changing Status of the Body:

In the Greek tradition the body was glorified- the healthy, beautifully built body held a place of honour (Synnott 1993:8). The arts found glory in the human body- it generally portrayed a complementarity between the body's geometry and the cosmos. Meanwhile, Greek philosophers fleshed out correspondence between humans and the universe.

Although, the Greeks upheld the beauty of a well-sculpted body, the body remained subordinate to the soul. The physical pleasures of the body caused the Greek to distrust, and reason was declared the ruler of the mind (Synnott 1993:8). The Classical view was that the body should obey the mind. Socrates claimed that the soul was a prisoner of the body and insisted that the body is a 'hinderance to the soul' an 'impediment' and an 'imperfection, constantly interrupting, disturbing, distracting and preventing us from getting a glimpse of the truth' (Synnott 1993:9). For Plato, the body was 'the tomb of the soul' and the soul was superior to the body. Regardless of this negative image, Plato also believed that the body was a way to achieve Absolute Beauty and God- "the body may lead to God or away from God" (Synnott 1993:9). Hence, philosophers at that time theorized about how to liberate the soul from the body. Aristotle, also believed that the body was superior to the soul but did not agree that the soul and body were separate, rather, he believed that they could not exist one without the other (Synnott 1993:10).

Under the Roman empire, philosophy increasingly questioned the Aristotelian notion of earthly corporeal fulfilment and idealized the mind. Stoics mocked the vanity of human wishes. They urged that one should not become slave to their passion. Christianity further accentuated this growing contempt for the flesh. The flesh was regarded as filthy, its sight

shameful, its lusts sinful. The golden rule was therefore 'Thou Shall Not'. The Genesis story shows humanity punished for sins of the flesh. Thereafter, 'Man is doomed to toil', while 'unto the woman', the lord declared, 'in pain thou shalt bring forth children' (Genesis 3:16). For Judaeo-Christianity the flesh was corrupt and prey to Satan. Only the sacrifice of God's son would suffice to bear away the sins of the world. On the whole, Christianity engaged with the body- God became flesh- but the flesh had to be mastered through asceticism and monasticism. The Protestants proved no more indulgent: they upheld Original Sin, carnal turpitude, the servitude of the will, and the real presence of Satan and of Hellfire to come.

From around the seventeenth century, discussion about the mind/body relations increasingly took place in philosophical and scientific terms. In Rene Descartes, Discourse on Method (1637) spelt out the most influential scientific metaphysics of mind and body. Descartes stated, "I think therefore I am" and "this 'I', that is to say, the mind, by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from the body" (Descartes 1968: 53-4). Everything else about human life- emotions, desires, instincts and physiological processes- was devolved upon the body and deemed merely mechanical, matter in motion. Descartes' drastic division of the human being into mind and body, promised rich dividends, for it elevated the soul onto an untouchable metaphysical pedestal, while everything else was material and hence a legitimate terrain for scientific investigation.

Certain Enlightenment philosophers began to turn to science in order to deny dualism. They argued that the notion of spirit and soul was an invention of the priests and that human consciousness was part of the body. La Mettrie was an advocate of this view and

advanced the materialist perspective of humans as predetermined machines. He said, "The human body is a watch a machine which winds its own springs" (La Mettrie 1961: 141-2). Karl Marx took this view further. He rejected dualistic idealism as a false consciousness symptomatic of people's alienation, and claimed that "religion was the opium of the people" (Marx 1977:64).

The debate about the mind and body split persisted throughout the nineteenth century. Such sciences as medicine and biology rejected spirituality and "initiated a reconstruction of the body". Legislations producing various practices, such as inoculations, were passed in order to insure the health and welfare of the nation. By implementing legal power over the body, "the individual body therefore now became, to a degree, state property". It increased state control over the body and "expanded its authority and powers over more and more sectors of the population". By the twentieth century, the bio-medicine paradigm dominated. The advances in medical science and practice became beneficial to the health of the nation and, thus, proved its effectiveness in curing diseases which were once fatal. The body became something which could be managed and maintained rather than feared (Synnott 1993:26 - 28). This paradigm became body-positive and, thus, shifted the attitude from body negative to something good.

Although many thinkers questioned and debated the mind and body dualism, Cartesian mechanism "co-existed with the new body-positive construction of the body". The soul by the twentieth century was rejected by the positivist' principle of verifiability and furthermore by materialism (Synnott 1993:28). From this thinking emerges the metaphor, or conception, of 'body as machine' which suggests that the body is separate from the self.

Existentialist Jean Paul Sartre, however, in his book, Being and Nothingness (1943), claimed that the body is the self. He stated that, "I am my body to the extent that I am" (Sartre 1966:430) and, thus, rejected Descartes notion of "I think therefore I am". Sartre and also Nietzsche developed new philosophies and which were responsible for the "major reconstructions: from self as mind to self as body; from body as enemy or as 'despised' to body as self; from mind as spiritual to mind as material" (Synnott 1993:31). The body today is a symbol of the self, of one's identity and is highly political.

So far, we have seen how conceptions of the body have changed and differed overtime in various cultures and still we have no definitive answer to what the body exactly is. Presently, however, we can say that it really is a matter of perception. In the following section, I will discuss three of the most influential contemporary theorists on the body: Mary Douglas, Erving Goffman, and Michel Foucault, and explain their views on the body.

The Body as a Natural Symbol:

One of the main influences in contemporary theory on the body comes from anthropologist Mary Douglas. She is best known for her argument in Natural Symbols (1970), which explains that the body is a natural symbol of society or, a receptor of social meaning. In this book she develops her theory of two bodies which she explains as follows:

The two bodies are the self and society: sometimes they are so near as to

be almost merged; sometimes they are far apart. The tension between them allows the elaboration of meaning (Douglas 1973:112).

The meaning of society is found within the meaning of the body. That is, what the human body is within a given society is what the social body, in fact, is. Therefore, one can search for the meaning of a society by understanding their conception of the body. Douglas further explains that, "the social body constrains the way the physical body is perceived" (Douglas 1973:93), thereby, suggesting that there are various forces which manage and maintain notions of the body. She suggests that, "The physical experience of the body, always modified by social categories through which it is known, sustains a particular view of society" (Douglas 1973:93). Therefore, one can say that the ideas about the human body are linked to the prevalent ideas of the social body and, thus, the two bodies are involved in a complex interplay which somehow sustain each other.

In her earlier book, Purity and Danger (1966), Douglas explains that "the body provides a basic theme for all symbolism" (Douglas 1978:163-4). It represents the social system from which it emerges and, thus, represents its people. She says, "Just as it is true that everything symbolizes the body, so it is equally true that the body symbolizes everything else" (Douglas 1978: 122). Hence, we can see a clear reflection of society in the human body, thereby, making it a clear expression of the social body. The body, then, is determined by each individual culture and so is the symbolism it carries. Hence, the human body is a metaphor for the entire society. This body of work has had a significant impact on anthropology of the body and has provided it with valuable insights on the relationship between the body and society.

Learning to Present the Self through Body-language:

In Mary Douglas' work we have seen how the body symbolizes or is a metaphor for the social body, however, in Erving Goffman's work we shall see how the body is also symbolic of the self. In his work, the individual communicates their self to others through their bodies. Hence, the body is the primary symbol of the self.

In Goffman's book, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1959), he analyzes the conventionalized forms of non-verbal language- what he terms as 'shared vocabularies of body idioms.' He explains in this book that people's perceptions of bodily appearances and performances are directed by non-verbal language. It provides the individual with certain information through which they can manage their bodies. For Goffman, the body is a material possession of the individual. He argues that the individual has the capacity and ability to control, manage and determine their bodily performances, thereby, facilitating social interaction (Shilling 1993:82). Furthermore, he explains that although, the individual has control over their bodily performances, "the meanings attributed to the body are determined by 'shared vocabularies of body idioms' which are not under the immediate control of the individuals" (Shilling 1993:82). Through body idioms, individuals know how they must behave in order to develop the presentation of themselves. By learning the meanings of certain gestures, movements, facial expressions, and so on, within the individual's social boundaries, a person can navigate between a variety of choices which best represent what they are wanting to convey to the other. The selection of one's preferred bodily performances is influenced by the categories and labels provided by body idioms. The individual's understanding of these categories and labels provides them with a

variety of choices which they can appropriate. The rankings and classifications of certain bodily performances, however, "exert a profound influence over the ways in which individuals seek to manage and present their bodies" (Shilling 1993:82). Although, the individual has a choice in the way they present their bodies, society still holds the power to rank, classify and determine the significance of their bodies. It is the social meanings attached to the body's performance which determines an individual's sense of self and, hence, self-worth. One hand, the individual has the power to choose how they wish to present themselves, yet there are certain ramifications which come with faulty choices. For example, an adult who chooses to present themselves as a child in public will be ostracized from any of the adult activities. Hence, regardless of freedom of choice, one's bodily experience is limited by the classificatory system of non-verbal body language. An individual's body movements, gestures, facial expression, dress, make-up and so on, then, are all meaningful within a given society. They are a clear expression of the self and, thus, are symbolic. The individual learns how to navigate between the various options of bodily performances and also learns to make socially acceptable choices. In effect, they learn the limits within which they can perform without ramification. Who they are and who they become is, thereby, shaped by these choices and by their limits. That is, they are pressured to appropriate 'idealized' behaviours and actions. I am not suggesting that people do not attempt to rebel and perhaps take on the role of 'the rebel', however, there are consequences to this actions.

Through the daily use of non-verbal body language, the individual invents themselves. The vast array of bodily movements which can be appropriated within a strictly bounded

system, on one hand, limits the individual's bodily experiences, yet, on the other hand, lends itself to the creativity of the individual. Although, certain performed roles are type-casted, and some of its physical traits patterned, the individual can add subtle nuances of other bodily performances, in order to, in a sense, personalize their role. After all, 'life is a stage and we are all actors performing on the stage of life'. Individuals, then, are free to perform and, thus, become who they wish to be, however, must learn to withstand the pressure of having to fit into one of the acceptable categories provided by body idioms. Hence, the coercive nature of these categories and their limitations, pushes the individual to tap into their creative energy and, thus, encourages them to sculpt a masterpiece while maintaining some connection to one of the established roles. No matter what, the individual is always limited by certain societal roles and expectations, and also by a strict bounded system which, thereby, limits their bodily experiences. Hence, the experience of the body is, thereby, restricted to, or delimited, by the established boundaries it inhabits.

In addition to Goffman's explanation of body idioms, we can turn to anthropologist Marcel Mauss' theory on 'body techniques' in order to understand how people learn to use their bodies. Mauss is particularly useful in explaining the art of learning to use the body. In his work on 'body techniques' he explains that the way the body is used is "specific to determinate societies" (Mauss 1979: 98). Every society has certain uses of the body and, furthermore, has its own "specific habits", and attitudes towards the body (Mauss 1979:99). He claims that the way a person walks, runs, swims, jumps and so on, is executed in different ways in different societies. He explains that 'body techniques' are "the ways in which from society to society men know how to use their bodies" (Mauss

1979: 97). For Mauss, the body is, "man's first and most natural instrument" (Mauss 1979: 104). Although, it is natural, Mauss contends, there is no natural way of using it (102). All the techniques of the body are born from 'habits or customs', 'ritual formulas' and 'tradition' (Mauss 1979:101-5). He says, "There is no technique and no transmission in the absence of tradition" (Mauss 1979: 104). The use of the body, then, is learned through the inherited rituals, practices and habits of the past. They are transmitted from one generation to the next within a specific society. Hence, we can say that the techniques of the body are connected to a people and, therefore, are part of their identity.

So far, we have discussed the following: how the body is a natural symbol of the social body and of the self, how the individual can manage and maintain their bodily performances, how the individual can use their body as a canvas in the creation of themselves, how they are coerced into inventing themselves within a strictly bounded system, and finally, how the body is a natural phenomenon which must be learned, that is, learnt within a cultural context and under the guidance of tradition. No matter how we look at it, the body and how we use it is somehow linked to a society, to a specific tradition and to an inherited set of rituals and practices, and, thus, restricted to a bounded system. We shall now turn to the work of Michel Foucault in order to show how the body is constituted by discourse and, thus, managed and maintained by it.

Foucault's Conception of Discourse:

This thesis appropriates Foucault's conception of discourse in order to understand how

notions of the body are generated and maintained. It is concerned with discourse because we make the claim that the conception of the body is generated through discourse and, thus, practices. Through Foucault's understanding of discourse and its ability to construct social reality, and therefore, 'truths', we can come to a better understanding of how the body is socially produced. This section will discuss the logic behind Foucault's notion of discourse by explaining some of his writings on the subject.

Foucault's Histories:

Foucault's most important works were written as histories- histories of madness, clinical medicine, the social sciences, the prison, and ancient and modern sexuality. These historical studies can be characterized as histories of concepts, where Foucault traces the origins of these concepts by studying the evolution of their institutions. By tracing their history, Foucault explains why it was that we came to understand certain beliefs as 'truths'? In other words, Foucault is not directly interested in the histories of these institutions but rather, is interested in how it was that we came to conceptualize them as we do today? Although, the method of his inquiry is historical, the object of his inquiry is knowledge which, for Foucault, is invested in the complex system of institutions. He methodically studied the institutions' authorities, their practices and opinions in order to show them as being part of a regular daily practice and not as a scientific or theoretical discourse. By doing this he showed how concepts, such as madness or sexuality, are objects of perception which are produced by social practices, rather than an object of

thought which could be analyzed. Hence, he would ask how the experience of these concepts were put into practice?

Foucault's work, then, was concerned with describing the basic categories which shape the way a given age thought about such objects as madness or sexuality. These descriptions emerged from historical facts about discourse and behaviour during a given age. Foucault, in fact, examined the actual discourses which counted as knowledge within a set of conditions, in a particular period, and assessed the evolution of these discourses, thus, showing how they emerged, and how they were transformed. These discourses were generated at one point in time, thus, constructing a discursive space where perceptions of certain phenomena such as madness, were constantly being negotiated and re-negotiated, relative to the shifts in norms and values of a given age. Each period in history set certain normative standards which influenced the production of knowledge. It is this production of knowledge which is generated through discourse, thus, producing common practices which, in turn, establish certain conditions for existence.

In Madness and Civilization (1964), an example of Foucault's work, he shows how notions of madness were generated through accounts produced from the point of view of "scientific" reason. He attempted to locate the point in history when madness suddenly was separated from reason, both in confinement of the insane and in the conceptual isolation of madness from reason. Through the creation of words like "mad" through the language of reason, a discursive space is created- a space where the authorities within a given field, in this case the field of psychiatry, are able to produce knowledge using language. Hence, Foucault's object of study then became the knowledge which emerged

from the institution of psychiatry which further developed the language that gave 'madness' its cultural meaning. His historical inquiries, therefore, bring forth the histories of institutions, their authorities' discourses and thus, practices which, in turn, reveal the origins of our present day knowledge of such concepts as madness. Hence, Foucault's 'Histories' demonstrate that knowledge is a product of discursive practices.

In Foucault's book, The Archaeology of Knowledge (1969), he further develops his methodological inquiry into knowledge, history and discourse. Here Foucault looks at historical discourses and practices for answers instead of focusing on the evolution of knowledge on a particular subject such as madness. In this book, he develops his notion of discourses and explains that they are arrangements of statements and the relationship between them.

The Foucauldian explanation of discourse is what concerns us in this thesis. For Foucault, discourses are about 'statements' and the way these statements are arranged, and relate to each other. He explains that statements are single units which together constitute a 'discursive formation'. That is, every institution, such as law, psychiatry or medicine, 'speaks' and it is what is 'spoken' which constitute a particular discursive space. The 'spoken' is the discourse, however, it should be noted that these statements, which constitute discourses, are not, for Foucault, linguistic systems or texts but, rather, are practices. They can be anything from contracts, charters, registrations, exams, procedures, rituals, songs, stories, life histories, transcripts, and so on. Through a particular institution such as psychiatry, discourses arrange and manage the objects and concepts of that particular field. They, in fact, generate concepts and, thus, manage them through everyday

practices, which are themselves discourses. The discourses which emerge from a particular institution defines the space, or field, as the site of 'truths', thereby, validating its authority to make statements. Imbedded in discourses, therefore, are rules of conduct which are not only transmitted into the social body, but are weaved into it, and therefore part of social life. Hence, discourses are sets of deep principles which hold specific meanings and which generate and establish relationships between all that can be seen, thought and said. All the archives- the accumulated existence of discourse- should be the object of inquiry, Foucault claims, and this would include all the traces of the past in the present, such as: accounts, acts, buildings, customs, and so on. Hence, it could be stated that the totality of all discourses which emerge from the past and which are part of the archives today, constitute our present day social reality. Therefore, it can be said that our entire reality has been socially constructed through discursive practices and hence, everything around us 'speaks' and thus, shapes our perception of the world. Discourses are, thus, systems of social knowledge.

Discourse, Power and Knowledge:

In this section we will look at Foucault's concept of power and discuss the way in which discourses not only generate knowledge, or 'truths', but delimit the parameters in which a culture 'experiences'. That is, it will be shown that discourses define, label, and classify everything that is social reality, and by doing this, delimits the scope of a culture's knowledge, truth, and experience. Although, delimiting the parameters within which a

culture exists, does not mean that these limits are fixed, rather, the boundaries are always moving and changing, and its movement is determined by changes in discourses. Through Foucault's conception of power, it will be shown that how we 'see', how we 'act', and how we 'think', and therefore exist, are coerced through a mechanism of power relations.

In Discipline and Punish- The Birth of the Prison, (1975) Foucault turns to the body as "the place where willing, and feeling and thinking all take root" (Miller 1993:182). Here Foucault looks at the body as the site where discipline and regulation are exercised. His study traces the changes in strategies of punishment, and shows how the body is generated, sustained, and shaped through the webs of power relationships which regulate it in both subtle and obvious ways. The body is seen as being part of social practices and regulations which operate both within and around it.

Foucault shows how the shift in the conception of the object "crime", changed the attitude towards criminals and towards the way they are punished. Prior to the 1800's public torture was the strategy used to force a confession, however, as the perception of crime changed, so did the perception of the criminal. Hence, punishments which were directed at the body, were shifted to the confinement of the body in prison.

In the late 18th century there was: an increase in the population, increase in wealth, increase in statistical information, and moral values were imposed on property relations. An organized police apparatus was put into place and, thus, everyday behaviour was under constant surveillance. The rules of conduct were established through the political, judicial and scientific fields, and strategies of regulation and discipline were put into action.

What was then being formed was a policy of coercions that act upon the

body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour (Foucault 1977: 138).

Hence, the development of the prison system was now part of a disciplinary society.

Behaviour was now put under the 'gaze' of public scrutiny, and punishment was no longer without rules. The power of the 'gaze' was to dominate through the 'watchful eye'. Hence, the body became 'docile'.

A 'political anatomy', which was also a 'mechanics of power', was being born; it defined how one may have a hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. Thus, discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, 'docile bodies' (Foucault 1977:138).

The perception of the body shifted from being an object which needed to be physically punished to an object which society needed in order to maintain its wealth. By disciplining and regulating behaviour, physical harm was no longer imposed as a method of coercion. Hence, subtle forms of coercion replaced the public spectacle of pain and torture. The society now became disciplined.

It was a question not of treating the body, en masse, 'wholesale', as if it were an indissociable unity, but of working it 'retail', individually; of exercising upon it a subtle coercion, of obtaining holds upon it at the level of the mechanism itself- movements, gestures, attitudes, rapidity: an infinitesimal power over the active body (Foucault 1977:136-37).

The prison system represents deviant behaviour and is a constant reminder of what is considered 'normal' and 'abnormal' behaviour. Such "sciences" as psychiatry, criminology, psychology and sociology generate knowledge through discourse which, thus, ensure that the judges of normality are everywhere. They set the definition of 'normal' and 'abnormal',

thereby, generating a space within which society is coerced and, thus, confined to.

In Discipline and Punish, we saw how discourses generate surveillance spaces where all social action can be 'watched'. In The History of Sexuality, (1976) Foucault extends his argument to explain how people became more audible as well as visible. He states:

We have become a singularly confessing society...The confession plays a part in justice, medicine, education, family relationships, and love relations, in the most ordinary affairs of everyday life, and in most solemn rites: one confesses one's crimes, one's sins, one's thoughts and desires, one's illness and troubles; one goes about telling, with greatest precision, whatever is most difficult to tell...One confesses- or is forced to confess (Foucault 1980:59).

Through the confession and the truth it produces, surveillance space is expanded by adding 'talk' to the 'gaze'. This implies that not only are people's physical actions seen and documented but so are their thoughts.

In The History of Sexuality, Foucault shows how sex was incited to discourse first in the Christian confession where priests were concerned for the individual's physical fitness and their sexual activities. They were concerned with insuring the individual's fitness following their death in the afterlife. In the 18th and 19th centuries, however, the human sciences such as: psychology, medicine and demography became concerned with population growth and, thus, made the body a social concern. It was no longer about the individual's fitness but, rather, about the fitness and health of the entire social body. These institutions needed to insure the growth of the nation by taking control of reproduction. Sex, then, was linked to the physical reproduction and thus, population growth and by virtue of this fact needed to be controlled for the good of the nation. The concern over the

body shifted from thoughts on the afterlife to insuring the growth of the social body. Population management by government, then, shifted the discourse on sex away from the individual's sexual activity and focused on the sexual practices of the social body. In order to ensure a healthy population, which meant healthy bodies and, thus, productive bodies, and a wealthy nation, the government deployed notions of normal and pathological sexuality, creating a space where sexual activity is managed and controlled. By creating categories which labels forbidden sexual acts as pathological, and 'healthy' sexual acts as normal, moral judgements are generated and imposed on the social body, thus, limiting appropriate sexual activity. The discourse on sex constructs and shapes our perception and, thus, attitude towards the body. All that we know about the object of sex is generated, sustained, and shaped through the web of power relationships.

Through Foucault's work we gain an understanding of the way concepts become objects of perception which are produced by discourses or social practices. We learn that these discourses generate knowledge which is injected into the social body as a method of social control. Knowledge is coercive by nature because it is through knowledge that we develop ways to exist. Knowledge narrows our perception of social reality because it has the power to delimit the parameters, or scope, of our sight. What we know about the world is what we see, however, we only see what we know exists. To experience our social reality beyond the parameters imposed on us, and to exist beyond its limits, requires a shift in the way we conceptualize the objects of our reality. Therefore, if concepts emerge from discourses and practices and, thus, are managed and maintained by them, then we would find a culture's conception of the body emerged in its practices. Hence, by

adopting this theory from Foucault, we can look to the ballet culture's everyday practices in order to draw out how this culture conceptualizes the body. As we mentioned earlier, discourses are practices and, therefore, through a careful examination of how dancers learn to use the body, how they see it, and how they talk about it, we will be able to expose their conception of it, thereby, defining the boundaries of their bodily experience.

In the following section, then, we will introduce how the body is used in the ballet world, and explain how it is experienced differently than the average person would experience their bodies. For the purpose of this thesis we will refer to the dancer's conception as "The Dancing Body". This study, therefore, suggests that the conception of "The Dancing Body" is different from the larger society's conception of the body. Before we proceed it should be stated that although I refer to the ballet world as a culture, I do not claim that this culture of people are not part of the dominant culture. I do, however, claim that they are a rather closed milieu and are not easily penetrated from the outside. They have their own rituals and practices which are separate from the rest of society, however, they still do partake in the everyday practices of the dominant culture. This will be developed and discussed further on in this thesis.

The ballet culture produces dancers and, therefore, dancing bodies. The body for them is their artistic medium and is also part of their identity. With this body they create art and through it bring pleasure to audiences. They are performers by profession and their body is their instrument. Therefore, we will proceed to explain how dancers use their bodies and it will become clear, by examining their discourse, that their conception of the body is 'other' to the already established one. The concern here is with how the use of the body in the

dance culture differs from that of the larger of society. By analyzing the difference, we can begin to render a picture of what "The Dancing Body" is and, furthermore, show how this unique use of the body has shaped the dancers' perception of it. Hence, what will follow is an introduction to the data and a discussion which will centre around how the dancer uses the body and how, in fact, this culture has established a new set of limits by generating a new set of practices, and in turn have produced the dancing artist.

The Dancing Artist:

One dancer who I interviewed and who was a principle dancer for Le Ballet de Montreal Eddy Toussaint and had retired several years ago, when first asked about the body avoided the question. She seemed to not be able to speak about it at first and kept referring back to the dancing and performance instead of answering my questions. Finally, towards the middle of the interview and after a glass of wine, I decided to ask her what her goals were as a dancer, and she responded with the following statement:

Perfection....to be in total control of your body, to know exactly where your body is at all times, which is not the case...I would say Baryshnikov knew where his body was going, when it was coming, when it wasn't.

Dancers before they can use their body as an instrument to express themselves, must first work the body- to tune it, sculpt it, shape it and control it- in order to be able to move through space freely and express themselves. The body to a dancer is an instrument which expresses. This dancer in particular had an exquisite body for classical ballet, yet she did not seem impressed by her God given gift. Once I had her talking about her body I asked

her if she was happy with it? She proceeded to tell me, "You know what, I didn't think about that, you know I was not body oriented at all." Interesting enough the body seemed to be secondary to this dancer, and to many of the other dancers I interviewed. She continued and said, "I never perceived myself as having a body for dance. I never thought, it's only when I got old enough and people said to me, 'you look like a dancer', what does a dancer look like? It's only then." The dance is generally more important to the dancers than the body, however, the body's importance is heightened when it came time for the dancers to perform, move and express. I asked this dancer to explain the development of the artistic aspect of dance, and she said:

...it's an expression, that's really for me, unfortunate because it was the last thing to develop. It's really an expression of your insides..so having maybe a lack of confidence, took longer for me to develop the artistry, because I didn't really want to, I was afraid that if I showed something and it wasn't correct, that I would get scolded for it. So I kind of kept it hidden inside. And, everything else, the technique was very good so everything, technique, good, good, good!...at Balanchine school they basically, that's what they wanted...they wanted technique, they wanted technique...unless of course you are like a Suzanne, but when you are coming up in the ranks they don't want to much.

Dancers struggle with trying to integrate technique with artistry because so much of their training is spent working their technique. Finally, when they are given a role which requires them to become expressive, many freeze up at the beginning, and are shocked by the whole experience. The pressure to integrate these two elements is the most difficult task. It is, in fact, the ultimate and final goal of the dancer- when these two elements become one the dancer then becomes 'the dance'. The battle here is to integrate the body into the dance and become one with it. The body tends to be a means of achieving

something greater.

I believe I'm a dancer. I'm not a body, I'm a body that expresses itself, cause if it just moves I could move and not tell you anything, but I want to tell you what I'm feeling, when I'm moving without ever having to say a word so just through the movement and with the music. Your body is a, well I believe it's your tool which you work with. It's your tool and if you are like a craftsman, if you are fortunate enough that you worked it well, your craft will turn out beautifully. So, that's basically the goal.

The goal is not to become a machine that moves but to feel the moves through the body.

In the above statement, we see how the conception of "The Dancing Body", or the conception that the body is a vehicle with which one expresses, becomes the ultimate goal of a dancer.

Dancers use their bodies differently from most people. Within the dance culture, the body is trained daily preparing to become 'the dance'. They leap, turn, arch their backs, raise their arms and stretch their legs on a daily basis. Their ideally developed lines and extensions, the speed and accuracy of their movements, and their compulsion to discipline and extend themselves, are all part of becoming 'the dance'. Their daily practices (which I will develop further in the following chapter) extend beyond those of the average person. The dance culture, in fact, extends their bodily experience beyond the limits of the average person's experience. That is, they learn to use the body differently and as a result shift the boundaries of their perception and, thus, their experience. In the following statement, the dancer explains what she experienced when she stopped dancing and tried to keep in shape by going to a gym and exercising like everybody else.

I felt lousy, I felt terrible. Because your body is so used to it (dancing), you know, your body is so used to everyday doing that rigorous exercise...you know what, I was fortunate that I kind of stayed the same, you know, some

dancers have problems after they stop, but I just didn't feel so good about myself, and of course you're getting older, you know, aren't we all? And, I was going to the gym and that was fulfilling absolutely nothing!..... You're working your body but you're just doing, you're going through the movements, you're doing a muscle part, and you stop. There is no fluidity, there's no concentration, you just get on a machine and you go 'bing', 'bang', 'bong' and you count one, two, three, four, five, six...that's it! There is no music, there is no, you know there is just nothing!....And aerobics, I can't stand it, in the mirror you look like a complete freak, "One, two, up, down, up down!" You know I spent my whole life trying to be perfect and then to go like this(she imitates some aerobics moves) looking like an idiot!

One of the interesting phenomena about dancers who have retired and who have wanted to keep in shape, or rather, wanted to feel what they felt in their bodies when they were dancing, is that they are incapable of attaining the same kind of pleasure from their bodies outside of dance. Unfortunately, most dancers when they retire usually gain a tremendous amount of weight and many try to shed the pounds by working-out at the gym. Every dancer who I spoke to, formally or informally, expressed the same disenchantment. Fortunately, for this particular dancer, she seemed to not have the problem of weight gain but, nonetheless, felt out of shape and unhappy.

Dancers generally express love of movement and love for the art of dance but the battle to attain the goal of becoming a dancer begins with the body and ends with the art. "The Dancing Body" is not only about sculpting strong, healthy and beautiful bodies, rather, it is about the movement and expression of these bodies. The average person who trains their bodies at a gym does not experience what a dancer experiences. Dancers experience their emotions through their bodies by integrating their technical abilities with their emotions. The dancer explains:

.....when you are dancing it's from inside, you know like when she says (she is referring to the ballet teacher) your coccyx, your stomach, your this, it's not the outside that counts, it's the inside.....

.....you are trying to achieve complete control over every ligament and organ....even your heart, the rhythm of your heart, you're listening, you know when I started back it was so difficult and what would throw me off was my breathing, it was heavy, because you are really listening to it.....

What is illustrated through her descriptions is her perception of the body. She expressed that the dance comes from 'inside', therefore, it is not the external physicality of the body which counts but, rather, the way she feels the body from 'inside'. All the dancers interviewed expressed the notion of an inner sensation and further explained that this physical and emotional experience is difficult to express in words. "I can't explain it, it's not something you can put into words", one dancer said. Hence, we can say that the experience which the dancer feels 'in' their bodies, extends beyond that of the average person who merely trains to develop and work the 'outer' body. Although, dancers train their 'outer' body as well, they experience it through their emotions. They train for years to learn to fuse the two- body and emotions- together and as they mature and blossom into artists it becomes second nature to them.

For some aspiring dancers, however, the task of uniting feelings into the movement of the body is never achieved and, thus, their goal as dancers never fulfilled. In the dance world, dancers are often labelled as 'technicians' or 'artists'. "The technician is just the tool doing what they have to do, this is a dancer doing movements, that's it. But, the artist is having the body speak to the audience." These labels often separates those who are dancers and those who are not. That is, those who have not managed to integrate their

feelings into their technical work have failed the task of becoming a ballet dancer. Nonetheless, a dancer who is able to merge both technique and artistry, or body and emotion, have achieved the task of becoming the dance. Not only have they become the dance, but they have elevated their bodily experience to a level which is only attained by few. Dancers explain that the body is an instrument through which they express themselves, therefore, implying that their self is weaved into their bodies and, thus, experienced through it. The physical experience of the body for the dancer, then, is both a physical and an emotional one. This being the case, it can be suggested that the dance culture, through the unique use of their bodies and their daily practices, have broken away from the dominant culture's conception of the body by using it in a way which is 'other'. In order to do this they have developed new sets of practices and, thus, rendered a different conception of the body. This body which they use to express themselves and, thus, touch others, is a moving, feeling, thinking body with the potential to communicate in a way which is also 'other'. Hence, one can say that "The Dancing Body" is a conception which is 'other' to that of the dominant culture and which has been attained by generating a set of practices unique to this culture. It is through these practices that this culture of people have broken free from the dominant notion of the body and, thus, produced "The Dancing Body". They have perhaps broken free from the dominant culture's conception of the body but have, nonetheless, set new boundaries which delimit their bodily experiences.

In this chapter we have illustrated theoretically that the body is a social invention and is generated through discourse. Reference to some of the data was made in order to show how this culture of people conceptualize the body and how their goals of becoming

dancers depend on this conception. What I am suggesting is that the dancer's daily lives are structured around this conception and, therefore, is at the root of their deepest desires. Their conception of the body is the foundation from where the image of the dancer originates. Hence, it is well worth investigating the lived experiences of dancers- their daily rituals and practices- in order to obtain a clearer understanding of what it takes to become a dancer- the difficulties and challenges- and to, furthermore, explain how the image of "The Dancing Body" is used in the making of the dancer. Hence, in the following chapter the daily lives of dancers will be investigated.

Chapter Three

The Rituals and Practices of The Dancer:

This chapter will explore the various rituals and practices which shape the dance culture and which invest in its distinction. In the previous chapter it was shown how discourses constitute our everyday reality. Furthermore, it was explained that in order to shift a culture's perspective on a concept such as the body, it would be necessary to introduce and establish a new set of discourses and practices which would, thus, generate an alternate perception of the body. It has, therefore, been suggested that the dance culture has established their own distinct way of using the body, thereby, creating their own distinct conception of it. The use of the body in the dance culture has been established over three hundred years ago and has since produced a set of rituals and practices which manage, maintain, and determine's the way in which this culture conceives of the body. That is, the unique way in which this culture has used the body over time, and still does today, has constructed their cultural distinction and, furthermore, has established a unique way of talking about the body and looking at it. Hence, the actual present day rituals and practices of this culture constitute the notion of "The Dancing Body".

Rituals and practices are kinds of discourses and, therefore, are the focus of our analysis in this chapter. Through their analysis we can begin to trace the development of young dance students' growing awareness of their bodies, the way they learn to use their bodies, and how they come to understand their culture and its distinction. It was previously explained that the dance culture has defied the dominant culture's conception of

the body by producing a body which dances. In the analysis of their daily routine we will demonstrate how sensibilities are weaved into the body, thereby, illustrating how dance is about much more than just the mechanics of the body. Hence, what will follow is a description of these various rituals and practices as I have observed and experienced them and as described by the dancers themselves. Hence, I invite the reader to come on a journey through the dance culture and experience its rituals and practices through the dancers themselves.

The Dancer's Challenge of The Human Body:

One morning I arrived at the studio with plans to observe a professional ballet class. I was told by the director of the studio that many professionals from various companies around Montreal attend that class. I figured this would be a perfect opportunity to meet some of these dancers and to become re-acquainted with 'the ballet class'. I proceeded down the corridor towards studio "B"- the largest studio in the place- and before actually walking in, I was confronted with a familiar scene: dancers were rushing in and out of the studio preparing for the class, others were standing outside the studio door smoking the last few puffs of their cigarette, and the rest were already warmed-up and ready to go. I spotted the ballet mistress and asked her permission to sit in on the class- this is customary. She was thrilled to see me and with great enthusiasm invited me in. We entered the studio together and as we walked in the dancers immediately came to attention. She said hello to them and proceeded to announced that I would be observing

the class. Instantly, a young male dancer ran to get me a chair. As I greeted the pianist, who had accompanied many of the ballet classes I attended when I was dancing, the ballet mistress led me to the front of the class and invited me to sit with her there. As the class began, I looked around and noticed that some well known Montreal dancers were taking class and suddenly I felt honoured to be seated at the front of the class watching them. Louise Le Cavalier from La La Human Steps was amongst these dancers and so were a few of the other members of the company. My eyes scanned the studio and I noticed that not all of the dancers were ballet dancers. There were modern dancers, jazz dancers and classical dancers together taking their regular morning ballet class. In my mind I thought nothing had changed since I had retired; professional dancers, regardless of style, still took their daily ballet class in order to improve their technique. I watched and listened, and slowly was drawn into the whole energy of the class. I had initially entered the studio as an observer yet my thoughts were slowly lured away from me by this sudden visceral sensation which invaded my body. I began to feel the music in my body; poking me and taunting me, almost screaming at me to get up and dance. The whole energy of the class engulfed me and seemed to lift me out of my seat. I felt myself dancing and moving through the studio with the other dancers. I had not forgotten how to move this way and, for that hour and a half, I danced and danced, and felt freed by the whole experience.

The class came to an end- the dancers did their 'reverence' and as the sounds of the applause filled the class, and the dancers began to leave the studio, I slowly came back to myself and tried to rise from my seat. I was paralysed by the whole experience and suddenly felt very sad and very drained. I turned my head to the ballet mistress and

thanked her as she rushed out to teach another class. I sat for a second before turning to say thank-you to the pianist. As I turned my head our eyes met and at that moment I knew that he understood. He came to me and said, " Clara, it felt as though you were dancing five minutes ago." At that moment I realized that all the class rituals and customs are part of something greater. Dance is not only about the plie or the pirouette but is, rather, about a feeling, thinking and moving body which communicates and expresses itself. It is about a body which has the capacity to feel and which requires years and years to develop, understand, and perfect. It is about the use of a finely sculpted instrument which with its beauty speaks an infinite amount of words with just one movement. Martha Graham once wrote:

You see, to begin with, it takes about ten years to produce a dancer. That's not intermittent training; that's daily training. You go step by step by step. In ten years you'll be dancing- probably even before that time- but by ten years, if you are going to be a dancer at all, you will have mastered the instrument. You will know the wonders of the human body, because there is nothing more wonderful. The next time you look into the mirror, just look at the way the ears rest next to your wrists; think of the magic of that foot, comparatively small, upon which your whole weight rests. It's a miracle. And the dance in all those areas is a celebration of that miracle (Graham Saturday Review August 28, 1965).

As Martha Graham suggests, ten years of training is necessary in order to even begin to dance. The dancer is faced with the challenge of sculpting a physically 'perfect' body which moves and expresses with every movement. A challenge which many young students of dance embark on but never attain. The achievement of this dream is not so obvious; the human body with the right discipline can be physically trained, however, the most difficult task at hand is learning to unite both the mechanics of the body with the art

of dance. Hence, one might ask how does one become a dancer and what are the steps taken to achieve this goal? What, then, are the rituals and practices within this culture which produce professional dancers.? It all begins with the audition where a young child's dream of becoming a beautiful dancer will be determined. On this very day the authorities in this culture gather together to select the next elite group of students who will be initiated into the culture. Hence, we shall begin our journey at this gathering to witness the selection process which is deeply rooted in this culture's identity.

The Audition:

One of the most memorable days in a dancer's life is that one day when they gained access into the ballet school. It is generally the goal of every aspiring dancer to enter one of the worlds elite ballet schools, and it is through this rite of passage into the dance culture where the young dancer begins their formation. From this day forward, they will learn a new way of using their bodies and will, as a result, experience it in a unique way. This one day is the beginning of their life experience as a student of dance and as a potential professional dancer. At this one event, the child's raw talent will thoroughly be examined and assessed in order to determine whether they have the potential to make it as a dancer or not. Here the child and their parents will know from the onset the child's strengths and weaknesses. Their physical abilities and artistic talent will be measured against a set of strict criteria. In general, the elite ballet schools, such as The National Ballet School of Canada, will hold auditions every spring in all the major cities across the

country. From these auditions they will select the most promising young talents in the country. It is, basically, a nation wide hunt for the 'best'. A school such as the National Ballet School, which has an international reputation, can afford to be very selective and, thus, are amongst the schools which set the standards for excellence. One teacher from the National who I interviewed explained the audition as follows:

.....what they look for in the audition is specially how that child uses space, how the child moves, how the child expresses them self, how the child uses the music, how creative the child is.....so that is very important...they will automatically recognize if the child is shy or out-going.....if the child loves dance...First, they give them a class, a one hour and thirty minute class, in the first half. One hour on the floor to see if the body is flexible, how the body moves- the back, the length of the legs, the foot...standing up they give them some very simple exercises in order to see how the child memorizes the exercises...they give them little challenges to see how the child copes with those kinds of challenges like some movement the child never saw before so they see how quickly the brain reacts. In the third hour there is a centre on creative dance....they will see if the child is confident...how they mimic, the expression in their face.....facial beauty is important of course...

Once the child has passed the audition they proceed to the next phase. Before immediate entrance into the school, despite the fact that they have shown all the appropriate physical and artistic talent, they must pass one final test before being admitted. This is the test of mental discipline and endurance, which is necessary in order to withstand the pressures of becoming an elite dancer. A beautiful body and wonderful artistic potential is not enough; the child must have the mental strength and a deep passion for dance in order to make it as a member of this culture.

...they ask them to come for the summer, which is in the month of July, and from there they make the selection. So, lets say they have approximately fifteen little girls and boys, they will see how they react in the atmosphere

of the school... because they're far away from their parents...they will see how they cope with the discipline...they will see how the child is responding to the teacher...some children have problems responding to the teacher because they are very undisciplined, you know, the way they were raised in their house. We can see with the work of one month if the child is hard to cope with...all that is a factor for accepting the child or not.

By the time the child has finally been selected, the audition day and their one month away at summer school becomes imprinted in their memories as one of the most important events of their lives. During that time the child has experienced a new culture and new ways of doing things. They will have discovered a new way of using the body which, as a result, will have awakened new sensations in their bodies. They will have learnt what is expected of them and how challenging and difficult it is to become a dancer. Furthermore, they will have learnt that they must live away from their families under a new set of rules and regulations. They are, during this one month, taught what it means to be a dancer and what sacrifices are made to achieve their dreams. At the end of the month they are sent back home to reflect on whether they are ready to make this commitment or not. At the young age of ten they are expected to make a decision to enter this culture and appropriate this new way of life. During the summer school the young children are exposed to everything which is dance: its physical demands, its high expectations, the beauty of the art, its magic and, of course, the professional dancers who they will model themselves after. Through this experience, begins the young dancer's initiation process into this culture.

The physical and artistic ideals of this culture during the selection process becomes apparent to the young students. Through the judges comments at the audition and through

their teachers at the summer school, the children's understanding of what the ideals are, begin to take form in their minds. Most young children who dream of dancing, generally, imagine themselves as the beautiful ballerina image often seen in many popular children shows, or as the prince who rescues the princess- a theme often repeated in many Disney productions. One of the dancers who I interviewed and who was a graduate of The National Ballet School explains how she felt prior to the audition:

I thought I was the best. I don't know how I knew what it was to be the best. I didn't even know that ballet was French, and I was the best. I was young and had no knowledge of what I was doing on my part and that, aesthetically speaking, I was a ballerina. I thought I was beautiful and I admired myself. I was about four or five years old.

The image of the beautiful ballerina is the driving force behind many young dancers, however, when confronted with the actual hard work required to become a dancer, the young child, is faced with a rude awakening. The beautiful ballerina in the mirror becomes an illusion which vanishes with the reality of the high expectations of the dance world.

The audition, then, communicates to a child that they must be gifted with the ability to hear and interpret music through movement. That is, the gifted child generally has the ability to use their bodies as a sponge to absorb the rhythm of the music which, thus, inspires them to move freely through space. Before even learning the coded language of ballet, the gifted child uses their body to interpret the music and, thus, demonstrates this at the audition. What the judges look for is whether a child responds viscerally to the music, which generally determines their musicality, and also whether they are charismatic and have a love for dance. A child who has a brilliant energy, which has the capacity to

illuminate a stage, and who has a hypnotic quality about them will be seriously considered. However, along with their charm and magical energy, which will most certainly captivate audiences, the judges also expects the child to possess all, or most, of the following physical traits:

The ideal dancer's body is long-limbed. The legs are straight. The feet boast a strong metatarsal arch. The setting of the legs in the hip joint is mobile so that a 180 degree turn-out can eventually be achieved. The pelvis is neither too narrow, which will affect the potential for turn-out, nor too wide, although this is a purely esthetic consideration. The back is straight and strong. Finally, the head is well shaped and not too large in relation to the rest of the body. The arms, being non-weight-bearing extremities in girls, are shapely and supple. For the boys a certain development in the arms is necessary as they must have the strength to lift and carry their partners. Some weightlifting programs can be beneficial, but those designed to produced bulk should be avoided....Ligaments must be of normal length, not too tight, not too loose. The double-jointed child has a greater difficulty in controlling the shape of motion, while the stiff child may have to use too much force and effort to achieve the desired degree of extension. (Paskevskia 1992:9-10).

The technical demands of ballet which necessitates a perfect, or almost perfect body, in order to facilitate the dance movements, does not generally factor into the young child's mind. They only imagine the beauty and glamour of the art. One of the dancers explains what she saw as a young child:

....I remember being at O'Niells, which is right across from Lincoln Centre, right, that was the spot, and watching all the dancers, okay, Balanchine dancers go into the theatre or come out. They were beautiful, okay, they were just, I mean, their make-up was gorgeous, the jewellery, the hair, they were tall they were glamorous, it was like a kid maybe would look, be looking at Hollywood, kind of, if I had to describe something for the regular, for the layman.

The child sees the glamour or the magic of this world and here at the audition, has just barely been exposed to the reality of it. Each time I interviewed a dancer one of the questions I would ask was: What was it that made you start dancing? Almost all thirteen dancers responded that it was either the glamour or magic along with the fact that they loved to move to music and perform as young children. One of the male dancers who eventually became very well known here in Canada, explained what prompted him to start:

I was twelve years old and I was in, actually, when I was eleven I saw the movie called "The Red Shoe", it was like the course line and it was a sort of glamorous way of looking at life that I got hooked to the glamour of dance, of ballet in particular because it was so colourful...I think it was the glamour of it at first- you know it wasn't the hard work-...it was the magic of the theatrical illusion I think, you know.

Hence, it is only when these young children are actually exposed to the dance culture that they begin to understand the hard work which it entails. It is, therefore, at the audition where the child is first exposed to the rituals and practices of this culture and begins to unravel in their minds what this whole culture is about. They become aware that if they are, in fact, selected and allowed access into this world that they are special and amongst a select few. One of the dancers I interviewed said: " I knew that when I went to an audition something was okay because they always picked me..I was never refused, never." This dancer claimed that when she was younger she never perceived herself as having a body for dance, however, by being selected for some of the best schools in the world such as Balanchine's School of American Ballet or Maurice Bejart's school in Belgium, she eventually realized that she was special. Hence, by being exposed to this culture and its practices, the child begins to understand the culture's perceptions.

The audition then is the first major step in the young dancers careers, and the first place where they begin to develop an awareness of this culture. Now, in the school of their choice, they begin their ten year journey towards their dream and, thus, begins the real work. In the following section I will discuss the training, both physical and artistic, and show how the training rituals are, in large part, responsible for generating the notion of "the dancing body".

The Ballet Class:

The daily ballet class is where the dancer begins to learn the techniques used in the art. It is the place where the child learns to stand like a dancer by learning to "pull- up" giving the illusion that they are defying gravity. They learn to hold their heads, move their arms and legs, work every muscle and bone in their bodies in a new and unique way. They learn to feel the music throughout their bodies right down to the tips of their fingers and toes and learn to extend their energy through their bodies and direct its flow out into the space they occupy- all this is worked and developed in the ballet class which is part of the everyday ritual of the student and professional.

The rules and work ethic imposed in a the ballet class, and which must be respected at all times, exist in every studio around the world. These rituals of conduct in the ballet class were established over three-hundred years ago and have been passed down from generation to generation and, therefore, have been inherited. These are the practices which unite this culture and which claim its distinction. Most young dancers are reminded daily

about the heritage of these rituals and, thus, becomes ingrained in their minds. I recall being told almost daily that 'we' are from a world of nobility and that we must at all times respect our aristocratic history and tradition. Ballet dancers often, for example, look down at the less noble art of modern dance. The general attitude is that those who are modern dancers are really unsuccessful ballet dancers. Hence, the ballet dancer will have a rather regal quality about them which can be observed in the way they walk. They move with grace, elegance, pride and with a regal posture. They appear to be somewhat pious, however, it is the pride they take in their bodies which is mistaken for their apparent pious behaviour. They are proud to be dancers and proud to be part of this tradition of people. One dancer from the National Ballet School of Canada said she felt, "prestigious, elite...walking down the street in your uniform in Toronto you were above everyone...and to this day when I'm a graduate of The National Ballet School of Canada I feel that I am different." This attitude applies to most dancers, especially those who are graduates of the elite schools. Dancers think highly of 'the body'- it is everything to the dancer. One could even say that it is a 'body centred culture' and the body is their pride and glory. Hence, this noble heritage is taught to every generation of students and becomes part of who they are. The class, then, is the place where a young child becomes a dancer and, thus, becomes part of this culture.

Agnes De Mille has written a brilliant account of the ballet class in her famous autobiography, Dance To The Piper, (1952) and because of its accuracy I have chosen to share it with the reader.

"Don't talk" she said....."You must never sit during practice. It ruins the

thigh muscles. If you sit down you may not continue with class." I of course would have submitted to a beating with whips rather than stop. I was taking the first step into the promised land. The path might be thorny but it led straight to Paradise....So she began every lesson. So I have begun every practice period since. It is part of the inviolable ritual of ballet dancing. Every ballet student that has ever trained in the classic technique in any part of the world begins just this way, never any other.

I bent to the discipline. I learned to relax with my head between my knees when I felt sick or faint. I learned how to rest my instep by lying on my back with my feet vertically up against the wall. I learned how to bind up my toes so that they would not bleed through the satin shoes. But I never sat down. I learned the first and all-important dictate of ballet dancing-never to miss the daily practice, hell or high water, sickness or health, never to miss the barre practice; to miss meals, sleep, rehearsal even but not the practice, not for one day ever under any circumstances, except on Sundays and during childbirth (De Mille 1952:53-4).

This account of the importance of the training and the ballet class, which was written in 1952, is accurate even today. It is in the ballet class, and through these inherited training rituals, that a child, or student, prepares one step at a time to become a member of this culture. One step at a time they learn the work ethic required to build a ballet body, a body which is like no other. They learn to respect the body as an instrument of self-expression. The child, then, must train their bodies everyday in order for their muscles to develop properly and, simultaneously, must train their senses to feel the music everyday until it becomes second nature. Finally, they must train and discipline their minds everyday to withstand the pressures of becoming a dancer. The young student, therefore, becomes a dancer by appropriating the unique and distinct way in which this culture uses the body and, in so doing, begins to understand the body in a different way. This newly emerged understanding becomes evident in the way these young dancers begin to 'feel' in their

bodies. The training is a new experience for these children and is, therefore, a journey of discovery for them. They will not fully understand the body at the beginning, however, as they move from one level to the next and the work begins to show itself in their bodies, and in the way they feel and experience it, the child dancer will finally come to understand the mystery of the body and the magic in the constructing of it. Hence, it will not be an immediate revelation but, rather, a progressive one. Interestingly enough, one of the male dancers whom I interviewed began dancing at the age of twenty, which is quite late for a dancer, and as a result of his late start, he was able to make an interesting observation which he shared with me. He said:

.....at the beginning I never really noticed the difference. It wasn't until later on in life that I started to look around and I could tell the difference what was happening to my body and what I was seeing. You know, because in the beginning you don't realize, you don't feel it, it takes, you think you're doing the same thing but you're actually not. So, you don't have that awareness of your body....I probably started to be really actually aware of my body probably about thirty.....you know a dancer's body is not the body in sort of it's natural state at all! You know, it's, we're fabricated from the tip of our head to the tip of our toes...so my body in it's natural state- I don't know what it will look like.

Through the process of training everyday, the dancer is in the constant state of becoming. The daily rituals begin to bear its mark on the young dancer and, as a result, begin to shape their perception of the body. All the dancers will carry this mark and with it, forge a connection with each other and, furthermore, with their culture. In order for my readers to understand the importance of the ballet class and the mark of distinction it leaves on the young dancers, I will proceed to give further detail on the content of the class. My claim is that the daily class is a ritual in-and-of-itself and it is the repetition of

this ritual, day after day which generates this culture's uniqueness and teaches it to their students. The daily class is the place where bodies are managed, maintained and cultivated and, therefore, constitutes the notion of "The Dancing Body". Hence, it will be shown how, in fact, the conception of "The Dancing Body" is generated through the training rituals of the dancer. At this point in the thesis I have not yet arrived at how, in fact, the dancers reveal this conception of the body. Before embarking on the evidence that the dancers do, in fact, reveal this notion in their talk, I will dedicate the rest of this chapter to the actual training rituals in order to render a description of the unique way dancers use their bodies.

The Use of The Dancer's Body:

The ballet class begins at the barre where all the dancers run through a series of exercises to warm-up every inch of their bodies while coordinating their moves with the rhythm of the piano music. Every exercise- the plie, tendu, ronds de jambe, and so on- is executed with precise timing and eloquence. The arms and legs move in perfect harmony while the head gives character to the moves. All is balanced and poised. Here at the barre, the dancer prepares for the work in the centre of the studio by warming-up every muscle in their bodies. All of the centre work is an extension of the barre work and so the barre work is developed specifically to lead into the centre work. The barre teaches the dancer about body alignment and placement and also about the technique needed to execute certain moves in the centre. Ballet is composed of a specific vocabulary of moves and part

of the class work is to learn the vocabulary. In the lower level classes the teacher will demonstrate the moves while defining it. The student by the end of the year should have learnt the terms. These terms are French and are the same terms used in the ballet studios around the world. By the time a student reaches the advanced class the teacher might no longer demonstrate the exercises, rather, she will sit at the front of the class and verbally tell the class what she wants.

Once the barre work comes to an end the dancers have a few minutes to stretch. Following the barre work, is the centre work-out where all the dancers are lined up in rows facing the mirror and the teacher. In the centre the student and dancer, will do some adagio work -slow controlled moves testing strength, flexibility and balance- petite allegro -small quick jumps- pirouettes- turns on one leg- and grand allegro -big jumps. The class is usually one and a half hours long and will sometimes be followed by a half hour point class for the girls, and a half hour boys class where they will practice their turns and big jumps. These classes are taught everyday and is part of their daily rituals. Along with the ballet class, the dancers are expected to take pas de deux classes where the boys and girls are partnered together, and taught to execute lifts and turns. Here, they learn: what it means to work with a partner, to understand how another person's body works, to share a space with another body, and to not only respect their own bodies but also to respect their partners.

Another invaluable class given to the dancers of the elite schools is the character class. Here, they learn the various folk dances from many world cultures. It is in this class that a dancer's acting ability is put to the test. The dancer must be versatile enough to be able to

do anything from Hungarian folk dances to the Spanish Flamenco. Their love of music and dance comes alive in this class because they are taught not just technique but the emotional history behind each dance. Each of these folk dances have a story and this story is filled with emotion. The dancers must be empathetic enough to internalize these emotions and convey them in their interpretation. In effect, what occurs in this class is that the dancers learn about the various world cultures and experience them through their dance and, therefore, through their bodies.

Accompanying the usual classes, some schools also offer other classes such as modern, jazz, barre au sole, stretch, mime and voice. In offering all these classes they prepare their students for the future and for the demands of this profession. Girls are trained to work on pointes, that is, they are trained to dance on the tips of their toes. This is made possible by the pointe shoe which is made of satin on the outside and a cotton lining on the inside. At the tip of the shoe is a metal shank which helps to support the arch. The shoe is held on the foot by satin ribbons which are sewn on by the dancer themselves. Part of their training requires that they learn to sew elastics on their demi-pointes and ribbons on their pointes. They also learn to break-in their shoes which should be made to fit like a second skin. The pointe shoe or ballet slipper is just an extension of the foot and really becomes part of the dancer's body. It is for this reason that the shoe should be tended with love and care. Although, the pointe shoe is one of the most beautiful features of a ballerina it could also be the most painful thing of all. Nonetheless, the dancer must endure the pain and suffering which comes with dancing on pointe. I remember my first time on pointe as if it just happened yesterday. I spent the whole class holding back my tears and was rewarded

with a beaming smile from my teacher. When the class was over, I sat down and took my pointes off and almost fainted when I saw that my beautiful pink satin pointe shoes were filled with blood. The skin on my toes where blistered and bleeding and my feet were throbbing. As I sat there not knowing what to do, my teacher came to me and said, "Good work! Now smile and go take your shower." That night, I worried about going back to class the next day and having to put on those damn shoes! I awoke with horrible blisters and could not even put my sneakers on. I remember taking a deep breath while putting my feet into my shoes. I held my head up high and went back to class and suffered along with my classmates. Eventually, I developed calluses which helped numb the pain, however, I still needed to deal with toenails turning purple and falling off. I must say though, we were quite proud of having endured the pain, which eventually became part of our everyday lives.

Boys have it a little easier because they do not have to wear pointes, although, they do have to be able to execute lifts. They must work at being able to lift the girl right over their heads without dropping her and also be able to walk around the stage with her. This seems like an easy task but it takes years of practice to perfect. In the end, regardless of gender, every dancer must endure some sort of pain whether be it emotional or physical.

These various classes which I have briefly explained are, generally, part of an entire week of classes for the student. The level, or grade, of the student will determine the quantity of classes they will have to take. When they first begin, they might start with one or two classes a week and each year one or two more classes will be added per week. In high school, however, the student will begin to take a daily class and every year one extra

class will be added per day. By the time they graduate they will be taking all the classes I mentioned above every week. At that point, they will also be expected to participate in shows and daily rehearsals, hence, should be factored into the weekly work. The student, then, will work anywhere from one and a half hours a day to five hours a day, not including their school work. This training is like a full-time job and students hardly have any spare time do anything else. When they do, they usually do it with their class mates and end up talking about dance. One dancer who I interviewed, explained that the younger student's looked-up to the older ones and that the gifted older student became their icons. Generally, all the dancers interviewed explained that in order to become a dancer, a person must dedicate their whole life to it. Hence, the student lives, eats and breaths dance.

The Internal Dynamics of The Class:

Although, the actual rituals of the day is important to this study, what is even more valuable to our study, is the internal dynamics of the class, or training. It is not exactly the class structure which shapes the young minds but the interactions in the class and their experiences there. One of the interesting phenomena in the class situation is the ranking of the student. According to the student's work, the teacher will deliberately rank the students by placing the best ones in the front row and the worst in the last row. The comments in class will usually communicate to the class who the talented ones are, and why. Those who learn the technique quickly , develop beautiful lines and combine this well with the artistry, are the ones who will receive the most attention. In general, these are the

students who work the hardest. Every child will be conditioned to understand that if you work hard and improve you will be rewarded by the teachers attention. Those who slack-off will be ignored. The following are two comments made by two different dancers who were trained at different schools:

....after grade eight I was always one of the girls picked for, you know, the shows. I did Clara for two years in the Nutcracker....

....a lot of teachers in ballet mentality, they have no fucken pedagogy! They have no pedagogy. ...instead of, you know, you got to be 'exigent', you have to make your student work hard, but you must not attack the personality. And a lot of ballet teachers, because they love you, it was always because they loved me so much, they say things personal to you. When you're twelve years old, my God! Give you an example...you are twelve years old and you start to try for double pirouette, so they would give the exercise, ta, ta, ta...tendu, quatrieme, double pirouette, "Jacynthe three!" And you don't do three...of course I miss it because I'm twelve years old like everybody else!!!"You're lazy! You're lazy! With the body you have, you should be a hundred percent better than that." You know I had enough! ..They would tell my parents you know, "She's the next prima ballerina...." I was very conscious of my potential... I'm not the only one who thinks that. Because from experience there is a lot of dancers, but I don't know what you've been told, but me, my friends, my generation, you know, we all agree on that.

These two comments are typical examples of the ranking system in the ballet class. In the first comment we see how this young dancer was rewarded by being chosen two years in a row to play the young Clara in the Nutcracker. It is every young girls dream, to perform with the company and play Clara. Usually, the prettiest, most talented and expressive girl will be chosen for this role. This girl will stand out amongst her class mates and she will be the one they admire and model themselves after. The dancer who made the second comment, was also Clara in the Nutcracker, however, was a little more expressive

when it came to the class ranking system. Although, she was the best in the school and everybody knew it, she suffered from all the pressure imposed on her by the teachers. What she explained is one of the common tactics used in the ballet school to generate an understanding of what the perfect dancer is. They select the best and focus all the attention on them and, with this tactic, are able to render a picture of what the ideal dancer is, thereby, rendering a picture of the ideal body.

Everyday, the student is faced with the same exercises and same practices, and everyday the image of this perfect body that moves through space and expresses is dangled in front of them as some sort of guiding force. In class and in rehearsal and through the teacher's comments, the student awakens to a new conception of the body. The students who have worked hard and managed to achieve good technique- that is, can perform several pirouettes, jump high, lift their legs up high, and so on- however, have not managed too learn to feel the music and, thus, interpret it, will be told constantly that they are not "dancing", and that their bodies are "lifeless", "boring" and "not expressive". However, on the other hand, the students who move well through space and who express all of their feelings, however, have not managed to master the ballet technique, are told how "ugly they look" or that they are "dancers but have no technique", that "you'll never make it in the ballet world", and so on. As I recently observed in many classes, the teachers still use the same comments and the students are still ranked, classified and labelled.

The rituals and practices generate a situations where the high expectations and image of perfection is highlighted. Every exercise and every act in this milieu centres around the

building of the perfect body and, thus, the perfect dancer. This body should be able to perform amazing physical tricks and be lyrical as well. The image, then which is being communicated in the class and in this culture is of 'the dancer' who would be described as follows: 'The dancer' trains their bodies to respond on command- a task which is never one hundred percent achieved. Most dancers will have excellent control of every muscle in their bodies, however, it is never a perfect command/response performance. What they achieve is the ability to feel all the muscles in their bodies, thus, heightening their emotions. In effect, with their training will come the ability to reach the pinnacles of pleasures that their bodies craves to feel. All the senses tingling and dancing with pleasure, thus, freeing their emotions and allowing them to flow through their bodies and, hence, commanding their spirit to touch their audience. This will be and is the ultimate high of a dancer. It is almost like being in love when the body, mind and heart are fused together, and when every sense and emotion is at its highest peak- the body laughs with joy from the most ultimate of pleasures and cries from the most ultimate of pains. The pleasure is so amazing that it becomes a sort of pain- both pleasure and pain weave into each other causing the body to be overwhelmed by the sensation, thus, allowing the emotions evoked by this experience to radiate. The energy which they will generated is both captivating and exhilarating. Herein, lies the description of "The Dancing Body". It is an image which I myself have held in my mind and felt in my body since I began dancing. It is an image which taunts you and says, " Use your body as we train you to use it, and learn this well and you shall achieve this ideal."

To become a dancer, the dance students are confined by the strict demands of the ballet

world. There are rigid boundaries around the way a dancer uses their body and also around the way they conceptualize it. This unique use of the body is delimited by the rituals and practices in this culture and, hence, by the discourses. This usage of the body is a customary practice and, therefore, sustained by tradition and history. Overtime the actual physical shape and size of both male and female dancer has changed, however, the 'use' of the body has always been the same. The technical ability of the dancer has increased overtime, however, the body is still the instrument with which the dancer communicates. The dancers are bombarded with technique, technique, technique and then simultaneously asked to 'feel the music', 'express', and 'project your energy'. The student, then, realizes that it is not just about a mechanical body, nor is it about a body that moves without form, rather, it is about uniting these two together. The following is a story told by one of the dancers interviewed:

I spent all of my life in dance classes. I loved dancing, in my mind it was just moving, dancing. And the teacher was a Czechoslovakian person, so she was coming from this tradition where you have to express yourself while you dance. So, she was not very strong in technique to show the technique but she was giving us this pleasure to dance and this interest to do things, so we could do three pirouettes, it was all over the place but it was three pirouettes. And she gave us, very strong and very good habits, for example, I remember that she really insist to finish the exercises. We had to finish the exercises. And many times at the end of the class when she had been rude with us, we had to go anyway and do our bow and you know, shake hands and say bye-bye.

This one dancer, as she explains above, began her training with a teacher who did not demand good proper technique and, as a result, this dancer encountered many unsatisfying years in the milieu. While training with this one teacher she was happy and was having fun,

however, as soon as she entered a serious school of dance this all changed. She was offered a scholarship from Les Grands Ballet Canadien and this is what she encountered when she entered the school at fifteen:

...I realized all the aesthetic aspects of it, and I was not fitting in this aesthetic at all. Because I was "tout croche" considering the aesthetic of ballet, you know, I had big faults in my ways of doing things from their point of view, because I was not in the aesthetic of ballet, I was moving well, I was, for them I had no technique and they gave me the feeling that I have to start from the beginning. So, for me it cut the whole pleasure and I was discouraged because I felt very bad. I was not good at all and for me it was, with my temperament, it was discouraging, you know. I would say, well don't do it. I'm not good then I'm not going to do it. And then I felt the pressure on me, because of the aesthetic I had to see each day in the class. I started to have weight problems.

Generally, most big schools prefer that the student not have any previous training and it is for this reason that they usually select them young. In some cases, however, the student if they seem to have potential will be able to enter later. In the case of this dancer her bad training was a hindrance and took many years to rectify. This story is a clear illustration of how fitting into the aesthetic of ballet is essential to the art and to the culture.

The pressure which surrounds the student demonstrates the power of the discourse on 'the body' in ballet. It is through these discourses and practices of the body, within this culture, that the students learn what "The Dancing Body" is. They are not only taught, through the rituals and practices what this body is about, however, are also taught that they cannot deviate from this conception. The coercive nature of these discourses manage to instill in the dancer, for example, the notion of 'technician' and 'artist'. The construction of these concepts, which are generated through the rituals and practices and sustained by

the everyday talk of the dancer, creates a distinction between the dancers and, thus, ranks them. One dancer explains in the following statement what the difference between these concepts are:

....there is a great difference. Actually, anybody could be a technician, it's just a science, it's just logic, it's physics. And an artist, I don't think you could train anybody to be an artist, I think they just are. I think you could nurture it but you can't implant it. And, ah, the bad thing is that, ah, so many technicians are not artists, and so many great artists are not technicians, and then someone comes along who's a great technician and an artist. Baryshnikov is a perfect example he's a great artist who is also a great technician. They have their instruments, fantastic instruments and fantastic intelligence, to make those instruments do what they wish, for what they wished to do is artistic. That's very rare.

Here, through this description, which comes from a male dancer who has spent over forty years in this milieu, we are shown how this culture ranks, classifies and labels their dancers. Their unique way of perceiving a person as either a 'technician' or an 'artist' points to the fact that they are actually referring to an incomplete dancing body. Hence, by suggesting that neither one of these two types of dancers are complete on their own, a union of the two- technician and artist- is being idealized. What is also being suggested is that the combination of the two are very rare and is the desired goal of every dancer. Hence, we begin to see how the body is being conceptualized in this culture as a marriage of both sensibilities and mechanics, which are incomplete without the other.

The body, in the minds of the people in this culture, is a body which is both a physically moving and emotionally feeling. The body for the dancer is waiting to be born out of the inherited labours of centuries. The labours were developed to achieve the highest form of the body possible and is believed, and has proven itself, to have the potential of creating a

perfect instrument of self-expression. An instrument which has the power, strength and courage to reveal itself on stage and touch audiences. This culture's use of the body, then, is weaved into the conception of it and is, thus, constitutive of "The Dancing Body". Hence, this culture's distinction is, therefore, primarily established by the unique way they use the body.

In this chapter we illustrated the unique rituals and practices of the dancer and have also shown how they, in effect, construct the culture's perception of the body. The young child, teenager, and adult dancer all use the body the same way and for the same reasons and, in the end hold, the same goals. Dancer's whether they are still students or professionals live their daily work. This work is not only a part of their lives but is their life. From the very start of their training and education, as a dancer, in a studio, all the exercises performed, and all the movements executed, every muscle impulse, their whole being as instruments for movement has been conditioned to respond to their inner feelings and so is woven inextricably into the very fibre of their bodies. This body which feels, thinks, and moves emerges from the very root of this culture and is responsible for establishing its distinction. Hence, one can conclude this chapter by suggesting that the dancer's self is weaved into their body and ,therefore, their art. Their life work is to become this "dancing body" by immersing themselves in the rituals and practices which shapes their cultural identity. Becoming a dancer through the use of the body, which has been explored throughout this chapter, is but only one phase of the process. The dancer's connection with their bodies begins with the daily physical use, however, their connectiveness to their bodies is further extended to how they see and, thus, identify the

body with themselves. The aesthetic nature of this art form emphasizes the visual aspect of the body and, therefore, the self. In the following chapter we shall explore the interplay between the body and self by observing the way in which dancer's see themselves and, thus, identify with their culture.

Chapter Four

THE DANCER'S MIRROR IMAGE

In the previous chapter our discussion centred around the production of the dancer's body acquired through the tradition of the dance culture. Here, we discussed how the uniqueness of this culture's use of the body shapes and moulds its perception and, furthermore, defines it. These distinct acts of the body not only shape and mould the cultural perception of it but also delimits the actual physical experience of the dancer. These sets of practices have been implemented for centuries in order to discipline the body- to bend it, stretch it, extend it, make it pliable and transform it into 'the dancing body'- and as a result creates a beautiful instrument, with almost surreal physical lines, which touches audiences with their movement and emotional expression. Through the daily lessons, the student or professional dancer experiences the body both physically and viscerally and, thus, seeks to perfect the union of these two experiences. We have discussed and given examples of how a dancer struggles to attain this perfect union, however, what was not mentioned was how the visual experience of the dancer factors into this struggle. In this chapter, we shall concern ourselves with the dancer's visual experience by illustrating how a dancer not only develops an understanding of the body through the actual physical training, but also becomes increasingly aware and conscious of themselves and, thus, their bodies, through the act of seeing. A very important part of a dancer's development emerges from their daily confrontation of the body in the mirror. Furthermore, the aesthetic nature of this art gives importance to the act of seeing and,

thus, to the judgement it incurs. Therefore, in this chapter we shall journey into the actual visual experience of the dancer by accessing their internal dialogue and the dialogue with their dancing image. It will be shown through this dialogue how the dancer actually perceives themselves and how their daily confrontation with their mirror image is a constant process of weighing and measuring against the idealized "dancing body". I, therefore, invite my readers to continue on this journey, this time into the dancer's field of vision. It will be shown in the following how the image of "The Dancing Body" defines this culture and, thus, the dancers themselves.

The Battle For The Mirror:

One hot summer morning in 1984, I was taking the professional ballet class taught every morning at the St. Catherine street studios of Les Ballet Jazz de Montreal. The class was given by ballet mistress Marie Jose Hardy who was notorious for working the dancer to the point where they would practically crawl out on their hands and knees. Her class was a 'killer' and scared many student dancers and professionals away, however, those of us who attended the class religiously every morning and who paid \$8.50 a class, were dedicated dancers and loved the hard work. On that morning, the studio was so incredibly hot I still remember the amount of sweat that dripped off my body and soak through my leotard and tights as I simply warmed-up my body. It felt great to be able to warm-up so quickly and not have to wear layers of clothing just to keep warm. On most mornings it would take me approximately an hour to warm-up properly but that morning we were all

sitting on the floor stretching with ease and waiting for class to start.

The class was attended by various types of dancers: modern and jazz dancers who wanted to work their placement and start their day by warming-up with a ballet class; ballet dancers who wanted an alternative to their company class; pre-professional students wanting to be close to the already professional ballerina; ballet dancers in transition; and finally retired ballet dancers who just wanted to stay in shape. The class was jam-packed that day, as it usually was, and most of the dancers had already arrived at least one hour before class to not only warm-up but to also get the best barre space. One of the dancer's ritual is to find the most comfortable spot at the barre and claim it as yours and somehow try to keep that spot until another becomes available, or more appealing. Usually, in the professional schools, the teacher decides where you stand, however, once you become a professional and as long as you are not taking company class, the choice is up to you. Generally, however, if an accomplished dancer such as Karen Kain decides to grace the class with her presence, the dancer's will treat her like royalty and allow her to choose her spot first. This is a customary practice in the ballet class and should be respected at all times. Dancers are very particular about where they work in class, and generally like to be in a spot where they can see themselves in the mirror. It just so happened that in that particular studio the best spot was the place by the window and directly in front of the mirror- that was my spot. I chose this spot because I would face my mirror image throughout the barre work and watch my lines improve daily. I stood there with pride and confidence and just enjoyed myself- my hyper-extended legs, high extensions, perfectly pointed feet, the highest arabesque in the class, my musicality and expressiveness.

The mirror has a very mystical energy in the ballet class. Technically, the mirror is there so that the dancer can train towards achieving aesthetic perfection. That is, training the body to make beautiful lines. The mirror also represents the audience's vision- the image the dancer sees in the mirror is the image that the audience will see during performances. Although, the mirror has its functional purpose in the ballet class, to the dancer the mirror is alive. It is alive with judgement and criticism as well as praise. Dancers generally engage in a one-on-one relationship with the mirror in an ongoing dialogue to perfect their bodily movements. The mirror and the dancer conspire against the dancer's body, encouraging it, persuading it, and taunting it to 'hit those lines'. They 'speak' to the mirror with their bodies and the mirror responds with an image which may appeal or repel the dancer. Dancers also 'speak' to each other through the mirror. Generally, in a class there is no verbal dialogue between the students, however, they will often acknowledge each other with a smile or nod while looking in the mirror. Helena Wulff writes in her article, "Studying Ballet as an Ex-Native: Dialogues of Life and Fieldwork":

The dancers' fixations with mirrors is regarded as crucial for their work towards performance, which is a social act by definition. During rehearsal, the mirror is the point of orientation, reflecting the steps that are being corrected over and over again. The mirror is placed where the audience is seated during performance, thereby suggesting reactions of the audience, and of critics, to the dance. When the time of performance eventually comes, there is no mirror, so during the last student rehearsal a curtain is often drawn to hide it. The dancers need to learn to forget the mirror, to dance without constantly checking what they look like. It usually means that this is the phase when they move from technique to artistry, it is in a sense the moment when they start to dance. Liberated from the mirror, their steps become more expressive (Wulff 1997:212).

The dancer then spends most of their day, whether in a class or rehearsal, dialoguing with

the mirror. The dialogue is silent but quite meaningful to the dancer.

On that morning in question, I noted in my diary that I appeared to have lost some weight and that my lines were looking great. At this point in my life I was plagued with a horrible eating disorder and was constantly working on staying below the hundred pound mark. In that crowded studio on that very hot day I could not help but notice, while admiring myself in the mirror, that the class was full to capacity and everybody was already placed at the barre except for one dancer who had wondered in five minutes before class started; she was desperately searching for a spot at the barre and was trying to avoid drawing attention to herself. I remember she was wearing layers of baggy clothing over her leotards and tights and seemed to be confused and lost. I smiled at her and asked her if she would like to stand in front of me and we would share my spot at the barre. She was happy that I asked, but suggested that I stand in front of her instead. I agreed and the class began. I loved my place at the barre because from where I stood I could see myself and the whole class. As the class proceeded I realized that this little dancer who stood behind me was absolutely wonderful. I was almost ashamed to have her stand behind me. At the end of class I asked if she was coming back the next day and she said, "Yes". The next day again I took my regular spot at the barre and waited for her to come in. Five minutes before class began, Christine (that was her name) entered the studio and again found no place to stand. I called her over and this time insisted that she take the spot in front of me. I will never forget the look of terror on her face when she said, "No!!! I can't! I hate looking at my body in the mirror! Please let me stand behind you!!" I was so surprised by this reaction. I asked her what the problem was and she almost cried! I

explained to her that she was an amazing dancer and I thought it was appropriate for her to take my spot. We argued for a while and finally she agreed. We became really special friends from that day on, and for the next two years argued every morning on who was going to stand in front of the mirror.

Christine and I formed an interesting relationship- we became each others number one fan. She was trained at The National Ballet School of Canada and was in my eyes one of the most expressive and technically proficient dancers I had seen in a long time. She on the other hand envied my lines and natural ability. I was the sort of dancer who seemed to have everything naturally without having to work for it- this in my opinion was a false assessment- nonetheless Christine reminded me of this everyday.

Every dancer has their own personal dialogues with their worst critic- themselves. Everyday the dancer must confront themselves- their dancing image- through the mirror and have no choice but to measure themselves against the ideal dancing image. The production of a perfect dancing image is part of the making of a perfect dancer. Although, perfection is an unrealistic goal it is, nonetheless, the thing which all dancers strive for. They learn to 'speak' with their bodies- through their lines, gestures, and physical appearance- through the coded language of ballet. Their relationship with their mirror image is a complex one and goes beyond the assessment that the mirror is there for technical reasons only. In the following section I shall discuss this further and show how the dancer's image in the mirror is weaved into their identity.

The Dancer's Relationship With The Mirror:

The becoming of a dancer is weaved into the physical appearance of the body and of the dancing image. This image is imbedded in every dancer's mind as the image by which they assess whether they are worthy of the title of 'dancer' or not. An interesting quote in Agnes De Mille's book, Dance To The Piper, shows how the dancer is conditioned by the milieu to use the mirror:

"This is not good", she said. "You simply haven't a dancer's body. I'd like you to write, but if you must go on the stage, act. I believe you're a tragic actress. Stop dancing. Look at yourself in the mirror" (De Mille, 1952:92).

The child is told to look in the mirror in order to see how horrible she looks. The reflection in the mirror, then, represents a sort of 'other' in an I-other relationship.

My re-entry into the ballet world was an interesting one because it brought with it new knowledge. While watching a ballet class and watching all the dancers obsess over their mirror images, I began to question what this inability to pry their eyes away from their dancing image was all about. Both Helena Wulff and I both observed, that dancers would communicate with us through the mirror by making "mirror eye contact" (Wulff 1997:212). I know that in the past when I was actually dancing, much of the dialogue in class occurred through the mirror. It seemed normal then but now, after so many years out of the milieu, it took me a while to get used to. One afternoon I sat on the floor with a group of dancers in the studio chatting and waiting for rehearsals to start and noticed that even when the dancers were not actually dancing they were fixated by their image in the mirror. As we spoke and laughed the dancers would stretch their legs out and point their toes while looking in the mirror. Or, they would stand-up and pose in front of the mirror. I

watched and noted everything down until one afternoon I realized what was actually occurring. On that afternoon in question I was out shopping with some of the dancers and noticed that each time we approached a mirror one or more of the dancers would stop and proceed to perform ballet poses in front of the mirror. While having coffee at a Saint Denis street cafe, one of the dancers was glued to her mirror image. She was observing her neck line, her shoulders and any part of her body which she could actually see in the mirror. She became so mesmerized by her reflection, she actually took out her brush and hair pins and proceeded to tie her hair up in a chignon. Once she was done, she seemed to be very pleased with her appearance and continued to look at her self.

The dancer's preoccupation, or fixation, with their mirror image can be explained by this idea of the I-other relationship. In order to clarify this relationship, I will turn to Mikhail Bakhtin's, Art and Answerability and discuss how the dancer's 'seeing' and connection to their bodies is an act of self-understanding and self-contemplation. Hence, we shall proceed to understand this relationship as a sort of aesthetic event.

The dancer's relationship with their mirror image occurs because a dancer who is always in the process of becoming 'the dance' requires a reflection of their self-image in order to complete themselves. The dancer, who is always in the process of becoming, is incomplete, as is the self, or unfinalized, and can only becoming fully conscious of themselves through the vision of an other. They become aware and conscious of their bodies and, thus, their selves through an aesthetic event which requires two bodies, two consciousnesses (Bakhtin 1990:22). In the relationship between the 'I' and the 'other', the 'other' is a 'whole human being' who exists outside of the 'I' as a separate consciousness,

or entity (Bakhtin 1990:22). The 'I' and the 'other' exist with each other, and for each other, and do not exist without one another. 'I' am always searching for my image in the 'other'- my whole image which are not accessible to my 'seeing', and the 'other' seeks the same from me.

...I shall always see and know something that he, from his place outside and over against me, cannot see himself: parts of his body that are inaccessible to his own gaze (his head, his face and its expression), the world behind his back, and a whole series of objects and relations, which in any of our mutual relations are accessible to me but not to him (Bakhtin 1990:23).

In this relationship of how I see others and how the others see me, what Bakhtin calls the I-for-another and the-other-for-me, "the excess of my seeing, knowing, and possessing in relation to any other human being" is based on my unique place in this world- the place where I stand at any given moment and everyone else stands outside of me (Bakhtin 1990:23). The activity of the I-for-another or the-other-for-me, this act of seeing, occurs outside of both I and the other. Our ability to see the parts of each other that we alone cannot see for ourselves, is, thus, completed through the visual image of one another. The "I" for the other's existence relies on the other's 'excess of seeing' of myself and vice versa. These outer parts of myself- my outer body, my actions, my mannerisms, my smell, my sound, and so on, are consumed in the other's act of seeing and understanding of me. My existence for the other is outside of myself. In occupying a given place and time, I and the other, can hold in each other's gaze a knowledge which is inaccessible to ourselves alone. Through the projection of "I" into the other human being "I" can "see his world axiologically from within him, as he sees this world; I must enframe him, create a

consuming environment for him out of this excess of my own seeing, knowing, desiring, and feeling" (Bakhtin 1990:25). This act of empathy is essential for completing the other. It brings myself to know the other from within him and know and feel what he is experiencing. In order to experience "the fullness of his own outward expressedness in being" (Bakhtin 1990:25) requires this act of empathy by me.

He does not see the agonizing tension of his own muscles, does not see the entire, plastically consummated posture of his own body, or the expression of suffering on his own face. He does not see the clear blue sky against the background of which his suffering outward image is delineated for me. And even if he were able to see all these features- if, for example, he were in front of a mirror- he would lack the appropriate emotional volitional approach to these features. That is, would not occupy the same place in his own awareness that they do in his contemplator's (Bakhtin 1990: 25-6).

The dancer seeks to know what the other's whole image of them is, and through this activity can know how they appear. The dancer's obsession with the mirror, is a desire to gain self-understanding and self-knowledge. They look to see their whole entire self-image which is always in the process of completion. The dancer who seeks to know themselves through their mirror image, experiences their self through their own eyes. They lack the ability to complete themselves and, therefore, search for that finalizing moment in the mirror which can only be given to them through the act of empathy by an other.

In order to explain this I-Other relationship further, and to bring it down to a more concrete level, we can look at Charles Horton Cooley's "Looking-Glass Self" where he explains that we are to each a looking-glass which reflects the other (Cooley 1964:184).

As we see our face, figure, and dress in the glass, and are interested in them because they are ours, and pleased or otherwise with them according as

they do or do not answer to what we should like them to be; so in imagination we perceive in another mind some thought of our appearance, manners, aims, deeds, character, friends, and so on, and are variously affected by it (Cooley 1964:184).

Cooley proceeds to explain the three principle elements belonging to this type of self-idea:

the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgement of that appearance, and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification (Cooley 1964:184).

Furthermore, he explains that it "is not the mere mechanical reflection of ourselves" which would evoke a sentiment of pride or shame but, rather, is "an imputed sentiment, the imagined effect of this reflection upon another's mind" (Cooley 1990:184). Hence, the feeling of pride and shame emerges from what we might believe to be in the thoughts of those we value. In the case of the dancer who looks and searches in the mirror for themselves, their projection of what their teachers, perhaps, might think about them, is reflected back at them. In a sense it is a false perception of themselves because they are the ones actually projecting it and, thus, are not completed by another's perception of them but their own judgement.

The visual image of the dancer's body is important to them because it is intricately woven into the very fabric of their being and, thus, their self-identity. They are defined by this image and, furthermore, by the rituals and practices which defines their culture. They own their own distinct language which is non-verbal and which requires a finely tuned body which 'speaks'. Helena Wulff explains:

Many dancers are not very verbal people, they are trained to express themselves through their bodies, they have an extreme body-consciousness.

They communicate through their bodies even when they are not dancing, in a way that may seem strange or even offensive to other people. Dancers are used to being close to other people, skin to skin, which carries over to touching and fondling, kissing, as ways to show camaraderie when they are not dancing. There is also a constant use of terms of endearment, especially by older people to younger ones, protectively and pedagogically. In general, dancers move their bodies more when they engage in a conversation than non-dancers, getting up from a chair, for example, in order to emphasize a point through gesturing with arms and legs. Their bodily non-verbal signals are more frequent and varied than among non-dancers (Wulff 1997:210).

Body language is, therefore, their primary means of communication. Learning this language is their life's work and is the very thing which defines them. Without this, they cannot identify with their culture and with their people. They are bound together by the common physical, visceral and visual experiences of 'the dance'. And, united together, all of these experiences are the dancer. In the following section, then, I will give tangible evidence of the dancer's preoccupation with the mirror and their body image and how the idea of 'looking' like a dancer actually defines them.

Do I Look Like a Dancer and Am I one?

The way a dancer perceives 'the dancing body' is reflected in their own personal mirror image. 'The dancing body' is a term I use for the purpose of this thesis in order to name the actual ideal of this culture. This body which dances and produces art is a body which 'speaks' with its beautiful lines and emotional movements. The dancer works everyday to become this instrument which evokes sentiment and moves audiences, however,

sometimes reduces this art to the mere physicality of the body. One of the male dancers I interviewed explained the following when I asked him if he dialogued with the mirror:

No, I don't. I try, it's weird. I've gone through it when I started dancing there always was the mirror and I became very sort of preoccupied with the mirror. I think that we all do as dancers, we all look at the mirror. I mean, and then I went through a period where I was working in studios where there were no mirrors. And, there weren't a lot of studios where there were no mirrors....what it does is get your face out of the mirror, for one thing, no matter what you are doing you have the obvious tendency to check out of the corner of your eye, you know. So, what does it, having the mirror there, I'm always, even sitting here now looking in the mirror, I could see, and it's like I'm, it's exterior. You know, it's like out there what's happening, you know. I think at some point you become very preoccupied with the physicality of the body, instead of, or the imposition of physicality, of the body, instead of the outwards motion of the body, you know what I mean?

...Well it becomes very sort of superficial.

The dancer sometimes becomes incredibly absorbed with their actual physical appearance that they abandoned the emotional or visceral experience of the dance. They will simply tune out from the emotional and focus strictly on the mechanical. The constant struggle to keep the physical, emotional and visual experiences united becomes the battle of most dancers. I had explained the concept of 'technician' and 'artist' in the last chapter and here in the above quote we are shown how the presence of the mirror in the class can hinder the goal of uniting technique with artistry. The dancer becomes increasingly obsessed with appearance, or physicality, that they tend to forget the final goal. I am, however, not blaming the dancer because in the ballet world aesthetics is everything and dancer's bodies are harshly judged. The male dancer who I quote above proceeded to explain the dancer's battle:

You battle with it everyday. Somebody, another dancer said to me once that somebody asked him why dancers are so neurotic and what our problem is, and stuff like that. He said well think about it, you know, everyday of our lives, practically, the first thing we do is we walk into a studio and we have a mirror and we are confronted with the reality of our bodies. Every! Single! Day! Of our lives! ...and at one point you start to see only the weaknesses and what you don't have and what's not working, and I mean, other people see other things but that's all we see!

Here we see how the notion of the "looking-glass self" is relevant to the dancer's experience. They are faced with the sight of their bodies everyday and with the image of perfection in their minds. They are driven by this ultimately perfect body- this dancing body- which ultimately determines their self-worth. Some dancers look in the mirror with pride and others with shame and are constantly seeking out the 'other's' reflection of them.

Christine, the dancer I discussed earlier, finally expressed to me in an interview, after many years of being friends, how her battle for a perfect body made her lose her sense of self. Here, then, is her story:

...I did Clara for two years in the Nutcracker and in grade eight, grade eight, I had this ballet teacher- Elizabeth Yeigh. She put in her mind- I mean this was puberty my body started changing a bit- and she decided to- she was the kind of teacher that everybody wanted to be her pet because she had pets and you would do anything to be her pet.....she was the 'in teacher'. And, one day she came up to me and said, "Well Christine, you'll never be a ballet dancer, you can't be a ballet dancer, you don't have the body. You should go into modern dance." And that's when my life came tumbling down!.....my universe came tumbling down!

Christine told me that prior to being told that she would never be a ballet dancer because she did not have the body, she genuinely saw herself as a beautiful dancer. She never really obsessed over her physical appearance because her technique and artistry were good,

however, aesthetically she was now no longer corresponding to the ballet body.

....I started looking at my body in the mirror. Looking at faults. I started hating them, and hating my body.

Not accepting my body.....the fact that I have large hips and a big butt...She had amazing power over me. I really thought she was God on earth. I thought she was the greatest person on earth and whatever she said must of been the truth.....I definitely started going down because after grade nine I still was wanting to do the auditions for the ballets but, ah, my self-worth had been completely destroyed already by then. It was amazing, from literally, from one day to the next, suddenly, I was no good. I tried to fight it all the time and I would for a short span like three weeks. I would stop continuing. I was on and off all the time.

Christine's confidence was shattered by this one comment and so was her self-worth. In her mind she was no longer worthy of being called a dancer and, therefore, in her mind she no longer was. Nonetheless, she continued to fight because, she said, "... this is what I was supposed to be and if I wasn't here, I wouldn't fit into society." She felt like this was her place and back home in Moncton she felt like she would not be able to re-enter a life there. Christine's struggle continued throughout her life and with this battle with her body she lost herself.

To this day I have to fight with it. To this day I still haven't come to terms with that body. Why I haven't come to terms with it, I don't know, but it's been a sort of disillusion of myself.....I wanted to become a classical dancer in a big classical company, that meant that I never, I could never get there, that I was not worth much. I was a half being!....when I left the school there was no Christine. I was a shadow of myself...because I was not a dancer.....I'm still, I'm still on the quest of saying, "I will become a dancer." Somewhere inside me there was always the fact that I said, "Yes but you are all wrong! I'm the greatest dancer!" Yet I wasn't willing to pay the price to come about it. That will be something I'll have to deal with all the rest of my life.

Christine's dancing image became her obsession and because of it her ability to experience 'the dance' fully, was lost. She worked the mechanics of her body so hard but she forgot how to feel and, as a result lost her self. The whole purpose of this culture's conception of the body is to allow the dancer to experience the body beyond just the mechanics. As I explained in chapter two, the dance culture defies the limits within which the larger of society experiences the body by adding sensibilities to the mechanics of it. Christine's disengagement from her feelings in order to concentrate on her technique and, thus, her body shape, disconnected her from the very thing which defines this culture and which makes a person a dancer.

You become a dancer- I think you become a dancer when you go beyond the actual day to day business of becoming a dancer. In other words, its that when suddenly your obsessiveness with finally getting that perfect 'battement tendu' goes beyond because, in the real life, in the day to day basis is my rehearsal, is that I get to the variation (she means choreography). It's not just stop at that 'battement tendu'.

Becoming a dancer, then, as Christine explains above, is going beyond the actual physical work- beyond the actual mechanical exercises of the body- towards the actual experience of 'the dancing body'. That is, the actual experience of uniting the mechanics with the artistry.

"The Dancing Body" is supreme in this culture and is highly valued as the thing which defines it and the thing which endows it with its distinction. A person who does not attain the full experience of "The Dancing Body" is not a dancer and, therefore, lacks the very thing which defines this culture. Those people who are endowed with the title of 'dancer' have managed to experience the body and, thus, the dance physically, viscerally and, as

shown in this chapter, visually. The dancer's experiences have occurred from within the body and, thus, from within themselves. They have projected these experience outwards towards the audience in order for them to experience it as well. Hence, the dancer does not experience the body as an object outside of themselves but, rather, experiences it as themselves. The dancer's self-image, then, is internalized and woven into who they are. Hence, those who see a dancer's reflection in the mirror, are themselves dancers and those who do not, are not.

Chapter Five

DANCER'S 'TALK' ABOUT "THE DANCING BODY"

Throughout this thesis we have demonstrated how the body in the dance culture is the outcome of the distinct way this culture 'uses' and 'sees' the body and have, furthermore, discussed why and how this culture has managed and maintained the cultural discourse inherited from centuries ago. That is, the central goal of this culture is to produce 'dancing bodies' through inherited rituals and practices. We have also discussed and explored the various experiences inherent in the conception of "The Dancing Body" and, in so doing, have shown how this conception differs from that of the larger society. In the previous chapter, we explained how the body is weaved into a dancer's sense of self and also explained how the dancer's daily ritual of being faced with their mirror defines who they are.

In this chapter we shall further illustrate this culture's distinction by allowing the dancer's to speak. That is, I will turn directly to the interviews themselves to show how the dancers talk about the body and dance and, therefore, "The Dancing Body". It will be shown through their talk how the body is actually conceptualized and how the body is, in fact, a means to an end- the performance. What we seek to accomplish here is to allow the reader to capture a glimpse of the dance experience. The readers of this thesis have walked with me through the studio where dancers work and, as a result, have encountered the various experiences of the dancer. It is now time for the reader to experience "the dancing body" and, so, I now invite them to journey into the lives of the professional

dancer in order to experience the dance.

For the Love of Dance:

The dancer's work is never finalized and is one of the most demanding jobs a person could have. Baryshnikov in a documentary on "The Dancer and The Dance", explains that to make a dancer it requires more than just ballet skills. He says that the dancer must respect the physical work and withstand the sometimes boring daily routine of taking class. He says that the dancer must go to class everyday and convince themselves that "you love your job." "The work is hard", he says, but "if you decide to not work hard you feel guilty, so you must be the master of your own dance and your own mind, and you must know why you are doing this." From my own experience, I would say that knowing why you dance is the ultimate question in a dancer's life. Several dancers have tried to explain why they dance:

How can I describe that? It's a passion like, like everything. It's hard to describe. You just have that in you. It's a part of your soul, if I can express this in that way. Ah...you can't explain..eh, it's in you.....

I don't know, it was in me. It was like something I had to do or express. I wanted to dance and it's like in my head, I wanted to do ballet, but, um, it's just something I had to do....

...it is this sense of well being, feeling good, uh, it was exciting, there was really, there always seemed to be this positive aspect to it, a real release and huuh (he takes a deep breath and exhales) a charge of this music and somehow getting a real connection to music through movement, that sports never in any way had that, or moving, or doing an exercise, or games, or what not, there was never this high, you know, of somehow relating to music because certainly even at this moment music is really um, something

that can uh, spark changes in mood.....

The dancer works many hours a day for very little money. Many of the dancers I have know over the years were barely able to pay the rent or eat a proper meal. Mostly, they lived with several other dancers just to be able to make it. Baryshnikov's company, American Ballet Theatre, he says, tours eighteen weeks a year. On a day when they are not performing, the dancers will arrive at the studio at 10:00am and leave at 7:00pm with only one hour break. On a day when they are performing, the dancer will arrive at the studio at 10:00am and finish their day at 11:00pm, with only one hour break, which means a thirteen hour day on their feet, or toes for that matter. The ABT, in addition to their eighteen weeks of touring, perform their regular repertoire in New York city. They are a ninety member company with one of the biggest repertoires in the world and have very little time in order to learn these ballets. This is extremely stressful for the dancer especially when they are touring eleven major American cities each year and have to adapt to changing hotel rooms, studios and stages.

Baryshnikov explains that although the rituals and routine of the dancer is the same, the means by which they achieve success differ. He explains that when he was in the former Soviet Union, ballet dancers' training, schooling and living arrangements were organized by the government and paid for, as opposed to the North American dancers who generally pay for their own classes and training. He says, it is for this reason dancers in America learn faster because they do not have time nor money to waste. The dancer's life is a hard one because most leave their families at a very young age and, therefore, rely on the ballet

world for support. Some do not even have enough money to call their families. The dancer is driven by the performance itself and, therefore, by the dance, and is willing to sacrifice anything and everything for the love of dance. One of the dancer's I interviewed explained how the dance was even more important than her husband:

You know, I'm going to tell you something, my husband is going to kill me, one time I remember we weren't married yet and I had a really lousy day, and he said but I love you, and I said ya, but so what! I wanted the dance to love me, and that day the dance didn't love me! And that's a horrible thing to say, horrible, but only today at this time of my life can I say that because I adore my husband and he's so supportive, you know! But back then when you are twenty-one years old, it's like excuse me, I want to dance and the hell with everything else!!it was never a job to me, it's just like, it's not something that I wanted to be. It's just like it was there. I never said I'm going to be a dancer when I grow up, it just was there, it's who you are, that's why you walk funny.....

Most of the dancers I spoke to placed their dancing careers ahead of everything else. Their passion for dance and the performance is so powerful it has the capacity to decommission even the consumer bug. I asked Choreographer Howard Richard about his thoughts on this, and he said:

....it's stronger than actual consumerism to a point and one day you see dancers leave a company and then get "a job" uh, to finally make money and many, many experience it. I've gone through a few generations in dance so I've seen dancers start with me and go on, dance, have a career and then leave, start a family, get a job and then because it's part of them....it's like a bug, it's something you have to deal with, it's in your system. Some people get over it like a disease, and other people, it stays with them and it becomes their way of life.

Another interesting phenomena which I uncovered while interviewing the dancers is the fact that they were reluctant to speak about the physical pain of dance, and the injuries

which they had endure. When I asked them about it, most of them at first said that they never, ever had an injury, however, when I asked them if they had ever stopped dancing for any period of time during their careers, the truth about their injuries surfaced. Rachel-Anne Rist a ballet teacher who researched dancer's injuries, in her book, The Injured Dancer, says:

As standards of ballet technique becomes higher, so more demands are placed upon the dancer and the teacher. As the competition continues to grow, so a dancer is pushed further to the physical limits. The idea of a 'perfect dancer's body' is possibly an enigma. Most students studying dancing do not have a perfect physique and so, as they seek to perform a perfect art with an imperfect instrument, the result will be injuries....To some extent, a dancer leads most of life in pain (Rist 1986:XV).

I have witnessed dancers deny pain and injuries and continue to dance regardless, and stop only when they are no longer capable of walk. I have even seen dancers perform with broken ankles and ripped ligaments. Many people might consider this pure insanity, however, to the dedicated dancer, to be unable to perform means to die a slow and painful death. Their passion for dance extends beyond logic and is the very thing which allows a dancer to endure the worst type of pain. All this in the name of dance.

One dancer explained how she felt when she was no longer able to dance:

I felt empty. I just felt something was missing....I had nothing for me and that disturbed me a lot. I was very depressed. I felt my muscles aching, they hurt because I didn't have any. It's like when you need drugs. If you don't have the drug, you, you feel lost. ...I had a feeling I was a bird when I was dancing. I had wings when I was dancing...and when I stopped, I had a feeling something, something, somebody had cut off my wings.

The denial of physical pain must have been the thing which struck me the most in the

interviewing process. I understand the dancer's need to endure the pain, however, I do not understand why retired dancers whom I had witnessed in pain and injured, would, after so many years, deny ever feeling any. The only way I can rationalize it, is by suggesting that the denial of pain is part of the training and the glory of dance and to acknowledge it would invoke shame.

Contrary to the way the dancers responded to the question on physical pain, when asked about emotional pain the dancers were quite forthcoming with their responses. One male dancer expressed how he suffered as a boy wanting to dance. He said:

...it's terrible. First of all, high school is horrible for anybody no matter where, because I mean adolescents you want to be so much a part of the crowd, to like everybody else and no one is like everybody else...and being a ballet dancer as a boy is even as far out different as you could be and I suffered by it....I used to get anonymous telephone calls saying "twinkle toes" that kind of stuff.

All the dancers expressed emotional pain which generally centred around such things as: weight gain, technical problems, lack of recognition, company politics and so on.

Basically, anything which stood in the way of their success or development caused them emotional pain. The dancer's sensitivity and emotions play an important role in becoming a dancer, because it is very much part of their identity. They are supposed to feel emotions whether they are painful or exhilarating ones, and by allowing themselves to feel, improves their artistic skills. Physical pain, on the other hand, is denied because it is, in fact, a hinderance. For the dancer, nothing must stand in their way of becoming 'the dance'.

Throughout this thesis I have shown how painful, demanding, and challenging this career can be, and I have also shown how difficult it is to enter this culture and build a life

within it. In the following section and through the dancer's talk, it will be shown why the dancer is so determined to cope with all the struggles of becoming the dance. In this next section, then, the dancers will explain to the readers about dance and their bodily experiences.

The Art of Dance:

In all thirteen interviews, when asked what the body meant to them, the dancers explained that the body is either "a tool" or "an instrument" with which they express themselves on stage. When I asked about the dance itself and the performance, I received very colourful answers which I thought should be quoted directly. I have, therefore, selected seven quotes which were particularly interesting in order to allow the dancers an opportunity to be heard. Hence, the following are a selection of excerpts from the transcripts addressing the question of dance and the performance. Here is what the dancers had to say:

I think the art of dance is the most beautiful thing in the world. I really do. I think in all the art forms, whether be it music, opera, painting, sculpting - dance is by far the most exquisite art, because your body, your instrument is yourself by which you express emotions, pure emotion. It's not like a canvas where you throw it onto something else. Or, music sounds that are not made from you. And, maybe singing would be closer to that, but then again, it's only your vocal- cords, so to speak. I mean there is the whole breathing and stuff. But, where with dance, every aspect of you is involved be it your big toes to the strands of your hair...it is a vehicle with which you express who you are.

I think for me it's like reaching the truth, you must be saying what's that?

It's like coming to an understanding what life is about. It's something sacred. Something, um, not human, it's beyond that. It's really like another dimension somewhere...you're on another plain....

The audience is a big part of it. It's a need, a need to reach out and touch. It's a sort of...it's like people who, who you know, go out on missions to save the world....you are out there to reach, and touch, and to show them that there is nothing more beautiful, more real, more important than that very moment right there when you're doing something.

....it's very strange, I don't know, it's hard to put into words, it's a vision of abstract terror and at the same time total, um, total freedom...freedom from my own life, freedom from the world around me, freedom from everything.....

...it's to be able to leave myself, you know, sort of in the wings..

...it's like a connection, a reunion, an exchange, um, it's funny when we perform now, it's like I don't feel the body any more....

Well, dance is talking without words, is writing without a pen in words, paper, it's uh, expression, it's the soul, it's uh, it's all these wonderful gifts that whatever this God is that you want to call him, her, it's? Um, it's a rejoicing on one level, like again just bringing it back to primal is this idea of breathing in and out and magnifying this through the body, breathing in and out and having the ears in tune with what's around you and to start dialoguing with that and rhythm comes about to it like a heart beat, and different heart beats take over and, it's very primal but, but, even then as an experience, is gone well past that, it's gone to the point where it's uh, for me a primary source of communicating with the world, uh, it's a language, again like I say it's a language without using words, so it's less limiting than words....it's so many things dance, you know. Dance is waiting at a bus stop and just connecting inside and undulating and starting to move around, dance is so much.....dance is the high form of art, the high form of aesthetics, and at the same time it is gut, gut level dirty dancing, getting down there, uh, sweating in grime, and at the same time it's pure, it's so many things, it's black and white, it's like you know what is a person? It's so complex at the same time so simple.....if you're at a certain level and

you are at a certain connection with yourself, it can very much be getting to the state of, of divine, of oneness, of connection and it happens, it could be considered very trippy if you want but there is a hhhuuuuuhh (he takes a deep breath and exhales).....

The dancers explain that the body disappears and the dance takes over. They describe the dance experience as something which, on one hand, is a bodily thing, yet, on the other hand, is also an escape from the body itself. Furthermore, the body being an instrument of self-expression is, in fact, the self. The talk is no longer about the body, rather, is about 'the dance'. The body and self, in a sense, disappear into each other and are, thus, transformed by into "The Dancing Body".

The dancers' illustrate their passion for dance and also show how the body and the self are weaved into 'the dance' and, as a result, becomes their identity. Therefore, when the dancer talks about dance, they are actually talking about themselves and their act of communion with the audience. They unite all of their bodily experiences- physical, visceral, and visual- and project this union to their audience to experience. The dancers' talk, then, produces the conception of "The Dancing Body" and, thus, evokes their cultural conception. Hence, the body to this culture is not this thing outside of, or separate from the self, but is the self in every possible way.

It has been shown that not only is the dance culture's distinction an outcome of the way they use and see the body, however, is also the outcome of the way they talk about it. The dancer's cultural identity is weaved into everything they do, which is generally to produce dancing bodies. "The Dancing Body", then, is the product of this culture and emerges from the cultural discourses which determines this culture's distinction.

CONCLUSION

"The Dancing Body" as seen in this thesis is yet another conception of the body which exists amongst the many others that have emerged over time, and throughout various societies. This thesis, however, only discusses the dancing body which emerges from the ballet culture, however, acknowledges that every culture has their own version, or definition, of what their dancing body looks like.

To unravel the ballet culture's conception of the body, we adopted Michel Foucault's theory that the body is constituted by discourses and, therefore, analyzed ballet dancer's discourse and, thus, practices on the body. Through a careful examination of this culture's rituals and practices of the body, we explained how dancers come to understand their culture's conception of the body. They appropriate the traditional ways of this culture and learn how they must use the body. The young child is initiated into this culture only if they are gifted and have both the physical and artistic talent necessary to make a dancer. They learn early on that they must be able to unite their inner feelings with the technique taught to them through these practices and, thus, this becomes their mission. Their lives become routinized by the customs and habits rooted in this culture. They are a proud and noble people who have managed to sustain their cultural heritage and identity through the inherited labours of the past. Their distinction emerges from their unique set of discourses and practices of the body which have generated the boundaries within which they exist. Those dancers who do not manage to integrate the ballet 'technique' with the 'artistry', are marginalized. The boundaries set in place delimit the parameters within which the body is

experienced. The dancer is in a way coerced into experiencing the body within the confines of this bounded system. They are taught how to use, see, talk about, and feel the body, and learn this through the ballet culture's conception of "The Dancing Body". Furthermore, they learn that in order to experience the dance, they must become it.

The dancer experiences their bodies at various levels; they experience the physical, or mechanical use of it, the visual image of it, and the visceral experience of it. All of these experiences are conducive to understanding how "The Dancing Body" is experienced and not only conceptualized. The conception of a body on its own is not useful, rather, what is more interesting is why a people would conceptualize the body as they do. By seeing the body as one that dances, this culture can manage and maintain their people's bodily experiences. That is, they can continue to produce bodies which dance and perform under a strict set of guidelines, or within the coded language of this art, in order to maintain their cultural heritage. The ballet culture is made up of artists and relies on the production of these artists for its sustenance, therefore, manages and maintains the bodily experience through discourse.

I have taken my readers step by step through this culture and exposed them to a unique way of life and to a different set of discourses and practices. They have encountered the dance experience and have been shown how ballet dancers conceptualize the body and how they use it, see it, and talk about it. As a result of this journey, the readers were able to see how a culture's bodily experiences are united by a collective understanding of the body. Hence, "The Dancing Body" is the unifying force of this culture and the producer of their language. The purpose then of this culture is to produce dancing bodies who are

united by a common language, thereby, sustaining their cultural identities. Although, we have not focused on identity formation in this study, the data generated can be used to further investigate this. Therefore, the discussion of identity has been suspended and will be considered for a future project.

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APPENDIX A

Interview guide

The Journey:

(Early Years)

- When did you start dancing? Where?
- What made you start?
- Probe: Dreams, what they envisioned for the future.
- What did you enjoy about dance?
- What did your body look like?
- Did you like your body?

Training:

- When did you begin to seriously train?
- In what style(s)?
- What was your favourite style? Why?
- Tell me about the training? (continuation of their journey)
- Pains? Physical & Emotional.
- Was the training hard?
- At this point did you like your body?
- Did you ever struggle with the training?
- Did you ever want to quit? Why?

- How did you use the mirror?
- What did the mirror represent to you?
- Can you tell me what you saw in the mirror when you were younger?
- How did it differ when you began to seriously train?
- Did you ever have a weight problem?
- Did you ever go on a diet? Why? or Why not?
- What did you want to accomplish with the training?
- Did you like what you were seeing in the mirror now?

Performance:

- When did you turn Pro?
- Did you consider yourself a dancer?
- When exactly did you feel like a dancer?
- As a dancer what was your goal?
- How did you relate to your body as a performer?
- What does the performance mean to you?
- What do you try to accomplish on stage?
- How does it feel to perform?
- What was your best performance?
- What is the role of the music?
- Explain your relationship with your dance partner. With the audience?
- Probe: Question relationship between their body and their partner's.

-If you were to explain the feeling you get when you perform to a non-dancer, what would you say?

Retirement:

- When and why did you stop dancing?
- How did you feel about your decision?
- What do you do now?
- How do you feel?
- Do you miss dancing?

Probe: Question the effects of retirement.

- Do you still feel like a dancer?
- What is your mother tongue?
- Are you still involved in the dance world some how?

Teachers or Choreographers:

- What is the goal of the ballet teacher? Choreographer?

Teachers:

- Explain what your job entails?
- How do you see the dancer? (as body or artist)
- What is the ideal student?
- Are you a good teacher? Why? Or Why not?

Choreographers:

- What does a choreographer try to do?
- How do you use the human body to convey what you want?
- Is the body the most important thing to your art?
- Probe: body V.S. artistry.
- The role of the music?
- Is the individual personality of the dancer important? What role does it play?