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GRACE UNDER PRESSURE: RE-READING GISELLE.

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of Philosophy in English Literature

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For Peter, Alice, Audrey and Theda Ruben

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Summary

'Grace Under Pressure: Re-reading *Giselle* ' is a close reading of the Romantic ballet *Giselle* (1841) , focusing on the Birmingham Royal Ballet production of 3 March 1992. The Preface provides a personal introduction, and notes the status of ballet within dance studies and the academy. It also observes that in choosing *Giselle* as a text one is required to reassess the historical treatment of emotion and beauty within academic feminism. Chapter One gives an historical background to *Giselle*, a literature review and a methodological overview. Ballet has received relatively little attention from the academy in comparison with other performing arts. Whilst dance scholarship is a growth area in the university, ballet remains neglected. Hence, in order to bring theory across from areas of greater academic activity, this thesis is structured around textual juxtaposition. Thus Chapter Two compares the plot of *Giselle* with that of the film *Blade Runner*, and Chapter Three compares the movement of *Giselle* with that in the book *SEX* by Madonna. These comparative texts were also first viewed in 1992: whilst *Giselle* is usually categorized as 'High' art, however, they belong in the popular domain. This thesis demonstrates that the comparative texts differ from their own genres, dystopian fiction and pornography. Consequently, *Giselle* is shown to be materially different from other Romantic ballets, particularly in its self-reflexive critical framework. Chapter Four concludes the discussion of the 1841 and the 1992 *Giselles* , and focuses on the repercussions of this study for the academy and the production and reception of ballet. Throughout this thesis runs the assumption, common in dance studies but less overt in English Literature, that academic activity is a personal and political activity, and that a study such as this requires that one engage with the status of academic enquiry both within and without the academy.

Terminology

1. French Ballet Terminology

Whilst efforts have been made to render the sections of this thesis describing ballet movement accessible to the non-specialist reader, some usage of French terminology has been unavoidable. These words are italicized throughout, and all are listed in a glossary at the end of the main text.

2. Academic Terminology

The words 'the academy' have been used throughout to signify all those individuals and institutions involved in academic activity. In order to prevent repetition, the words 'the university' and 'academe' have occasionally been used, and are given to carry the same meaning as 'the academy'. Although these terms are used to indicate an institution with some authority in society, at no point are they intended to be inherently perjorative or critical, nor do they refer to any specific institution. Use of this terminology follows current practice in dance studies.

Preface

1. Introduction

In this thesis I attempt a work on two levels. Primarily I am concerned with generating close readings of the ballet *Giselle* , and especially of the production of that ballet performed by the Birmingham Royal Ballet on 3 March 1992. These readings, concerned particularly with the plot and the physical movement of the text, enable me to recast *Giselle* as a ballet which communicates radical and complex ideas about women and the dancing body. Such a perception of Romantic ballet is unorthodox, however, and in order to facilitate such a reading I bring other, more modern texts to bear upon *Giselle*. I have chosen either texts available for consumption in 1992, or those which share significant genre links with *Giselle* throughout its performance history. Above all I have chosen texts upon which theory and academic activity have been extensively enacted, thus bringing *Giselle* into the domain of criticism and discussion in which they already exist. From the outset this strategy has meant that, perhaps unusually for an English Literature Ph.D, I have called on sources more normally suited to the areas of Cultural Studies or popular discussion.

Stemming from the intentions detailed above has come another, more general and perhaps less conclusive project. Whilst it is acknowleged that the inclusion and exclusion of any text from a canon, be it personal or academic, is a political decision, I have found my choices for this thesis have lead me to contemplations of a particularly political and personal nature. These thoughts, again unusual in their situation in an English Literature thesis, have been included because they have formed such an integral part of my exploration of *Giselle* and the texts that attend it.

The structure of my pursuit of these two ends is as follows:

The remaining sections of this Preface constitute an exploration of my personal reasons for writing this thesis, and an attempt to make the process of personal reflection gibe with academic activity. Harnessing these two activities together seems both to find a precedent in current dance writing, and to be particularly productive when considering dance. I also consider the type of language used in academic discussion, and whether dance forces us to alter our vocabulary in order to incorporate both the corporeal and the affective.

Chapter One serves as an introduction to Romantic ballet, to *Giselle* itself, and to the chequered but vibrant history of dance writing and criticism. I focus on the way ballet, as opposed to other dance forms, has (or has not) been attended to by critics, and list the diverse methodologies and critical traditions which I have brought to bear upon *Giselle*.

Chapter Two makes a structuralist analysis of the plot of *Giselle* in concert with *Blade Runner: The Director's Cut,* a dystopian science-fiction film directed by Ridley Scott. Other broadly Gothic texts are brought to bear, indicating that *Giselle* and *Blade Runner* belong to the same narrative genre tradition.

As throughout this thesis, the position and positioning of women, their agency and contribution to the creative process, are overwhelming concerns.

Chapter Three deals with the movement , the actual dancing, in *Giselle* , using the photographic book *SEX* by Madonna as the rhyme or touchstone which permits unusual critical canons to be played out upon the ballet. My choice of comparative text immediately brings concerns such as the eroticization of the body, the relation between pornography, prostitution and ballet, and the animated and at times hostile relations between the different schools of feminism, into the equation.

Chapter Four is a brief summation of my thoughts on *Giselle*, crystallized by a production of a later Romantic ballet, *Coppélia*. In addition, I return to those more general personal and political themes initially addressed in this Preface. These thoughts do not form a cohesive manifesto or agenda for either the future of British ballet or of the academy. Rather, they are an acknowledgement that the very process, both intellectual and physical, of academic consideration, is inherently political and requires of us that we reflect upon how our textual readings are woven into the larger fabric of the university and the production of textual material.

2. My Personal Aims for this Thesis

This thesis is a response to my experiences in universities, ballet-going, school teaching, ballet class and dance teaching. I have often encountered apathy or simply surprise towards my interest in allowing these disciplines to inform one another. From the outset, it has been my intention to locate the properly personal in academic discourse. Ballet (rather than dance as a whole) is not widely considered to be an appropriate textual resource for study in university arts departments; similarly, the makers of ballet are rarely interested in academic studies of their work. This thesis, by focusing on a 1992 production of *Giselle* , demonstrates how ballet can be positioned amongst the theoretical and textual canons of English. Not only that, ballet offers us the chance to collapse the difference between the popular, the academic and the personal imaginations.

Ballet is conspicuously different from the texts that are usually studied in arts departments: it is also very different from those forms of dance which more frequently receive academic attention (including modern dance and those dance forms and cultural activities linked to the rave music scene). This thesis shows that ballet can add to, as well as exist in, such departments.

Giselle enables me to locate ballet within the current textual hierarchy because it epitomises the contradictions of ballet. *Giselle's* contradictions are partly contained within the fabric of its performances, and partly in the gap between the public, publicized perception of ballet, and ballet in performance. [1] It is made of bodies, yet we are not supposed to become sexually aroused by it. The bodies in ballet are at once desexualized by its status as 'art', and a product of an artistic tradition wherein appreciation of the eroticized body was its *raison d'être* . Women are in the majority among its performers , yet few women become choreographers or artistic directors. It is seen as a bastion for homosexual men, yet it constructs an idealised heterosexual female image as its absolute icon. The stories of the 'favourite' ballets deal directly with class, power and gender, yet it is somehow an infringement of the rules of the 'magic of ballet' to perceive it as 'political'. It is a High Art form, yet to study it in a university arts department is considered risible by many. [2]

Ballet is alternately dismissed or feted as transcendent or escapist. It can be argued, however, that the consolation offered by fantasy genre texts plays a role in supporting resistance to and struggle against any given political hegemony. On a personal level, I watch ballet and I love it with a passion that includes a feeling that I am empowered by it, and yet I loathe it for the physical and ideological scars it has left on me and on women like me. In these contradictions we find the value of ballet. That is, that we can generate diverse and divergent ideas through our experience as audience. Because ballet is currently understudied and over-represented, it offers us an unexplored location for unprescribed response and analysis. [3]

If ballet offers productive textual tensions, then my own experience of ballet is also characterized by tension. I am writing this thesis as a member of the audience; I was never a professional ballet dancer. However I have been teaching ballet professionally since I was fourteen years old, and part of my working week is still given to dance teaching; I have also worked for the Birmingham Royal Ballet education department. I belong to the machinery of production (in addition to the industry of viewing) without ever having been granted a position of privilege by performing within it. These tensions do not prevent this thesis from being a location for the voices of professional dancers however, and those are provided in quotations from biographical sources and interviews I have carried out during the writing of this thesis.

In researching this thesis I found comparatively few modern critical texts dealing with ballet, although there has been a marked increase in those focusing on modern and other non-ballet forms of dance. Writers including Christy Adair, Helen Thomas and Judith Lynne Hanna have set the agenda, and the work that they and their colleagues have done is characterized by a breadth of methodological approaches, a sense of personal investment and engagement, academic rigour and humour. [4] My response has been to apply these qualities to a very specific area of study, harnessing traditional ballet scholarship to theories of feminism, performance, photographic and film theory.

The aim of this thesis is to find ways of seeing ballet that go beyond the grace that is often seen to characterize it. I do not want to rob ballet of its beauty; to recommend that classical technique should become modern; or that the genuinely high technical standards that give ballet its beauty be compromised. Rather, I want to subject that beauty to interrogation. I want to put grace under the pressure of critical analysis. It is only by doing this that ballet can be brought into the political arena: rather than being a diversion or escape from the struggles of real life it becomes a part of the struggle, a means of resistance. American ballerina Gelsey Kirkland, in the introduction to her book *Dancing On My Grave*, which details a personal struggle to make ballet mean something in real life, quotes Friedrich Schiller:

> Genuine art [...] does not have as its object a mere transitory game. Its serious purpose is not merely to translate the human being into a momentary dream of freedom, but actually to make him free. [5]

Kirkland later states her own belief that ballet is 'genuine art'.

> By its very nature, the method of classical ballet held the promise of a revelation that opposed escapism. [6]

My aim, in analysing the ballet *Giselle*, with a range of other objects of art and culture, is to shift the generally accepted perception of ballet, and the study of ballet, from that of 'transitory game', to meaningful political activity.

Although it is my intention to place ballet in the academic arena, I also want its presence there to challenge certain aspects of the academy. Simon Barker, in the essay 'Images of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a history of the present', which deals with ideological appropriations of Shakespeare, states:

> the academic left was content with a post-Derridean 'freeplay of meaning' game in which it hardly mattered that nobody could win, since nothing was at stake. [7]

It is my belief that ballet can provide an aspect of academic activity that matters: this thesis demonstrates what is 'at stake'.

3. My Own Mythology

My own personal mythology underlies this thesis: the fabric of this work constitutes an academic unpacking of these myths. Three events shaped my desire to write this piece of work.

I took ballet lessons from the age of three. I was very aware of the shortfall between what I thought of as ballet - tutus and *pointe* work, [8] and Primary Grade classes, which involved wearing a white gym slip, practising the five positions of the feet, and pretending to be a witch or a doll (an opposition that is of significance in this thesis).

The first full length piece of ballet I ever saw was the film of The Royal Ballet's *The Tales of Beatrix Potter* (1971). [9] Rather than being disappointed that the dancers did not look like those in my *Ladybird Book of Ballet,* [10] I was fascinated by the naughtiness of the characters - The Two Bad Mice as they wrecked the dolls' house, Squirrel Nutkin as he taunted the owl, and Peter Rabbit as he wriggled out of Mr MacGregor's clutches. It was their transgressions that attracted me. They had grace, certainly, technical brilliance without doubt. What they lacked were the usual, accepted decorations that I knew signified ballet: tights and tutus. Nowhere could I see the common symbols of 'balletness': the thin, fragile women, so often lifted and carried; the men who did the lifting, but never stood on *pointe* . Instead there was a frequent roundness of figure and lack of obvious gender, in terms of both body and movement, throughout the movie. (Male dancers actually performed *pointe* work in some of the scenes.) There was great fun to be had in what was signally *absent*. I especially liked the fact that these strange dancers were very good at ballet, but were undoubtedly 'bad' at the same time. For me, the correctness of the signs that normally allowed ballet to exist in the symbolic order had been called into question, made in part redundant by a film that admittedly now seems rather twee and affected. No matter: I had an oblique view, and I liked it.

The second ballet I saw was a Royal Ballet production of *Don Quixote*, in the early seventies, at the Birmingham Hippodrome (now the home of the Birmingham Royal Ballet). With choreography by Marius Petipa, and music by Ludwig Minkus, the version of the 1869 ballet I saw captivated me for quite different reasons. I was very aware that the story was told through the old Don's eyes, and that Dulcinea, the Dryads, and even the virtuoso role of Kitri were, to some extent, his fantasies. My first view of 'proper' ballerinas (beyond the Ladybird book) was of women who were overtly presented as idealized, male generated constructions. My favourite scene was set in the Don's library, a character sequence in which the Don is depicted with a backcloth of books, reaching from either side of the stage and up into the fly tower. As a child who adored books, I was tremendously jealous of this vast library: ballet seemed now to me a world where the rules were only created through imagination (as was Dulcinea or the windmill giants), where those rules could be broken without sacrificing brilliance or beauty (as did the tutu-less animals in *The*

Tales of Beatrix Potter), and where, above all, breaking the rules, being 'naughty', let you in to the most exciting places of power: the forbidden garden, the dolls' house, and most importantly the library.

When I saw the 1994 Royal Ballet production of *Don Quixote*, there was no library scene: it was excised in 1978 by Mikhail Baryshnikov (in keeping with Petipa's original choreography) along with the tradition of having Kitri and Dulcinea danced by the same ballerina. Dulcinea also became a mime role. The Don was marginal: it was Kitri's story. Although these revisions can be interpreted as being politically correct, they effectively limit the available meanings of the ballet. Baryshnikov's reading is more closely aligned with the 'realist' convention, attempting to occlude or dilute the constructedness of ballet. The effect of simulating reality through narrative is discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

My first two experiences of ballet convinced me that the 'magic' of ballet was located in transgression and in the availability of reading. I continued to go to classes in ballet and other forms of dance throughout school. I passed my grade examinations and often performed on the stage. Occasionally I incorporated dance in academic school projects. I hoped to combine my love of ballet and of books when I entered Higher Education.

However, whilst studying a B. A. course component entitled 'Modernism and Modernity', I attended a seminar on W.B. Yeats's Leda and the Swan (1923). [11] The aim of the course was to focus on popular and high art ideals, throughout the arts, during the Modernist period.

Whilst discussing the poem, I mentioned Anna Pavlova, who was living in Golders Green, London in 1923. I spoke of the fashionable swan cult, fuelled originally by her 1907 Dying Swan solo, and of her continuing love of the birds, with which she was frequently photographed. I was listened to for as long as I talked about fashion and photography. When I started to discuss the movement values of her variation, its relation to the poem, and the existence of Yeats's dance poems, I was not only ignored, but told that 'that is enough.'

My feeling then, as now, was that ballet is seen simply to be a conduit for middle class or bourgeois values, and that as such it can have no academic worth. This is a very poor and wrong-headed reason for excluding a textual field from academic study, based more, I think, on the desire to seem 'cool' than even on the desire to seem politically correct. In the first instance, even the most rabidly conservative of texts is subject to some slippage, some accidental giving way at the margins wherein we can find unauthorized voices and complicated ideas. Secondly whatever the rights and wrongs of the current situation, academics are in the main middle class, as is a large portion of the non-academic population. While I would never argue that the middle class white academic is an excluded minority, the fact that such persons have, historically, had the best access to academic expression does not therefore invalidate their voices and experiences. The dance critic and historian Sally Banes has noted:

> The theatrical dance canon comprises dancing on the lyric and concert stage - largely aristocratic or bourgeois venues. Thus the tendancy is to represent onstage bourgeois, rather than working-class, values towards sexuality and marriage. This is not to say that bourgeois values are always upheld; they may well be contested. [12]

The conviction that contestation was impossible within a bourgeois text was upheld when I tried to discuss ballet. Thus when I finally got to the place which I thought would give me full rein to explore the transgressions and readability of ballet, I was blocked. This thesis takes me through that block. I feel that it is important to make overt reference to those experiences that catalyse academic activity. As Christy Adair has noted:

> The overt inclusion of my experiences when appropriate embraces the idea that 'the personal is political'. [13]

Those people, and particularly those women, who are writing about dance - across a very broad political spectrum - noticeably include the personal in their work. This is not to put dance writing in a personalized ghetto, but rather to add an aspect to valid academic writing that is currently missing.

4. Ballet Writing and Ballet Going in the 1990s

'Ballet is a problem because it must be beautiful.'

This comment was made by Professor Andrew Harrison at a conference concerning 'Philosophical Issues in Dance. [14] He identified one of the most important reasons why academics tend to shy away from using ballet as a text. No other art form requires, *demands* of itself that it must be entirely beautiful. Many would argue, with good reason, that ballet provides a moment of grace, a pleasant diversion, but nothing more: its beauty prohibits the effective communication of weightier themes. More seriously, Evan Alderson has pointed out that when the goal of high art is to present its concerns as being universal the aesthetic of beauty is over-represented; this allows beauty to mask the social concerns of the text. Thus:

> By focusing on the ways in which an art object expresses the interests and ideas of a particular social group, even where the work (or the perception of the work) seems to claim an aesthetic transcendence, some sociological approaches emphasize the constant and necessary entrenchment of both the production and reception of a work of art within the social order. Moreover, the very concept of aesthetic autonomy itself is perceived as exemplifying a social bias, a means whereby social elites privilege some expressive forms over others [...] In particular, classic works of art that have a continuing presence in our culture seem to escape any ideological entrapments of their moment of creation [...] We have to perceive how ideology is projected in and through aesthetic value and not apart from it [...] we may recognize some of the ways our own subjectivity is socially organized, how the experience of aesthetic transcendence also re-places us in the social order. [15]

Whether actual fact, or popular prejudice, British ballet seems to have little political or social relevance or influence. It is good at being graceful, but beyond that, it appears to mean almost nothing. Although this need not necessarily be the case there are several reasons for this perception of ballet. These include ballet writing, the attitude of the academy, the issue of pleasure, audience expectations, repertoire and the awareness of ballet dancers.

The form of writing that has been called 'ballet scholarship' to date has tended to be historical or descriptive: it has certainly been knowledgeable and often based upon many years of experience in ballet: without writers such as Cyril W. Beaumont, and Arnold Haskell the body of ballet scholarship would be infinitely less substantial. However, theoretical approaches and willingness to engage with issues of production and reception have been signally absent from such writing, as Lynn Garafola acknowledges in *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* . [16] One of the reasons for this is that there is in dance studies no community which includes ballet performers, historians and technicians as well as scholars. When I interviewed Lili Sobieralska, who has been making costumes for Royal Ballet companies for over thirty years, and is hugely knowledgeable about her own work, she was fascinated to learn about the historical precedents for costuming in the second act of *Giselle* from me. This I knew simply because I had read a book about Olga Spessivtseva. There is a great deal of expertise that could be lost, so much material that could generate really important and engaging writing and dancing, that will either fail to be recorded, or will remain localized within perhaps the wig or shoe department of a company. Communication between the makers, the commentators and the viewers of ballet is currently very limited in comparison with other performing arts and even other dance forms.

The results of my research for this thesis are an indication of the dearth of academic ballet writing. A trawl through the archives of the National Resource Centre for Dance yielded one hundred and seven articles, several books, including Cyril Beaumont's exhaustive 1944 text *The Ballet Called Giselle*, [17] videos, and a bibliography sepcifically prepared for 'A' level students studying *Giselle* as a text. Whilst there were several academic articles included in the 'A' level bibliography, the greatest part of the available material was reviews from magazines such as *Dance and Dancers* and the *Dancing Times*, which have little or no academic content. Perhaps this result was actually more gratifying than I at first felt: in comparison, few dramatic plays first performed on the French stage in 1841 have enjoyed *Giselle's* longevity or popularity. However, Beaumont and others have called *Giselle* the 'Hamlet of ballet' - perhaps not a fair comparison, but certainly one that brings into focus the extent to which other performed texts have been documented and discussed within the academy. [18]

Turning to the New York Public Library Dance Collection, an even larger amount of material material was available - one thousand, three hundred and ninety nine items. This includes reviews, notation, interviews, videos and pictoral material. Even taking into account the American focus of the material - the *Giselles* of Alicia Alonso and the Dance Theater of Harlem feature prominently - this is a wealth of raw data. However, what is still lacking is a body of critical writing about this and other pretwentieth century ballets which is informed by any kind of theoretical superstructure.

Alexandra Carter has précised the patchy theoretical heritage of dance leading to the predicament of the 1990s thus:

> [The] theoretical tradition was sporadic [...] and by the end of the nineteenth century the Victorian moral backlash against dancing prohibited the development of a solid body of serious literature.
>
> Other factors which contribute to the lack of a substantial heritage of dance study [...] include its very nature as an activity of the body rather than the mind and the Western dualism which privileges the cognitive over the corporeal; its population of predominantly women performers and resultant low status; the dubious moral character of any practice which not only involves women but also focuses specifically on their bodies; the lack of a substantial and stable canon throughout its theatrical history and perhaps most significantly, the very ephemerality of the dance in performance. [19]

As a result of these factors most ballet criticism and journalism does not operate within as current a stylistic or critical idiom as criticism of other performing arts - the response has tended to be to focus on description of performance and to side-step problematic theory. A large part of newspaper and specialist journal reviewing centres on descriptions of the physical characteristics of the dancers, and the competency of the orchestra, thus reinforcing those sterotypes that dog ballet. Although this is perhaps inevitable in an art form that relies on musical and visual impact, there is very little opening up of the meanings made available by these media. Jeffery Taylor, for example, wrote in the *Daily Mail* in 1993:

> Three years ago Yulia Makhalina of the Kirov Ballet was a chubby, gifted girl. She returned to London last week a star [...] Last Friday, her figure honed down to a fragile perfection, she danced a 'Swan Lake' of heart-stopping majesty. 20

The quality of newspaper criticism is extremely variable: some of the well known critics have been writing since the 1950s and earlier. This is not in itself a bad thing: there are few enough forums for knowledge of ballet to be shared. However, there are not many ballet journalists willing to take on board modern critical ideas, as one might expect in theatre, film and television criticism.

Addressing the tension that he, like Mackrell below, feels between description and deconstruction in dance writing, Roger Copeland remarks:

> I'm not suggesting that dance writing will benefit from becoming less descriptive (only that it shouldn't *settle* for description). The ideal dance writer regards description as a necessary, but not sufficient, component of the critical task.
>
> Similarly, the ideal critic realizes that theory need not, should not, *must* not, become synonymous with abstract system building [...] The real function of theory is simple: it promotes reflection. [...] in academia, dance writing has leapt from description to the rarefied realm of theory without having passed through the humble, but more fertile intermediate stage of *ideas*. 21

This lack of ideas is especially noticable in most of the writing about ballet. Dance periodicals offer an eclectic, even eccentric range of written responses to dance, and publications are becoming both more numerous and more high-profile. Carter notes:

> The establishment of the Society for Dance Research in 1982 [...] offered opportunities for independant scholars, as well as those aligned to educational institutions, to disseminate their work. Nevertheless, the study of dance in Britain has tended to be fragmented between those whose interests cohere around particular genres and functions such as theatre, social and historical dance. The development of a community of scholars is still an ideal rather than a reality. [22]

Ballet continues to be the least attended-to form of dance in terms of theory and ideas. Publications range from *Dancing Times,* a well-established blend of reportage, history, and local ballet school news, to the *Dance Research Journal, New Dance Magazine, Dance Scope* and the *Drama Review* which encompass a huge range of dance and theatre styles, critical and theoretical concerns. *Dance Now* is perhaps the nearest to being an academic periodical that deals in the main with ballet. However, even this last tends to be complex and challenging when dealing with modern ballets, companies and dance policy, but resorts to mere review, rather than academic analysis, when tackling an older ballet such as *Giselle*. A recent article concluded thus

> The effect of these two new heroines [Sarah Wildor and Leanne Benjamin as Giselle at Covent Garden, Spring 1995] was to take our breath away with the drama of the dance,

> its aching beauty and its capacity to do what ballet does best, to communicate with the soul. [23]

Again, we are faced with the kind of liberal humanist writing which attempts to say much, and ends up saying almost nothing. Indeed, by espousing a personal voice in dance writing, one may be facilitating endings of the sort given above. Because ballet is beautiful, graceful, and gives a certain kind of pleasure, it has been deemed an unsuitable subject for the attentions of the academy.

This is not to say that the problems listed above render ballet an inappropriate text for study by the academy. In his book *The Postmodern University*, Stanley Fogel attacks the attitude of the university, whilst affirming that radical work can be undertaken in university departments:

> The institution, the university, manifests itself for the most part as a static, heirarchized expression of a powerful urge, yet its endurance and occasional vitality as learning's nexus are incontestable [...] The complacency of the academy - comfortable within the framework of knowledge - is my target. Caveat emptor. [24]

Fogel's target must also be the target of ballet scholarship. By introducing ballet to the current canons, we challenge the literary model that dominates the arts academy. Sandra Kemp, in her essay *'Let's watch a little how he dances' - performing cultural studies'*, opens by asking the question 'What would a feminist cultural studies look like?'. [25] Her aim is to imagine an arts academy wherein both criticism and aesthetics take as their model feminist discourse. Kemp puts forward two additions that could, she feels, help to balance out this unequal model: avant-garde films and post modern choreography. The examples she cites are all made by women. I would add ballet to this list. Although cultural studies claims to ask what she calls 'improper' questions, she points to its impersonal style of writing, noting that it remains -

> in pedagogical practice,..firmly locked in the convention of cool, critical reading. [26]

Yet the kind of pleasure that ballet grants both its audience and its practitioners is one that as a rule they do not want to see dismantled by any kind of critical practice. One constantly encounters the sentiment that ballet is unquantifiable: it is 'magic'. In her 1980 book *The Magic of Dance* , Margot Fonteyn wrote (of Anna Pavlova) that 'Genius is another word for magic, and the whole point of magic is that it is inexplicable'. [27] This resistance to the analysis of ballet is rooted in the feeling that to explain would be to take away this magic. Although it is the case that the 'magic' of ballet serves to avert our gaze from the ideologically unpalatable aspects of the form, many attest to the empowering effects of dance's unquantifiable mystique. Helen Thomas details this phenomenon in her essay *An-Other Voice: Young Women Dancing and Talking.* [28] The dancers she talked to often articulated the magic of dance as being the personal space with which it provided them, whether dancing or watching.

Ballet is an élitist form: however, it would seem that the pleasures it offers go beyond those it is often assumed to supply. The seeming distance between audience and action that ballet engenders in its magic does not necessarily make us passive receivers of the form. Analysis of ballet must be willing to take into account those aspects of ballet that fail to conform to academic prejudices. Too often, the pleasure we, as an audience at the ballet, feel as a result of this 'magic' has been mobilized as ammunition against ballet as a site for serious academic study. However, as Duncan Webster has commented:

> In this analysis 'pleasure' might well replace 'ideology', but that should not be presented as a depoliticization of cultural criticism but as a way of addressing not just the pleasures of the audience, but the position of the critic: the conditions of that 'distance' - class, education, 'cultural capital'. [29]

For 'cultural criticism' we could read 'ballet'. By using ballet as not only a text, but as a model for criticism, in the same way that some avant-garde choreographers have included overt references to theoretical practice in their works, we can make ballet's magical distance animate, rather than allowing it to make us passive.

Sandra Kemp notes that arts depatments are unable to accomodate many forms of text, and points to those aspects of art which characterize ballet - emotion and aesthetics - as the notions academics find difficult to deal with:

> Much cultural practice remain[s], in fact, outside the scope of cultural studies techniques, and the issue is whether cultural studies can meet the challenge of those texts that don't fit its literary models, which still ask awkward (and evaded) questions about art, emotion and aesthetics.[30]

We must try to achieve not just a feminist academy, but one that has space for all radical and improper texts and ways of seeing. Ballet has in abundance the elements Kemp describes as absent from scholarly analysis of the arts. In 1991, Camille Paglia gave the M.I.T. Lecture in Cambridge, Massachusetts: she too turned her attention to the inadequacies of the university arts department, focusing on similar 'lacks' in academic feminism:

> there are [...] huge areas that feminism has excluded that need to be integrated within it [...] One of them was aesthetics. Right from the start there was a problem with aesthetics, a difficulty in dealing with beauty. [31]

These qualities may not currently be 'correct', but as Webster has noted, we should

> give up justifying cultural studies by referring back to 'proper' political concerns. [32]

Kemp's final definition of an ideal academy is one that would be able to accomodate ballet, and the strange magical pleasures it offers:

> I want to offer a radical revision of cultural studies in which you get at politics through the aesthetic; and to suggest that, in this way we will achieve a more rigorous documentation

> of the political. I want cultural studies to turn its concern to the things that don't get talked about, and the questions that don't get asked within the field. [33]

One of the reasons that questions don't get asked about ballet is due to the economic conditions of its production. Ballet audiences tend to be loyal to certain companies: over the years they build up expectations concerning the style of the ballet 'favourites', *Giselle* included. In order to maintain audience figures, it is often not financially viable for major companies to present experimental versions of older ballets. When companies were still making many new ballets, this was not a problem; the classics served as a technical training ground and source of education for new audiences. Now audience expectations have become a millstone. *Swan Lake, The Nutcracker, Sleeping Beauty* and *Giselle* dominate the repertoires, limiting dance makers' creativity, and audiences' openness to new works.

The dictates of the profit imperative have exacerbated the perception that ballet is not grounded in the real world. Classical ballet companies, led by the Royal and Birmingham Royal Ballets, receive the lion's share of all state funding for dance. By the start of the 1990s four major ballet companies - the Royal Ballet, Birmingham Royal Ballet, English National Ballet and Northern Ballet - were using 76% of all Arts Council funds ear-marked for dance. The remaining 24% had to be spread across all other ballet and modern dance companies. However, recent publicity and television documentaries (the BBC's *The House*, for example) have shown these same companies to be incapable of taking responsibility even for the most basic book-keeping. Continuing requests for funding leave ballet companies looking incompetent and effete .

The constraints placed upon ballet companies by the expectations of their audiences are reinforced by the working conditions of the dancers. In addition to the predominance of classics, major companies present a rapidly rotating repertoire. Dancers barely have time to learn their steps: very rarely do they have the additional time, or the education, to discover what can be 'said' with those steps. In *The Shape Of Love,* Gelsey Kirkland discussed the problem of teaching an old repertoire to young Royal Ballet dancers in the late 1980s.

> They've only been taught to count and execute the steps, in the correct style [...] But that's not the same thing as finding or expressing the character of the variation [... they] should be taught so the dancer can discover the range of expressive possibilities, if the body is ever to become a voice. [34]

Denis Bonner, the *répétiteur* with the Birmingham Royal Ballet, defends this practice, saying that roles are not perfected in one rehearsal run, but with repetition over years of dancing the same role. I asked whether dancers tend to learn steps without gaining any understanding of their significance?

> Maybe with certain individuals, but people get to know a role as they perform it, and if they perform it over ten years then the performance you saw ten years ago was completely different. [35]

However, in an art where many careers finish at the age of twenty-five due to injury, working on a role in this way is a rare privilege. As a result, ballet can tend to become merely a series of imitations,

> an aesthetic of quotations pushed to the limit; it is an incorporation of forms, an imitation of dead styles deprived of any satirical impulse. [36]

Ballet dancers trained in this country also receive only a rudimentary education in even the history of ballet. It became very clear to me whilst carrying out interviews with dancers for this study, that, although these were by no means stupid people, they were ignorant of the most basic aspects of history and criticism relating to their art. It would be unusual to find this kind of ignorance amongst the majority of actors, musicians, painters or novelists. Obversely, when a dancer does betray an interest in theory, they open themselves to ridicule. For example, The Royal Ballet employed the choreographer William Forsythe to make a new ballet for them in 1995. Renowned for his interest in critical theory and group generated choreography, Forsythe faxed the Royal Ballet, stating that 'choreographically I no longer exist', meaning that he could no longer dictate steps, but wanted to make ballet as part of a collaborative process. The comments of Judith Mackrell, the dance critic for the *Guardian*, reflect both the ignorance of dancers and the antipathy of the ballet establishment towards critical theory.

> The *Independent* chortled gleefully over his claim, [...] and its message was clear - who does this dancer think he

> is, justifying his refusal to invent a few steps with the fancy terminology of post structuralism?
>
> Certainly, we did have to laugh at the idea of Anthony Dowell [Artistic Director at Covent Garden] reading Forsythe's fax. British Ballet dancers aren't famed for their grasp of the finer points of Derrida. But every other art form has accumulated textbooks of critical jargon. Why should Forsythe be so vituperately singled out for Pseuds' Corner? 37

This thesis is a critical response to the problems discussed above. However, it is also a deconstruction of the problems themselves. I asked Michelle Wong, then the education officer at the Birmingham Royal Ballet, what she felt to be the key to liberating ballet from its current situation:

> We're just going round in circles for years and years, because we haven't radically attended to that problem.[38]

In order to attend radically to the problem of ballet we must look at what is overlooked. I have thus far focused on watching ballet as an intellectual and even sexualized process; on the looking as 'gaze' as Laura Mulvey would have it. [39] However, as we remind ourselves that ballet dancing is corporeal, an act of the body, we must remember that watching ballet is also a physical activity: reception is as physical as performance and, tellingly, the pleasure of reception comes from a form or physical restraint. In Chapter Three I discuss the stigmata of ballet - the almost supernatural gifts received in exchange for the physical pain of the dancer. Not only does the audience's experience of watching mirror this in some small way, but what we today regard as standard auditorium behaviour - stillness, silence in the dark, self-restraint, great concentration - is actually specific to Romantic ballet. When the Paris Opéra became a public - and therefore bourgeois, rather than aristocratic - theatre, its manager, Dr Louis Veron, brought a new discipline to bear on his audiences, cultivating attentive behaviour using newly advanced lighting systems to dim the auditorium. [40]

In affirming that watching is a physical act, we note that academic activity is also of the body. In doing so we bring the two activities closer together: we attend radically to their historical separation. Susan Leigh Foster has captured the physicality of such activity thus:

> *Sitting in this chair; squirming away from the glitches, aches, low-grade tensions reverberating in neck and hip ... shifting, stretching, settling, turning - I am a body writing, I am a bodily writing.* We used to pretend the body was uninvolved, that it remained mute and still while the mind thought ... Now we know that the body cannot be taken for granted, cannot be taken seriously, cannot be taken. [41]

5. The Shape of Love

The *Shape of Love* is the title of Gelsey Kirkland's second book, an answer to the horrors and emptinesses of her first, *Dancing on my Grave.* Love, as unquantifiable and unsatisfying academically as 'magic', has recurred throughout my research as the figure, the hieroglyph almost, that represents the gap in ballet and ballet scholarship.

In the final work published in his lifetime, *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes, examining the nature of photography and photographs, throws aside all philosophical ideas concerning aesthetics: rather, he defines the aesthetic as that which we love.

> I then realized that there was a sort of link (or knot) between Photography, madness, and something whose name I did not know. I began by calling it: the pangs of love...Is one not in love with certain photographs? [42]

In Chapter Three I discuss the way in which Barthes' theory of photographic interpretation allows us as readers of ballet to generate an impulse, a form of affect or emotion, that could fill up 'that which is missing'. I realise that by using an indefinable and unacademic term such as 'love' I leave the way open for slippage and confusion that is unhelpful and counter-productive. However, I feel that the specific associations of this word are uniquely suited to writing about ballet. Love is an idea we feel physically, within our bodies: it is an idea we express - or repress - with our bodies: it is associated with - even inextricable from - sexuality and sexual activity; it is both a primordial instinct and a highly codified form of social etiquette. When we write about ballet we should use words that make us remember that dance is made with a sexualized, socialized body. 'Love' does this: it keeps before us all the aspects of ballet that make it difficult and valuable.

Kirkland, in calling her autobiography *The Shape Of Love* , was not coining a pretty but meaningless title. Rather, the whole volume details her search to codify and convey the concept of love on stage - not through a mime, or a gesture, or anything that belonged to the linguistic order of meaning, but through a physical shape alone. Her struggles with the limitations of technique and her own body are analogous to the political and linguistic struggles involved in attempting to negotiate the critical theories that give structure to the raw textual material of English, dance studies and cultural studies. I do not think that this gap I am calling 'love' is some sort of transcendental panacea, a universal absolute. Even Kirkland, at the close of her book, states that

> It was as if that elusive shape I pursued had become outmoded, or perhaps irrelevant, given the needs of the times. [43]

However, I do think that 'love' matters, in a way that is significant to the academic study of ballet, and I will return to it throughout this thesis. More than that, if the study of ballet is to be radically revised, love *must* matter. And equally, if ballet can, in part, offer us the opportunity for the academy to matter, then it has a great deal to offer indeed.

Notes to the Preface

1. The image of ballet authorized by company publicity departments is generally in line with the received notion of ballet - slender women in tutus and so on. Further discussion of images used to publicize Birmingham Royal Ballet productions is made in subsequent chapters.
2. I give a personal example of this tendency on page 19.
3. There is a number of institutions at which this generalisation does not apply. They include Roehampton Institute, Middlesex University, the University of Surrey and the Laban Centre for Movement and Dance. Dance has long been part of the school curriculum in Britain, but until recently has been contained within physical education and teacher training. However, it is certainly fair to say that ballet is not a text commonly studied in university arts departments, perhaps as a result of the popular perception, discussed later in the Preface and Chapter One, that ballet is at once 'posh' and yet not 'serious'.
   Alexandra Carter's General Introduction in the *Routledge Dance Studies Reader* gives many personal and often humorous insights into dance in the academy and education from the 1950s onwards, and communicates the sway that the Laban/Modern Educational Dance movement held over the study and teaching of dance for almost thirty years. My mother trained as a dance teacher during this time, encountering much practice based on Laban's teachings, and reports sharing many of Carter's frustrations.
   Alexandra Carter, ed., *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 1-17.
4. See for example:
   Christy Adair, *Women and Dance: Sylphs and Sirens* (London: Macmillan,1992).
   Helen Thomas, ed., *Dance, Gender and Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1993).
   Judith Lynne Hanna, *Dance, Sex and Gender: Signs of Identity, Dominance, Defiance, and Desire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

5. Gelsey Kirkland, *Dancing On My Grave* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988), p. 9.
6. Kirkland, *Dancing On My Grave*, p. 31.
7. Simon Barker, 'Images of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a history of the present', in *Literature, Politics and Theory*, ed. by F. Barker, P. Hulme and D. Croxley (London: Routledge, 1986), pp. 173-189 (p. 173).
8. The technique, mimetic of flight and etherealisation, whereby the female dancer balances upon the very tips of her toes, aided by specially strengthened ballet shoes, known as *pointe* shoes.
9. *The Tales of Beatrix Potter*, dir. by Reginald Mills, (GB: EMI, 1971).
10. Ian Woodward, *Ballet, A Ladybird Book* (Loughborough: Wills & Hepworth, 1969).
11. W. B. Yeats, 'Leda and the Swan', in *Yeats's Poems*, ed. by A. Norman Jeffares (London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 322.
12. Sally Banes, *Dancing Women: Female Bodies on Stage* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 6-7.
13. Adair, p. 1.
14. Andrew Harrison, 'Competing with Inattention' (unpublished paper given at 'Philosophical Issues In Dance' conference held by The Society for Dance Research at The Place Theatre, London, February 27th, 1993).
15. Evan Alderson, 'Ballet as Ideology: Giselle, Act II', *Dance Chronicle*, 10 (3 1987), 290-304 (pp. 290-91).
16. Lynn Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).
17. Cyril W. Beaumont, *The Ballet Called Giselle* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1944).
18. Beaumont, p.80.
19. Alexandra Carter, p. 1.
20. Jeffrey Taylor, 'The Kirov Ballet', *Daily Mail,* 29th July 1993, p. 39.
21. Roger Copeland, 'Between description and deconstruction', in Alexandra Carter, pp. 98-107.
22. Alexandra Carter, p.3.

23. Ann Nugent, 'Turning again to Giselle...', *Dance Now*, 4 (Spring 1995), 3-8 (p. 8).
24. Stanley Fogel, *The Postmodern University* (Ontario: ECW Press, 1988), p. 14.
25. Sandra Kemp, '"Let's watch a little how he dances" - performing cultural studies', *Critical Quarterly*, 34 (Spring 1992), 36-70 (p. 36).
26. Kemp, p. 38.
27. Margot Fonteyn, *The Magic of Dance* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1980), p. 119.
28. Helen Thomas, 'An-Other Voice: Young Women Talking and Dancing.', in *Dance, Gender and Culture*, ed. by Helen Thomas (London: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 69-93.
29. Duncan Webster, 'Pessimism, Optimism, Pleasure: the Future of Cultural Studies', *News from Nowhere*, Autumn (1990), 96-101 (p. 96).
30. Kemp, p. 38.
31. Camille Paglia, *Sex, Art and American Culture* (London: Viking, 1993), p. 264.
32. Webster, p. 101.
33. Kemp, p. 41.
34. Gelsey Kirkland, *The Shape of Love* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), p. 135.
35. Denis Bonner, Répétiteur at The Birmingham Royal Ballet, speaking in an interview given for this thesis, 14 October1993.
36. Giuliana Bruno, 'Ramble City: Postmodernism and *Blade Runner*, *Alien Zone: Cultural Theory and Contemporary Science Fiction*, ed. by Annette Kuhn (London: Verso, 1990), pp. 183-195, (p. 184).
37. Judith Mackrell, 'Dancing to his own tune', *Guardian*, 22 April 1995, p. 25.
38. Michelle Wong, Education Officer at The Birmingham Royal Ballet, speaking in an interview given for this thesis, 8 September 1993. I discuss the status of interviews quoted in this thesis in Chapter One, and all interviews are listed in the Bibliography.

39. Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen* , 16 , 3 (Autumn 1975) pp. 6-18.
40. Banes, p. 25.
41. Susan Leigh Foster, 'Choreographing History', in Alexandra Carter p. 180.
42. Barthes, Roland, *Camera Lucida*, trans. by Richard Howe (London: Flamingo, 1984), p. 116.
43. Kirkland, *The Shape of Love*, p. 235.

Chapter One
The Ballet Called *Giselle*

1. Introduction

This chapter is an introduction to the ballet *Giselle,* and to the critical and methodological approaches that will be taken by this thesis. Analysis in subsequent chapters relies upon close reading in order to achieve those aims set out in the Preface. Hence this chapter gives an historical and artistic background to the Romantic period, followed by a précis of the plot of *Giselle*. An account of the creation and reception of *Giselle* in 1841 follows, after which is a survey of twentieth century approaches to the story, including that of the Birmingham Royal Ballet in 1992. Next, the position of ballet in dance scholarship is considered, after which ballet's status as a text is discussed. Finally there is a methodological section, focusing on allied texts, theoretical and critical approaches and the status of interviews as they are used in this thesis.

2. *Giselle*: a Romantic Ballet

This section gives an historical background to Revolutionary and Romantic events and ideals, followed by a brief listing of Romantic concerns as expressed in art, and concludes with a discussion of Romanticism in ballet, specifically as demonstrated at the Paris Opéra, where *Giselle* premiered. Although often seen as the perfect distillation, not simply of the origins, aesthetics and philosophies of ballet in the Romantic period, but of all Romantic art, *Giselle* in many ways queries those ideals that had their roots in the French Revolution.

The Romantic period is usually defined as 1789-1848 - the period between France's two revolutions. If Revolutionary fervour gave rise to Romantic art, then by 1841 such fervour was cooling. The start of the period was marked by the storming of the Bastille in Paris by disaffected peasantry, leading to the execution of Louis XVI in 1793, and Robespierre's year-long Reign of Terror. Napoleon was crowned Emperor in 1804, and was defeated at Waterloo in 1815. Throughout Europe notions of liberty, equality and fraternity were espoused, although often more so by the intellectual middle classes than the proletariat. The spread of non-conformist religion in Great Britain prevented Revolutionary ideology taking uniform hold as it had in France, although George, Prince of Wales endeavoured to make the Regency period every bit as decadent as the lives of the French aristocracy.

Underlying these events was the Europe-wide Industrial Revolution which was bringing about massive national transformations, sweeping great swathes of agricultural peasants into the cities to work in the new machine-filled factories. Slums were created and landscapes and social relations changed forever. The last vestiges of medieval feudalism were destroyed, and the middle classes became a powerful force everywhere.

Initially inspired by Revolutionary ideals, many artists and intellectuals were eventually repulsed by Napoleon's despotism, and social concern in Romantic art was directed towards the sufferings of the poor, or less altruistic worries about the threat to old class hierarchies. By 1841 France was no longer being governed by a despot but by the 'July Monarchy' of Louis-Philippe, the 'citizen king', possessed of inherited power but warned to use it in moderation by the Revolution and the Terror. It has been noted by both Banes and Jowitt that compromise and the middle way of his administration are reflected in the ballets of the period.[1]

Throughout Europe concerns were voiced about the place of the individual in this maelstrom, and writings on human and women's rights, sufferage and the condition of the poor came to the fore. The social concerns of the period can be summarized thus:

1. Fear of or hope for class war arising from an organized working class.
2. The rapid growth of manufacturing wealth and thus the middle class.
3. Threat to the political order and the power of royalty and the aristocracy.
4. Egoism and individual expression
5. Notions of unrestricted freedom and the rise of theories of human rights.
6. Fear of impending moral disaster or hope for libertinism with the decline of church power.
7. Mechanization as the saviour or destroyer of 'modern' life.

The resulting Romantic period in art is generally agreed to have started in 1798 with the anonymous publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The ballads were seen to demonstrate an artistic rebellion against the rational, empirical ideas of the Enlightenment and Classicism - that is, the slavish imitation of Greek and Latin reason, form and order. Other key texts include Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), [2] and the *Declaration of the Rights of Man,* in which the French Revolutionaries set out their ideals. Even from the outset it can be seen that the forward-looking concerns of Romantic artists were tinged with nostalgia and very real concern for the safety of their role in society. The key characteristics of Romantic art are as follows:

1. The artist's internal emotions and responses were the central force of the work, as opposed to the externalized, imitative standards of earlier art production.
2. Imperfect humans, as opposed to lofty gods, became the centre of artistic attention.
3. There was a focus upon extremes of emotions, loss of rational control and altered states of consciousness engendered by madness, visions and drugs.
4. Central to art was an admiration for nature as an almost religious force with special concern towards wild phenomena such as mountains, waterfalls and storms.
5. There was a fascination with the supernatural - ghosts, reincarnation, vampires, spirits and so on.

6. Imitation of an idealized form of medieval art and building was common.
7. Idealized exoticism was also used, that is, the 'lure of the East' or the eastern past, or any geographic 'colour'. The period saw the start of middle class tourism abroad.
8. Art became a vehicle for the expression of social and political concerns, to criticize, rather than please, those in power.

Not only did the concerns of art change in the Romantic period, but the conditions of production of art and the status of the artist altered forever. The artist was no longer a craftsman in the employ of a noble patron, producing art that glorified and publicized his master: rather he aimed to be a feeling, observing individual in society for whom art was a means of expression of the self's powerful emotions and beliefs. In addition, the subject matter of the artist altered - art could focus on finding beauty in commonplace subjects, or even upon subjects that were unbeautiful. Gypsies and pedlars may now seem merely twee, but their inclusion in art was considered highly subversive in the early nineteenth century. The events and concerns detailed above are reflected in the ballet of the period, and *Giselle* is clearly a ballet which both dramatizes and problematizes many Romantic notions.

In the decade preceding the production of the first *Giselle* in 1841, ballet in Europe, centring on the Paris Opéra, had undergone several sweeping changes. The combined effect was a new form: Romantic ballet. The Opéra itself had changed:

aristocrats dominated the audiences less and less, until in 1830 the institution shed its state patronage to become a public, profit-making theatre under Dr. Louis Véron. This status was reflected in the abandonment of grand mythological subjects for productions which focused on 'real life'. [3] At the same time, changes were being made to the style of ballet danced at the Opéra.

Tutored by her father Filipo, a new and brilliant dancer, Marie Taglioni, had popularized a style of dancing that was at once softer and more expressive, but also more disciplined and codified, than previous forms. The verb 'Taglionize' was invented to indicate the imparting of these qualities, and her dance clothes were much copied as fashionable day-wear. Taglioni brought a measure of respect to professional women dancers, who had previously been regarded as set dressing to the virtuoso antics of their male counterparts. There were, however, those who argued that Taglioni's ascent signalled a deterioration in ballet standards due to the over-representation of women. [4]

Taglioni brought two especially significant changes to the Paris stage - the use of *pointe* work and the Romantic tutu. Firstly, *pointe* work - previously something of a novelty act accomplished for a second or two at a time - became a technique which, supported by padded shoes and well-trained muscles, enabled ballerinas to depict flight in a way that the acrobatic leaps of their male partners could not.

Secondly, the Romantic tutu became standard dress for ballerinas: it was a mid-length dress, with a white sleeveless bodice and full, bell-shaped net skirt, often with small gauzy wings. Dancers dressed thus frequently represented supernatural creatures of some sort, often the tormented souls of wronged women. Interestingly, Beaumont argues that this dress was designed to conceal, rather than display the lines of the body, and was a break with the more revealing, diaphanous Empire-line dresses that had previously been fashionable in society and on stage. [5] Deborah Jowitt also points to the fact that Taglioni's dresses permited greater range of movement, both of the legs beneath the full, shortened dress (Empire-line dresses would have 'hobbled' the dancer) and of the torso, demonstrated by Taglioni's greater use of bending from the waist. Taglioni's tutu retained freedom of movement for ballet dancers even when fashion deprived women of it in their day-dress, and, by changing the movement the body could achieve, ballerinas trained for themselves bodies that were physically different from other women's:

> By the time corsets returned, the dancers had already changed, and they never looked back. [6]

These elements of Taglioni's style first came together in 1832 in *La Sylphide* , choreographed by her father. This is a tale of a Scottish sylphide who entices a farmer away from his rural community on his wedding day, and into the forest. The ballet ends with the sylphide dead and James, the farmer, grief-stricken, having used a witches' spell to free himself from the sylphide's power. There are obviously close parallels between *La Sylphide* and *Giselle* , but subtle differences are also clear, especially when the earlier ballet is viewed through Sally Banes' notion of the marriage plot., which is referred to in greater depth later in this chapter. [7] It is known that Gautier was present at the first night of *La Sylphide*.

Obviously Taglioni was not the only female dancer to move ballet forward at the Opéra, and it is significant that contemporary critics were much given to ascribing essential qualities to Taglioni and her peers, characterizing both Romanticism and bourgeois attitudes to women. Thus Gautier called Taglioni 'the Christian' and her rival, Fanny Essler, 'the pagan'. It was felt by many that Carlotta Grisi had the ability to dance both styles - she, as the first Giselle, had to portray a very pagan, Essleresque first act, and a Christian, Taglionized second act, as Banes has pointed out. [8]

The other Romantic characteristic to be added to ballets at the Opéra was the use of rustic scenarios, set in identifiable peasant locales including Spain, Germany and France: these scenes incorporated stylized versions of the dress, customs and character dances found in those countries, and were a quasi-democratic substitute for the exoticism of the classical mythology that had dressed eighteenth century stages

Although ballet as a discipline was becoming both more elevated artistically, and more recognizably rooted in the politics and lives of its haute- and petit- bourgeois audiences, ballet at the Opéra also embodied contradictions that prevail to the present day. Music written for ballets was not of the same standard as orchestral works composed for concert hall and chamber performance, and the Opéra itself continued to be perceived as a sexual market place, positioning ballet - and in particular the 'ballet girl' - as sites of dubious morality in the public eye.

The scores used for ballets until the late 1800s were notoriously shoddy. Even *Giselle*, although more musically coherent than some of its contemporaries, cannot fully be excused from this accusation. Scores were produced to the specifications of the directing ballet master, and paid for by the bar. Hence there is much repetition, and often one finds passages out of character with the rest of a ballet's musical progression or geographic setting. Thus should a German-set ballet prominently feature a Spanish ballerina, the ballet master would simply send a message to the composer, requiring a certain number of bars of cachucha, at the standard price, to be delivered within a day.

Jowitt and Banes both refer to the draw of the Opéra as a site of sexual transaction, and the manner in which ballet girls were often codified as whores. Banes, whilst pointing out that all but the most famous dancers would have been under-paid, thus inviting complementary financial arrangements, also indicates that the notion of sexual availability at the Opéra could have been largely male wish-fulfilment. [9] Jowitt is also somewhat sceptical about the reality of the situation, but demonstrates that, whether the *petits rats* (ballet girls) indulged in liasons or not, there was a flourishing cultural belief in the Opéra as a licentious venue, and much that has been written about ballet since has been influenced by this belief. Jowitt points to the exhausting nature of the ballet girl's training and the firm hold of the ballet masters over their time and leisure as further indication of the fleshly fantasy and more restrained reality of the dancers' lives. [10]

Hence ballet, with its inherent contradictions and harnessing together of the ethereal and the carnal, very much captured the spirit of Romantic art. Jowitt refutes the notion that ballet is inferior to other Romantic art forms, and points out that a great deal of the adulation directed at Byron's poetry, for example, both in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is as much generated by his lifestyle, where flesh and the devil reigned, as at the perfection of his writing. [11] Romantic art has at its heart the dichotomy between the worldly desires of its producers and their lofty artistic aspirations, and later Romantic art, of which *Giselle* is an example, certainly tended to incorporate queries about its own early ideals. These contradictions have done much to limit the academic response to Romantic ballet: that it is composed of bodies almost makes too difficult and too immediate the opposing energies harnessed within the genre.

3. The Plot of *Giselle*

The following plot summary is based upon Chapter IV of the book by Beaumont after which this chapter is titled. Beaumont's translation of Gautier's original libretto for *Giselle* (*"Giselle ou les Wilis", ballet-fantastique en deux actes, par MM. de Saint-Georges, Théophile Gautier, et Coraly,* 1841) gives insight into the details of plot, both lost and retained, of that original staging, and the tone in which Gautier wrote: one is particularly struck by his desire to depict a supernatural scenario both eerie and picturesque. [12]

Further detail has been added where appropriate and useful, as various sources indicate that there was more to the plot even of the first production than is given by Gautier. Although the simple structure of the two act plot has changed little over the years, subtle alterations in nuance of choreography and interpretation are very significant in a study such as this.

The following section attempts to give the movements of the dancers as part of the narrative, partly because, as later chapters indicate, the story of *Giselle* is *about* dancing as much as it is told *in* dancing. Should a separate dance plot be required, Chapters X, XI and XIII in *The Ballet Called Giselle* give a detailed breakdown using extensive French ballet terminology. [13] It is hoped that by limiting the usage of such terminology, this thesis will avoid alienating or confusing the reader without specialist ballet knowledge. That Beaumont separates the plot from the steps is significant: more recent theorists of the ballet locate much of its meaning in the co-existence and even collapse of narrative and movement

The action in *Giselle* is split between two familiar Romantic settings: a rustic village, and a haunted glade. These scenes provide the backdrop for the first and second acts respectively. The action begins in the village, with a small wooden hut on either side of the stage, and a backcloth representing the mountain top castle of The Duke of Courland.

The action commences as Prince Albrecht's squire enters, going into the right hand hut. Giselle's mother, Berthe, emerges from the other hut, then, having been presented with a game bird by the forester Hilarion, she exits with him. Albrecht, disguised as the peasant Loys, enters, gives his sword to his squire, and, dispatching him, knocks on Giselle's door and waits for her to appear. She does, and, thinking herself alone, executes a set of steps and mime movements that indicate her love of dance. From the beginning of the ballet, the subject of the movement is not only the action of the ballet, but ballet itself. She circles the stage using skipping steps which include small, coltish kicks. These steps, and their accompanying mime, signifying 'I love to dance', form one of the most important recurring themes. Such a theme, where movement and music reinforce each other, is known as a *leitmotifs*.

When Giselle sees 'Loys', she is girlish and shy, looking away as her hand is held. After a mimed entreaty, and comic cajoling on a downstage bench, 'Loys' mimes his love for her, and she starts to play 'he loves me, he loves me not' with a daisy. Flowers are also a central *leitmotif* in *Giselle*. At one point 'Loys' makes a gesture that implies he is swearing true love, but Giselle covers his hands to prevent this, feeling it to be unlucky. 'Loys' then cheats and finishes the flower to look like an omen of true love, and then they repeat Giselle's 'dance' theme again together. Sally Banes notes the significance of the lovers dancing together:

> That they do the same steps in the same style side by side, seems to imply that they are equal, and perhaps even suggests that there is no sexual hierarchy in this imagined peasant life, for there is no gender differentiation in their dancing here. [14]

When later Giselle repeats these steps alone the illusory nature of their equality is evinced: both gender and class hierarchies are threatened by this dance of theirs, and soon it is divided.

As the lovers kiss, the squire returns, trying to convince his master that he is playing a dangerous game. Albrecht pays no attention, unaware that they are being watched by Hilarion, who is in love with Giselle.

The village girls enter, Giselle dances with them, and, as the local men join in, she brings 'Loys' into the movement. The dance signatures here are based upon traditional European national dances which have been distilled into the 'character' dances often used to add local colour to ballet. Various combinations follow, the lovers forming the centre of the patterns, ending in a group tableau downstage centre. This is broken when Giselle's mother bustles on to chastise her for her antics. Giselle demonstrates the pleasure she experiences dancing, rolling her hands above her head, then opening them in joy. Her mother repeats the gesture in exasperation, pulling her daughter away, making her sit down, as if to convince her that too much dancing has dissipated her energies.

At this point one of a variety of mimes is performed by Giselle's mother. These range from a very brief chastisement to a major piece of storytelling in which Berthe points out that Giselle is infirm, that dancing will exacerbate her condition, and that she fears a terrible fate will befall Giselle should she not heed her mother's warnings. Torn between mother and suitor, Giselle at first moves to her mother's side: at the last moment she tries to run to Albrecht, but is again stopped. Everyone exits, Albrecht leaving last. Hilarion steps out from his hiding place, and enters 'Loys" cottage, where Albrecht's royal sword is hidden.

A hunting horn sounds, and the court of the Duke of Courland enters, followed by the villagers. Giselle's mother bows to the Duke, and sets out tables and chairs for his entourage. Giselle is fascinated by the Duke's daughter, Bathilde, and touches her robe, unaware that she is betrothed to Albrecht. Giselle repeats her 'dance' gesture, and tells Bathilde that she is engaged to a man she loves. Bathilde is charmed, giving Giselle a necklace. Before they repair to Berthe's cottage, the Duke also leaves the hunting horn, so that he may summon his courtiers when required. The stage empties, and Hilarion is left to compare the crests on the horn and sword left by 'Loys'.

A 'rustic' set piece follows, as the villagers perform a series of character dances that culminate in the crowning of Giselle as 'Queen of the Vintage': she is set atop a cart laden with grapes and given a crown and staff of laurel - an image which is echoed in darker circumstances in Act Two. The villagers then execute a series of celebratory combinations: solos, pairs, duets, groups. When Giselle tries to join in, her mother pulls her away from 'Loys'. Again the peasants' dance conspires to include the lovers, but this time it is Hilarion that pushes them apart.

An impassioned mime follows: Hilarion first shows Giselle the sword and she refuses to believe, but the horn is blown, the courtiers return, and Albrecht is recognized by them. He goes to leave with Bathilde: Giselle runs after them, and is shown Bathilde's betrothal ring. Realising the truth, Giselle tears off her necklace, and pulls her hair down around her shoulders. She throws herself down by her mother, but then, hearing her 'theme music', repeats her steps, and unsteadily mimes her flower game. Shaking her head, she suddenly grabs Albrecht's sword: the court and village watch as she plays with it, threatening those who try and stop her, before she is mortally wounded on its point. There is no definitive interpretation of this moment: some directors or ballerinas prefer Giselle to slip - an accidental death. For others it is vital that she clearly stabs herself.

A protracted death scene follows: she gives the sword to Hilarion, falls at the hem of Bathilde's dress, then into Albrecht's arms, who motions for space. She staggers to her mother, then to Albrecht again. Attempting to repeat her signature of steps, she lurches in pain, catching her hands in her wild hair, and runs through the crowd, to her mother then Albrecht, before finally collapsing. The girls gather around her, and Albrecht throws away his sword as Giselle's mother clutches her daughter's body. The court leaves, Albrecht is hurried away by his squire, and the village gathers around to mourn.

Act Two commences with church bells sounding midnight. The scene is a forest: we can see Giselle's grave, and she has been buried in unhallowed ground. Hilarion is alone on stage: he sees a

Wili and runs off, terrified. In middle European mythology, Wilis were an exclusively female species of vampire - girls who, jilted before marriage, died of grief on their wedding night, and who are subsequently unable to rest in peace. Led by their queen, Myrtha, they appear during the night and, in vengeance, force any man who ventures into the forest to dance to his death. Men, rather than blood, provide the life-force upon which they feed. Myrtha calls her Wilis to her, and they perform solos and ensemble pieces that, in mood and technique, form a marked contrast to the celebratory character dances of the first act.

Here the technique is absolutely Romantic: very little character dance or mime interrupt the symmetries of pure technical display. However, whilst Act Two is perfectly in keeping with the steps and style of Marie Taglioni, it provides a *corps de ballet* (or chorus) with some unusually challenging *tour de force* pieces - more the kind of bravura work male soloists usually get. We see the Wilis pay homage to their queen, who dances carrying myrtle branches, which are introduced in a gesture that is a chilly echo of Giselle's daisy and dance motifs. Giselle herself then appears, shrouded like both bride and nun, and wearing a pure white Romantic tutu, contrasting with the time-yellowed dresses of the other Wilis. Myrtha pulls her forward, and then cruelly mimics the courtship dance of the first act. Giselle runs away, and the Wilis follow.

A further flower motif is seen when Albrecht, caped and carrying lilies, walks to the new grave. There Giselle appears: at first he fails to touch her, but they finally dance together, in a slow, *adage* passage where Albrecht lifts her high above his head. She drifts on and off the stage, throwing yet more flowers for him to gather, until she leads him off stage. Hilarion re-appears, and is trapped by the Wilis, who pull him this way and that between them. They force him to dance, pursuing him like a pack of hunting dogs, until they dispatch him, leaping after him. Traditionally, haunted forests required a lake: it was into this that victims were thrown. Early productions of *Giselle* did depict a lake, and sometimes a trapdoor would be used in order to make Hilarion's exit both dramatic and unmistakeably final. In twentieth century productions the lake has become all but extinct. Hilarion's demise may be less satisfying now, but many directors find it preferable dramatically, as special effects are prevented from interrupting the narrative of Act Two.

The Wilis return with Albrecht, but Giselle stands between him and Myrtha, barring the queen from her grave. Myrtha gestures that Giselle must force Albrecht to dance, but their *pas de deux* is an extremely slow *adage* , which again repeats the lovers' motifs from the first act. Giselle is then made to set a faster pace, her footwork, which Albrecht must follow, becoming more demanding and complex. There then follows Albrecht's big set piece - huge fish leaps, rapid beaten steps, and multiple pirouettes. Each time he stumbles in exhaustion, Giselle helps him up, but the Wilis form a cordon, preventing him from reaching the safety of Giselle's grave. As he appears to falter for the last time, Giselle begs first Myrtha and then the other Wilis for mercy - but just as he falls to the ground, a bell sounds. The Wilis shade their eyes from the dawn, and drift off the stage, leaving Giselle to help

Albrecht to his feet. At her grave, they take a few last steps together, and then she pushes him off into the world of the living, disappearing into her grave, where she can now rest in peace. By saving Albrecht she has broken free of Myrtha's power.

For a moment Albrecht returns to lie on Giselle's grave, before walking away. Here again interpretations differ, and no absolute exists. The number of available versions of the ending indicates the subtlety and adaptability of a ballet which tends to be viewed as immutable. Sometimes Albrecht simply stands alone, or finds a lily, and walks toward the audience with it as the curtain falls. In the 1970s Rudolph Nureyev, as Albrecht, lay upon the grave as the curtain fell. Other endings show him less heartbroken - they have him meet Bathilde (as Gautier originally indicated) or the court, glad to be back with his own kind. Occasionally one sees him meet Hilarion (in a production that lacks a lake) and the two men recognize a shared sorrow, in a moment of cross-class integration or masculine triumph. It should be noted that a ballet-literate audience will watch any one ending with some awareness of other endings.

Sally Banes identifies the plot of *Giselle* as conforming to her notion of a 'marriage plot'. This she defines specifically as a dance in which the leading female character's story leads her to marriage within her own social caste, thereby satisfying bourgeois requirements of gender, class and social organization. Not only this, but Banes uses the word 'plot' to indicate that there is a level of conspiracy and planning in which the heroine is not involved. Banes taxonomizes the marriage plot according to its affect and outcome - euphoric and dysphoric - and whether the plot reinforces or subverts bourgeois taboos including fear of incest and exogamy. Obviously such a reading is significant to *Giselle,* and is refered to more fully in Chapter Two: at this point it is useful to note that Banes finds *subversive* dysphoric and euphoric plots in nineteenth as well as twentieth century dance texts. 15

4. The First *Giselle*

The first night of *Giselle* in 1841 generated an unheard-of response in Paris, particularly among those haute-bourgeois young men who, in fact or fantasy, desired a *petit rat* for their mistress. Gautier wrote at his ballet's opening:

> *Giselle* has conquered Paris. The pale and shadowy figures of the Wilis have received a reception undreamed of [...] This ballet will last as long as there is beauty. 16

Parisian ballet-goers thrilled to the near hysteria that surrounded leading dancers, and, refering to the industry of souvenirs and artefacts created by the followers of Taglioni, Essler, Grisi et al, Jowitt has called these women 'the rock stars of the nineteenth century bourgeoisie'. 17 Grisi's dancing in *Giselle* heralded new heights of ballet-mania in the capital.

The creation of *Giselle* was the result of co-operation between some of the most significant figures in the French Romantic ballet: Beaumont gives a fuller history of these figures than would be appropriate here. The libretto was written in the main by poet and essayist Théophile Gautier, with additions by the dramatist Jules Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges. It is thought that Gautier's initial instinct had been to write an entirely supernatural libretto: Act One, therefore, was more the work of Saint-Georges, whilst Act Two was Gautier's. Gautier was inspired by two poems focusing on European folklore: 'De l'Allemagne', by Heinrich Heine, and 'Fantômes', from *Les Orientales* , by Victor Hugo. His desire to use a specifically Teutonic locale may have been in keeping with the art of the day, wherein challenge to and restoration of political order could be enacted, but also distanced by eschewing a recognizably French scenario.

Once the libretto was accepted by Léon Pillet, a director at the Opéra, a choreographer and composer were set to work. Because Adolphe Adam, the composer, knew Carlotta Grisi, who would be dancing Giselle, the work proceeded quickly and with Grisi's talents in mind. Although Jean Corelli, the reliable workhorse ballet master at the Opéra, was assigned to be choreographer, Grisi wanted her lover, Jules Perrot, himself a dancer of remarkable ability, to choreograph her *pas*. Hence, although uncredited on the first night programme, much that is remarkable in the choreography of *Giselle* is attributable to Perrot. However, the separation of Grisi's *pas* from the rest of the ballet serves only to underline the dichotomy between flesh and the spirit that this ballet seeks to communicate. It should be noted that Perrot's contribution was hardly a secret - rather unfairly, Coralli's work received no critical attention after *Giselle's* first night.

The most radical departure from standard practice in Perrot's choreography lies in the fact that he loathed dancing as 'set-dressing' - he held a firm belief that all dance should advance the action on stage in a logical fashion. In addition, he was known for his unusual and democratic choreography of crowd scenes. Here he rejected long passages of *ensemble* dancing and instead made his *corps de ballet* perform a range of different and often sharply contrasting movements, giving a new and realistic feel to such sequences. He was not afraid to buck theatrical conventions of the time, even allowing his dancers to turn their backs on the audience. [18]

This attitude also shows itself in the Act Two combination of soloists and *corps de ballet*. Beaumont notes that

> The *corps de ballet* is never employed as a mere decorative background, but as an integral part of the ballet, sometimes dancing apart, sometimes dancing with the principals, but always making an essential and vital contribution both to the choreographic design and to the development of the action.[19]

Adam composed the score at great speed - between eight days and three weeks. Although this was standard practice, the music was unusually personal and appropriate to its subject and artists. Beaumont notes that the score to *Giselle* is not great music, but that the coherence of the *leitmotif* plot is remarkable. Even this was not entirely original, for Adam's *leitmotif* themes come from composers including Beethoven, a Mlle. Puget and one

Frau Burgmüller. However, the critic Escudier remarked in *La France Musicale* on July 4th. 1841:

> M. Adam's score has been so generally acclaimed that we feel it encumbent on us to make an analysis of a work which is as meritorious as many an opera that has achieved undoubted success. [20]

Carlotta Grisi must also be credited as one of *Giselle's* original creators, for her style set the tone not only for the character of Giselle, but also for the future standard to which ballerinas aspired. Indeed, as the following quotations, from Gautier and Henry Chorley, an English music critic, indicate, our understanding of what it is to be a ballerina - an artist whose grace appears effortless but is founded on great physical endeavour - corresponds with contemporary perceptions of Grisi.

> She has a well set-up body which, although slender and light, has none of that attenuated anatomy which so often makes dancers resemble race horses in training - all bone and muscle. With her, there is never any sense of weariness or hard work, she is happy to dance for sheer love of it [...] in the arts there is nothing so disagreeable as a difficulty obviously overcome.
>
> She has not the dancer's face, with its set smile put on to disguise breathless distress and fatigue. [2]

The following notice from *The Times*, was given after Grisi's London debut in *Giselle* : it too remarks on her effortless style, and also catches those aspects of her personal technique which are now seen as characteristic of the role of Giselle.

> Her dancing is marked by a graceful ease, by a complete 'naturalness', the *tours de force* which she executes are completely without effort, without the slightest appearance of exertion [...] an easy voluptuousness is often a pleasing characteristic of Carlotta Grisi's dancing; the indolent fall into the arms of Perrot, without an effort to sustain herself, was one of her happiest achievements. [22]

This first *Giselle* was a success repeated around Europe, and, in 'bootlegged' version, in St. Petersburg by the Russian Imperial Theatres. In 1848 Jules Perrot moved to St Petersburg as ballet master for the Imperial Theatre. He recreated his *Giselle* there in 1859, assisted by Marius Petipa. It was Petipa who kept *Giselle* in the Russian repertoire for the next forty years, altering and refining the 1841 original: it is his version that is still performed today.

5. Twentieth Century *Giselles*

Although the Petipa version of *Giselle* is still a frequently performed component of most ballet companies' repertoires, there was a long period in Europe from 1860 onwards, when it was viewed as stolid and old-fashioned by the ballet-going public, as was most Romantic ballet. It was only maintained in St Petersburg, and was not seen in the West until 1910, when Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, a group of expatriate Russian artistes and their entrepreneurial leader came to France. They presented the ballet once more at the Paris Opéra, thus preventing *Giselle* from resting permanently in peace. Tamara Karsavina, once a favourite of Petipa's, danced the lead, partnered by Vaslav Nijinsky. The company also included Anna Pavlova, Olga Spessivtseva, Bronislav Nijinska, Serge Lifar and George Balanchine. These dancers not only created what is thought of as modern ballet technique, but went on to found many of the most internationally important ballet companies and schools of technique of the twentieth century.

After the Russian Revolution, Nicolai Sergeyev left the Maryinsky Theatre. He had been the *régisseur* there, and in 1924 he staged *Giselle* at the Opéra using the Maryinsky's notations of Petipa's choreography. His production starred Olga Spessivtseva, who became the first Giselle British audiences had seen, repeating the role, with Anton Dolin as Albrecht, for the Camargo Society in 1932. The Vic-Wells Ballet (now The Royal Ballet) presented the first British ballerina in the role in 1933. Alicia Markova, in her teens, had danced with Diaghilev's company, which had by that time become the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo: she had been inspired by Spessivtseva's interpretation. Markova had waged a personal battle to dance the role for a British audience, as the ballet was considered unsuitable for an English dancer. Once identified with the role, she continued to dance Giselle, around the world, for the next twenty five years. In her book, *Giselle and I*, Markova writes about Spessivtseva, and identifies an aspect of this ballet which will be discussed throughout this thesis. Spessivtseva ended her days in a mental institution in New York State, where she was visited by Markova in 1941.

> A combination of sad circumstances and of loneliness had led to the breakdown of this fragile and rare person, and her sensitivity, which was naturally more than average, had failed to cope with ordinary life. [23]

This could almost be a description of Giselle herself: Spessivtseva has been called the 'real-life' Giselle. She demanded great control over her interpretation, insisting that her first act costume have a short, classical tutu (a departure not since imitated), and that her second act costume consist of a skirt fashioned from a great length of muslin which was wound and stitched to her bodice anew every night between acts. She also used to make up her face in blue, rather than white for the second act. Looking at a posed, studio photograph of Spessivtseva in the Mad Scene, one can see that today's dark-haired, huge-eyed Giselle, with remarkably fluid articulate hands, owes much to her disturbing interpretation. [24] One can imagine that the ballet, its story and its struggle, was written on the body of this dancer. The fact that *Giselle* focuses on a single central female, who exhibits an extreme but realistic character development, has lead to the formation of strong identifications between certain ballerinas and the role's characteristics.

The newly formed Royal Ballet staged their first *Giselle* in 1946, with Margot Fonteyn and Alexis Rassine. This production was restaged and amended by Frederick Ashton in 1960, working with Tamara Karsavina - the favourite of Petipa, who in turn had been assistant to Perrot. The most recent classical stagings of *Giselle* in this country date back to the 1968 production that

Peter Wright made for Sadler's Wells Ballet (the Royal Ballet touring company that is now The Birmingham Royal Ballet).

We can gain some measure of the changes in interpretation that have affected *Giselle* during the twentieth century from the following quotations. The first is from the British ballerina Alicia Markova, recalling her first Giselle for the Vic-Wells company in 1933, under the direction of Sergeyev.

> Today, I am afraid, ballerinas tend to dance their own versions, suiting themselves entirely [...] After learning Sergeyev's version, which was made to fit exactly, to dovetail with the music, then, and only then could I set about becoming the mad Giselle.
>
> Giselle did not die, as one sometimes sees today, by stabbing herself [...] [The sword] never touches her. Giselle dies - so Sergeyev told me - from complete emotional and physical breakdown: in other words from a broken heart. [25]

Galina Ulanova, a Kirov trained ballerina who first danced Giselle in the 1930s, gives the following analysis of her interpretation. Ulanova is noted for having been an exponent of the Stanislavski acting method.

> My Giselle was conceived as follows: a young, carefree girl, in love and convinced of her happiness, experiences a great tragedy and in the end develops into the tragic image of a woman with a great suffering heart [...] I sought instinctively for that something, that 'magic word', that would turn me into Giselle and make me live her tragedy and believe in it so utterly as to make the audience believe in it too. [26]

Nora Kaye, dancing for Anthony Tudor in the 1940s, reminds us that *Giselle* is not a coveted role for every ballerina, and that many dancers fail to find meaning in it, as do the critics mentioned at the end of this section.

> I thought Giselle was a silly girl. I could never understand her. And I thought the ballet was silly. It made no sense to me as a narrative ballet, and I had a great deal of trouble with it. I went to Paris with Margot Fonteyn and we studied with Preobrajenska, because Margot had trouble with it too before she made some weird step with it I could never figure out. I never got it right [...] I liked the rigid, traditional aspect of the mime. I just couldn't bring myself to understand the whole character of Giselle. [27]

Alicia Alonso, who staged her own production of *Giselle* with the Ballet Nacional de Cuba in 1959, saw interpretation as stemming from an understanding of the moment of a ballet's cultural production. This is especially significant as her ballet company has survived and flourished through the revolution in Cuba, giving particular weight to the Romantic ideals contained in *Giselle*, which became Alonso's signature ballet.

> At our company [...] we try definitely to understand the Romantic style, definitely to understand in what time was that ballet done, what is the story about, what kind of person each of them was [...] That role is very special. I think it captures the essence of Romanticism in a very beautiful way [...] At the beginning [...] the Romantic style was new to everyone [...] I learned the style through books, and reading old write-ups. And from then on I've been reading everything about the Romantic era, looking at lithographs and critics of the time [...] not only because I like that epoch, no. I read about all of ballet. Before I do any ballet in my

> life, I try to know the most about it that I can [...] Giselle is life itself! 28

Giselle was, for Alonso and her company, a ballet with much to say about the lives of dancers and their country. This has been the case around the world with the exception of Britain. For reasons which no doubt combine historical influences and the specifics of ballet company organization, interpretation in this country has remained focused on the personal story of Giselle, with little regard for her as a dynamic social construct. Although this may be the case, interpretative concerns had altered significantly in Britain by the mid-twentieth century. Lynn Seymour, a Canadian trained at the Royal Ballet School, recalls the development of her Giselle in the 1960s and 1970s thus:

> When I solved the riddle, her death was acceptable and the ballet, as a whole, became dramatically valid. Giselle, I decided, did not look like the rest of the peasant girls [...] She never cavorted with the peasants; she was never out gathering grapes, or whatever peasants do along the Rhine. Her mother probably brushed her hair for hours. She did not have much fun at all [...] until she fell manically in love with the disguised prince. She depended on that stalwart youth and when she learned of his deception, she simply snapped [...] she did not wish to live any more. And so she killed herself [...] She was not frail but rather a highly strung individual who suddenly committed a savage act against herself. However, it was quite a while before I was allowed to dance that interpretation at Covent Garden. 29

Seymour's interpretation actually tallies more closely with Beaumont's translation of Gautier's libretto than does Markova's:

many of the 'alterations' made by Peter Wright over the years are also in fact restorations.

Gelsey Kirkland, renowned for her extensive and even obsessive preparation for roles, danced the lead in *Giselle* in Mikhail Baryshnikov's 1975 production for the American Ballet Theatre.

> Each facet of her psychology had to be forged from a real quality in my own personality. There was only one way I could translate her character into my body. No details were minor in the physicalisation of such a role. It was always a case of life or death [...] I approached the part of Giselle as a detective. The meaning of each personal moment for the character was a mystery that had to be solved within the dance. The clues consisted of the story, the steps, and the music. The mimed sequences provided the key to the investigation [...] I turned to the mime artist Pilar Garcia [...] nobody at ABT [The American Ballet Theater] could teach me what I needed to know.
>
> It was assumed at ABT that a directorial concept emerged automatically from the steps taught by the ballet master. The emphasis [...] was placed on stylistic rather than dramatic considerations [...] The mad scene was Giselle's attempt, however desperate and deranged, to hang on to her love for him, even at the expense of denying life itself [...] There was a method to the madness that led from flesh to spirit, from the sword to the cross, forshadowing the climax between the two lovers, the shared moment of epiphany that would ultimately allow Giselle to rest in peace and Albrecht to resume his life. [30]

Although Kirkland's analysis seems to bring out the complexities offered to those who interpret Giselle in the late twentieth century, the majority of ballerinas are not afforded the time or artistic freedom to reach this level of nuance: Kirkland's experiences with the role may also indicate that such a level of self-immersion is unhealthy. That dancing Giselle well is a mixture of technical expedience, long experience and sympathy with the director is evinced in the following quotations, taken from interviews with the two ballerinas portraying Giselle in Wright's 1992 Birmingham production. The similarity of interpretations within the company is evident. The first comment is made by Marion Tait.

> She's just this very vulnerable girl, swept off her feet by this man [...] I love to immerse myself in the emotion, but then I've had the chance to do the ballet hundreds of times. I'm completely in agreement with Peter [Wright] 's production because that's the only production I've ever done, and everything he does makes sense to me [...] His comment to me was that on her first entrance I had to find some quality that showed her vulnerability, her frailty [...] she's hypersensitive to everything she does. [31]

Ravenna Tucker describes her understanding of Giselle thus:

> She has so much love inside her for this man, and she's sensitive, and this man comes along and turns the world upside down, and because she's so sensitive she can't cope with the betrayal. I know that's very traditional! I do tend to get typecast in the classics - I don't mind, I love the classics, but I would love to do something that gives people a jolt [...] When you're on stage you don't get the chance to think about the magic or the interpretation or whatever, it's just the rush to get it technically right. [32]

Giselle is a ballet that Peter Wright, as director of the Birmingham Royal Ballet, has returned to over the years: all subsequent Royal and Birmingham Royal Ballet re-productions since 1968 have been staged from the notation of the version he directed that year. He has also directed *Giselle* for a number of international companies, aiming to recreate his definition of the ballet in nations as different as Japan and Brazil. *Giselle* has been the ballet that Wright has used as his signature throughout his directing career.

Modern British productions of *Giselle* have remained fairly traditional, even when produced outside the Royal companies. The Scottish National Ballet's current version was directed by Peter Darrell in 1971, the same year that Mary Skeaping made The London Festival Ballet's newest revision (exceptional only in as much as it is fairly unusual to find a woman directing, as opposed to dancing or teaching, a ballet). The London City Ballet, a comparatively new company, featuring many young dancers, has in its repertoire a *Giselle* directed by the Kirov defectée, Natalia Makarova: its Russian lineage gives it an unusual focus on mime as the catalyst of narrative action.

However, although British *Giselles* have exhibited only subtle variations, the text has proved a rich site of meaning and re-interpretation for ballet companies abroad. Two comparatively recent *Giselles* have made the implicit subject explicit: in Early and Lanslay's 1980 production, *I, Giselle*, for the X6 Collective, Giselle's punishment for transgressing is displaced onto Albrecht, who instigates the transgression, and it is he who goes mad. The

Swedish Cullberg Ballet's 1982 version, directed by Mats Ek, shows Giselle not in a forest, but an insane asylum in Act Two. In this latter the original Adolphe Adam score was retained, but the entire piece was rechoreographed, using a modern variation of classical technique. Possibly more subversive in that it adhered to the Petipa choreography, and that it demonstrated the ability of black dancers to perform white-dominated ballet technique, was Arthur Mitchell's 1984 *Giselle* (also known as *Creole Giselle*) for the all-black Dance Theater of Harlem.

Mitchell set his story among the plantations and bayous of Louisiana in the 1850s. Eddie J. Shelman and Virginia Johnson led the all black cast: peasant feudalism was transformed into the Creole caste system, the Rhinelands into the Mississippi Delta, and the forest graves into a Louisiana Mausoleum. While it retained exactly the themes and structure of the original, this reworking gave *Giselle* a new immediacy and resonance for American audiences. This reworking of the ballet was applauded for giving its audience the sense that it was about *their* past, and not *the* past. The effectiveness of this interpretation only underlines the difficulties that British ballet directors have had in combining the positive aspects of traditional technique and choreography with an interpretation that acknowledges both current issues and the inherent themes of a ballet.

It is worth noting that Mitchell was exploring a scenario that would have been familiar to ballet-goers in the early Romantic period, as Beaumont indicates:

> Bernadin de Saint Pierre's [...] *Paul et Virginie*, a moving tale of slave life on a sugar plantation in the Ile de France [...] inspired two ballets [...] in 1806: *Paul et Virginie*, with choreography by Pierre Gardel [...] and *Les Deux Créoles*, with choreography by Jean Aumer [...] both ballets included a *pas nègre.* [33]

That both ballets included a 'negro dance' demonstrates the assumption against which Mitchell was rebelling - that is, that black bodies 'naturally' conform to certain movement codes. There are those, however, who would argue that there *is* a black movement code, and that Mitchell was justifying his company's existence merely by imitating the values of white society. This thesis does not attempt to judge the worthiness of either argument, but tries to indicate that *Giselle*, as an example of middle-to-late period Romantic ballet, can give access to the discussion of issues that are socially current. It should be noted at this point that there are dance writers who would question the truth of this statement also: Adair and Daly, amongst others, would characterize *Giselle* as a dance which epitomizes a bankrupt and even analytically uninteresting genre, with nothing to say to the modern era, arguing that ballet's treatment of women, as subjects and as bodies, can only oppress them. [34]

6. The Birmingham Royal Ballet's 1992 *Giselle*

This section focuses on the Birmingham Royal Ballet *Giselle* performance of 3 March 1992 featuring Marion Tait and David Yow, using material from the entire production run of the Spring

Season 1992. Aspects of plot, design and production peculiar to Peter Wright's vision are indicated throughout.

The Peter Wright *Giselle* in question was not overtly innovative, nor especially conservative in the way a Russian influenced production would be, seeking to preserve mime sequences, for example. Wright has produced *Giselle* a number of times, with several ballet companies in Britain and abroad. He gave an orthodox reading and presentation: a simple, unfussy production, with very clear plot lines and directorial decisions made where options are traditionally available. There was nothing flashy about this production: however, it was a self-assured piece, made by a director conversant with both the challenges *Giselle* presents, and the familiar expectations of a ballet-literate audience. It was a commercially viable *Giselle* , shown at the company's home theatre, the Birmingham Hippodrome: it was in part funded by an Arts Council Incentive Funding Award, and the entire season was sponsored by the Midland Bank.

In the performance upon which this thesis focuses, Giselle is danced by Marion Tait. Although her Giselle is well known and much admired critically, it is not an exceptional interpretation in comparison with some of the more idiosyncratic dancers that have been seen during recent decades. Tait's style is not particularly gymnastic, like that of Sylvie Guillem, nor is she a dramatic actress in the style of Lynn Seymour - two ballerinas who represent opposite poles in the range of the Royal Ballet style. Rather, Tait embodies the restraint and attention to detail that characterize the English style in ballet.

Tait *was* remarkable in that she was forty-two when she performed this *Giselle*: Forty-two is an age at which most ballerinas, by dint of injury, arthritis, weight gain or family, are considered completely unsuitable for a leading Romantic role - especially one that is both girlish in character and highly physically demanding. Most female dancers at forty-two are teaching or dancing character roles - Giselle's mother, for example - if they are lucky. Some may not even have those options: many dancers are effectively crippled by the heights of technique to which they aspire. For example, the Russian choreographer George Balanchine taught his own version of technique at the American Ballet Theatre and school, and many have remarked on the physical damage done by his style. His favourite ballerina, Suzanne Farrell, needed a hip replacement by the age of forty. [35] Gelsey Kirkland had severe tendonitis by the time she was thirteen. [36] Even the comparatively gentle technique taught at the Royal Ballet School can result in serious back, joint and tendon problems for male and female dancers at a very young age.

Yet, although dancing *Giselle* requires stamina, sustained strength and virtuoso brilliance, plus a well developed acting ability, Tait at forty-two was capable of delivering all these requirements. She has a relaxed flexibility, a fluidity of movement, in her arms and feet especially, that do not require an expert's eye to be noticed, and would be remarkable in a seventeen year old. She also has the strength and 'line' (i.e. correct and precise placement of the limbs and head) that only come with years of ballet class. Above all, she has the emotional and dramatic maturity to make a believable transition from carefree youth, to madness, to self-sacrificing spirituality, in a ballet lasting less than an hour and a half. Marion Tait's possession of these qualities, combined with Peter Wright's confident and experienced direction, imparted not a dazzling departure in style or interpretation, but certainly an unusual deftness and clarity to the plot of *Giselle* as it was played out in March 1992.

Giselle requires its directors to make decisions based on personal vision, the abilities of the available players, and previous interpretations that have inscribed themselves upon the text. The first production decision taken by Peter Wright was to have Giselle's mother, Berthe, played by a woman. There is a precedent, still occasionally observed today, for this role be danced by one of the older male character dancers or teachers within the company. There are other roles in the Classical, Romantic and modern repertoires wherein this convention sometimes operates: the fairy Carabosse in *The Sleeping Beauty*, the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*, and the Ugly Sisters in *Cinderella* have all been danced by men. For a modern audience, the use of 'drag' carries unavoidable allusions to burlesque and pantomime, neither of which is currently held to be a serious art form. Wright is signalling that this *Giselle* is not a pantomime. [37] A great deal of the plot is concerned with Giselle's relationships with mother figures (Berthe, Bathilde, Myrtha), and Tait's acting skills are sufficiently flexible for her to make the connection between these characters significant and subtle, rather than stereotyped. Berthe was portrayed by Anita Landa, the company's ballet mistress.

At the end of Act One, any director of *Giselle* has to choose whether her death is an accident or suicide. Wright unequivocally opts for the latter. When he produced *Giselle* with the National Ballet of Canada, the programme accompanying the performance reproduced part of an interview given by Wright in 1982. This piece is worth quoting at length, both as a means of illuminating the interpretations underlying his directorial decisions, and as an insight into the extent to which a ballerina's interpretations are (or are not) made use of.

> It's a story about love, betrayal and suicide. Surely Giselle must kill herself. The sword is a symbol, half death, half phallus. I mean, if she didn't stab herself, why else would they bury her in unhallowed ground? I always insist that my Giselle's stab themselves in Act One, though, of course, I know that some ballerinas who don't like the idea change it as soon as my back is turned.
>
> Giselle is probably illegitimate. There's no father in the village. Perhaps her father was a nobleman and so her mother went through the same thing. The mother does, to my mind, sense that there's something not quite right about Albrecht.
>
> Albrecht is just out for a good time. He does not consider the consequences of his actions. As it happens he does fall in love and feel true remorse. The experience is a turning point in his life.
>
> As for Hilarion, I've never been able to see him as a villain. He's a sincere fellow but not very bright. He's the local tough guy, and is annoyed that Albrecht has come between him and Giselle. [38]

Wright's comments, above, are rare: directors in ballet, make few public remarks concerning the directorial process, certainly far fewer than directors in cinema or even dramatic theatre.

Although it is clear that directors are powerful figures within their companies, many would argue that this comparative lack of 'cult' surrounding ballet directors is healthier than in the dramatic or cinematic worlds. There are fewer forums for public reflection, and the sheer speed at which ballets are produced tends to legislate against extensive preparatory analysis. In three weeks of pre-season rehearsal a company will rehearse perhaps two or three full length ballets and three one act ballets: with cast rotation, some dancers will be expected to perform a piece only twice in a season, several weeks apart. The overwhelming concern of directors, dancers and teachers is that the right steps are performed to the right music on the right night. Obviously there is character preparation and subtlety of interpretation, but the ballet repertoire inhibits the kind of interpretative process one would normally expect in the modern dramatic theatre: it resembles instead the provincial repertory theatre that flourished in the middle decades of the twentieth century. There are positive aspects to this convention - dancers learn several ballets a year, there is less chance of becoming stale in a role, and the system provides a wide-ranging performance education for new members of the *corps de ballet*. In-depth understanding of a role is based on the cumulative time given to a role throughout a career, however, as in Wright and Tait's cases, and this process is often interrupted or ended by the physical limitations of the dancer's body.

Wright is obviously keen to impose the 'suicide' reading on 'his' ballerinas. He sees this as being central to the experience of alienation both Berthe and Giselle go through, and to the on-stage development of Albrecht. This development begins, in Wright's production, towards the end of the first act: Hilarion (Mark Welford) first attempts to reason with Giselle, but when she refuses his mime, he presents her with Albrecht's sword. Albrecht, danced by David Yow, lunges at Hilarion, but is restrained by the villagers. Hilarion then fetches the Duke's hunting horn: when it is blown, the court reappears. Albrecht, once recognized, assumes a more royal and detached posture. In altering his movement code from that of the virile, virtuoso dancer to that of the *danseur noble* (the classical leading male ballet dancer), he also changes from a recognizibly masculine argot to one that could be codified as effeminate: haughty, ponderous, refined, relying on langorous hand movements and the striking of poses. Signifiers of class and gender are very closely linked in this narrative.

Albrecht kisses Bathilde's (Sherilyn Kennedy's) hand, and moves to leave with her. It is at this moment that Tait, as Giselle, gives a new intensity and exaggeration to her movements, departing from the restrained English style, and thus defying the strictures of that code's 'femininity'. Flinging herself into Albrecht's arms, she is shown Bathilde's engagement ring. For a moment she holds Yow's face in her hands, then, in recognition of the truth, violently turns from him, tearing the royal necklace from her throat and pulling her hair into a loose wild shower at the same time.

Tait is a small, fragile looking woman, but she has the physical control required to make herself seem thrown from one side of a stage to another simply by emotion, rather than by any visible muscular effort. One is reminded of contemporary descriptions of Carlotta Grisi: she appears to be propelled by puppet strings, rather than her own labour. In the scene that follows we are struck by the speed at which she travels, and the distance she covers, when she moves as the maddened Giselle. The movement quality of everyone else on the stage is a complete contrast: they are at once hypnotized and repulsed by the manic and fitful energy that possesses Tait ... each time she falls, they gather round, only to back off in fear as she rises again. Wright has retained Perrot's signatures here - contrast of movement and naturalistic crowd scenes. Rather than appearing melodramatic, in this case there is an echo of the ballet's Gothic antecedents: the fascination of the onlookers at a being that seems to live when dead is tempered by the restraint of the English style that Wright maintains in his *corps de ballet*.

The next passage presents the director, and the ballerina if she is permitted any kind of interpretative licence, the same kind of difficult choices as does Ophelia's mental deterioration in *Hamlet*. The ballerina is required to play with flowers, dance falteringly and even badly, and appear to see and hear a scene other than the one that actually surrounds her, without allowing her madness to become less than picturesque. To dance incorrectly on purpose is very difficult for a trained dancer: it must not look comic, or drunken, and must convey ineffable sadness. Tait achieves this effect partly by dint of her physical smallness; because she conforms to the pathetic and child-like pattern of the ballerina, this precludes her movements from resembling those of an incompetent dancer. In addition she punctuates passages of frantic movement with sudden halts. These interrupt the audience's expectations that ballet motion shall be a continuous flow, alerting us to a breakdown of sorts.

This chapter has referred previously to two notable attempts to make Giselle's madness 'real', by modern choreographers, both of which dealt explicitly with madness brought on by exogamous love. Each endeavours to engage with the fact that insanity is rarely aesthetically pleasing: they eschew the mythology of picturesque insanity for harsh and even offensive images. In the 1992 *Giselle* , the musical structure helps to imply Giselle's madness without very much disrupting the harmonious aesthetic of the whole. The occurrence of Giselle's *leitmotif* theme music helps to reinforce the impression that Tait is not seeing what the assembled cast is seeing. Then, a moment later, Tait appears to 'come to', and recognizes both Albrecht and her mother with horror: in a second, she turns melancholy to violent anger, backing away from the two architects of her heartbreak.

Tait now picks up Albrecht's sword by the tip, dragging it backwards, drawing a circle on the ground with the hilt. She turns Albrecht's weapon upside down: she has turned the pain he has caused her into a magic circle of rage and power. As the others back away in a synchronized wave movement, Tait raises the sword, and clearly, intentionally, stabs herself with it. Again she seems to be thrown from one character to another, then is suddenly halted as pain wracks her body. She attempts to repeat her dance, then in a last burst of energy, runs wildly through the shocked crowds, hands in matted hair. Finally, she collapses and dies. The court leaves immediately, but as the peasants gather around the body, Yow throws his sword far into the offstage woods. He is taken off by his squire, and the final tableau shows Anita Landa clutching her dead daughter, surrounded by the grieving peasants. The court is present only in the image of the castle painted on the backcloth behind them.

The last major production decision taken by Wright, concerns Albrecht's actions at the very end of Act Two. After Giselle's spirit has finally disappeared, David Yow lies on her grave. They are both free of Myrtha's (Sandra Madgwick's) power, yet will have no more time together. With obvious reluctance, Albrecht starts to back away. Finding one of the lilies he brought for Giselle's grave, Yow turns to face the audience, and walks towards them, the lily held out in his upturned hand, in an incomprehending and hopeless gesture. He is still walking as the curtain falls. This ending is very much in keeping with Wright's interpretation; Albrecht's time with Giselle was more than a nobleman's idle dalliance, and this ending represents a turning point for the character, rather than a re-integration into his own caste. There is also a certain ambiguity to this choice, a lack of closure, because it continues to move. Dance is both movement and stillness: Wright has chosen to deny us the traditional Romantic closure of the symmetrical frozen tableau, or the return to the mortal world that signifies the supernatural dalliance to have been merely a dream, but rather to leave us with a single man, still in motion.

Peter Wright's *Giselle* was designed by Peter Farmer. The Farmer designs were made in 1977, and have been used for all Sadler's Wells/Birmingham productions since. In many cases this means that the 1977 costumes themselves, with some repairs and alterations, are in use, not merely the designs for them. The over-extended lives of ballet sets and costumes is nothing new - indeed, as Beaumont noted, Gautier commented that an 1853 production of *Giselle* was still using the original set-dressings:

> The settings of the ballet begin wretchedly to expose the canvas [...] Giselle's cottage has no more than three or four straws on its roof. [39]

A slightly different Peter Wright production, with decor and costumes by the designer John F. McFarlane is used at Covent Garden. Mary Clarke observed in *Dancing Times* that

> John F. MacFarlane's bold and original designs, eschew pretty evocations of Romantic prints - Peter Wright has done many productions in that style, notably the one now in the repertory of his Birmingham Royal Ballet. [40]

Thus in the Birmingham production we see peasants who, if female, are dressed in generic European folk dresses, with puff-sleeved blouses, laced bodices, hair braided over their heads in Swiss-maid fashion, and dirdnl skirts in a range of autumnal colours. The men wear tights, baggy white shirts and low cut jerkins in similar tones. Berthe's dress is more medieval, as is Hilarion's. Albrecht wears tights, shirt and short jerkin, and a huge cloak that is discarded as a sign of his royalty. In Act Two he appears in a black embroidered velvet top and white tights. The Duke's court appear to be wearing broadly Tudor costumes, with the men's dress in particular resembling the Hans Holbein portrait of Henry VIII.

Farmer's designs take their lead from those of Paul Lormier for the 1841 *Giselle* . Beaumont points out that the first court costumes were not new, but scavenged from a number of recent Paris Opéra productions in Renaissance dress - Pillet, the director, was 'a firm believer in economy'. [41] Lormier's original designs are still in existence: judging by contemporary lithographs, ballerinas then as now were in the habit of taking their costumes to a seamstress to have them altered, abbreviated and generally made more flattering. Lormier's costumes were worn until 1853: Peter Wright shares Pillet's belief in economy.

In Act Two the Wilis are dressed in very simple *ballet blanc* Romantic dresses, with full skirts, fitted bodices, tiny wings, and a trail of ivy from right shoulder to left hip. In addition, Giselle has tiny gauze sleeves on her dress. All the women by then have their hair pulled back smoothly into a bun at the nape of the neck - this style was Taglioni's signature, whereas Essler was more given to wearing her hair braided around her head as dancers still do in Act One.

The first set is simple: two ramshackle huts, against an impressionistic backcloth featuring faint trees, hills and a castle. Act Two features a dark forest constructed of flats which jut out from the wings and a more foreboding forest backcloth: dry ice gives the scenario much of its effectiveness. The lighting for the production was designed by John B. Read; he relied on a fairly conventional scheme using warm, diffused colours for the first act, and cold, blueish lights, with greater use of spotlights and pool lighting, giving shape to the dark space of the forest, in Act Two.

Adam's music was played by the Royal Ballet Sinfonia, conducted by Anthony Twiner: this orchestra is the only one playing exclusively for ballet companies in Great Britain, being the resident orchestra for both the Royal and Birmingham Royal Ballet companies.

7. Locating Ballet in Dance Studies

The fourth section of the Preface summarized academic and critical approaches to ballet in the 1990s, and gave an indication as to the fashion in which a revised dance academy might proceed, should ballet be accepted as a viable text, particularly by feminist dance historians. This section attempts to give a brief overview of the history of dance studies in Britain, accounting for ballet's marginalized status, and focuses on the uneasy relationship between ballet and the educational establishment. This section does not attempt to give a detailed history of either pre- and post-1900 dance scholarship or dance in education: should such histories be required, they can be found, respectively, in Janet Adshead's *The Study of Dance* (1981), Francis Sparshott's *Off the Ground* (1988), and the *Routledge Dance Studies Reader*, edited by Alexandra Carter (1998).[42]

One of the reasons for modern dance's over-privileged status in dance studies today is the powerful link between dance education, forged in the early decades of this century. The morally suspect haze that clung to theatrical dancing throughout the nineteenth century rendered ballet unsuitable for inclusion in the curriculum of the burgeoning schools system. A new national order of healthy minds in healthy bodies was being built, the nation's shortcomings having been exposed in the Great War. Decadent and undemocratic ballet had no place in that order. The emergent modern dance forms of the period did not have the same moral baggage as ballet, and were more in keeping with the ideaology of national fitness put forward by physical education programmes. The ideas of Rudolf von Laban (*Modern Educational Dance*, 1948) [43] were particularly influential. The resulting hybrid of P.E./Modern Educational Dance colonized the school gymnasiums and teacher training colleges of the nation. As people - and particularly women - growing up in this educational environment came of age, studied, trained and started careers in academe, modern dance often seemed to be the natural and correct branch of dance to study. By the 1960s and 1970s modern dance formed a comfortable mirror for the ideals of socialist feminism, bringing with it the earnest and worthy stripes it had earned in long service of education, and none of either the difficult baggage of oppressive practices, bodily exposure and fetishistic male pleasure of theatrical ballet, or the bourgeois frilliness of provincial ballet classes.

By the late 1980s, when various disparate individual practices had combined under the banner of 'Dance Studies', becoming a vibrant and divergeant discipline, broadly socialist and feminist, but able to contain almost any number of critical approaches and types of dance, only ballet was still under-represented. Perhaps this is only fair: in an under-funded discipline where resources are limited and precious, ballet, bloated with state funding and still not breaking even, ought perhaps to support its own academic activities. Many of the important and respected authorities in dance writing today feel very strongly that dance studies owes a debt to feminism and education, and must therefore reject ballet as both text and physical practice.

Christy Adair criticizes ballet as an oppressive practice, and posits modern dance as an antidote to it, but her arguments centre very much around the conditions of production of ballet, failing to take into account that the text in performance may generate other meanings than those involved in its making. [44] Ann Daly's reservations about ballet stem from her readings of Laura Mulvey's theory of the gaze: this fails to take into account the difference between watching the cinematic image of a woman and the immediacy of being in the same room (albeit a theatre auditorium) as a powerful, technically dazzling female body. [45] Susan Leigh Foster has put forward the view that the *pas de deux* presents a woman as passive in the arms of a man. [46] This shows a lack of understanding of ballet technique (the woman is a physically active partner, although she may portray passivity), and assumes that ballet is homogeneous: both Romantic and

Classical *pas de deux* can be found where the female partner is either overtly active, or shown to subvert the male hold upon her. This is discussed further with reference to Act Two of *Giselle* in Chapter Three.

It should not be assumed that ballet has nothing to add to the academy: Michelle Wong sees ballet as a text crucial to the education system as a whole:

> I would very much like to see ballets as texts [...] being studied in their own right: not just in terms of 'music and movement' and/or P.E. - where I feel dance has been very wrongly placed - but as an independent art form [...] What is specific to British ballet is relevant to the British education system: what is missing from education ballet can offer. [47]

A further reason for ballet's exclusion from the dance canon is that dance studies has been built up by scholarly people who have enjoyed participating in, as well as watching, dance. Understandably they have therefore included components of participation and choreography in the courses they teach, and the qualifications towards which those courses aim. [48] There is a tacit understanding that modern dance is for everyone and every body, but that only ballet dancers, with their specialist training and specialized bodies, can participate in ballet. Whilst one could argue that non-specialists should participate in ballet, there may be more mileage in the argument that the academic study of dance should not necessarily require physical participation.

Obviously, dance studies has to date gained much from the personal understanding of the physicality and bodily investment of dancing demonstrated by its scholars. However, the assumption that scholars will themselves dance has served to prejudice the academic consideration of ballet.

Dance studies has travelled far this century, but as it consolidates its position as a discipline it faces new problems, as Alexandra Carter has identified.

> The consorting of dance with other critical and cultural persepctives has, undoubtedly, enriched the field of study but it has also given rise to much self-reflection. Has too much dancing with strangers resulted in not just increased popularity but an unwelcome promiscuity? [...] Are there analytical strategies which are necessary for the study of dance, or are they merely sufficient, depending on one's intent. Dance can be used to support a pre-existing argument or paradigm but the danger can arise of losing sight of its specificity when dealing with its generality. (A *prima facie* case here is feminist studies, wherein all ballerinas are seen to represent the sylph or white-gauzed figure, a misinterpretation which negates not only the variety of the Romantic period in dance but also 90 per cent of the remaining past and current repertoire.) [49]

It is to be hoped that a fuller, less prejudiced representation of ballet in the dance studies canon would go some way to meeting Carter's concerns, bringing with it both discipline and precision, and the capacity to make a significant addition to the academy's understanding of narrative dance's antecedents, and the theoretical approaches dance can support.

Although no-one would argue that dance studies is a major force in the academy yet, it is certainly now a significant discipline. Carter, in a neat theatrical metaphor, describes the situation thus:

> Instead of being under the traditional pedagogic, historical or anthropological spotlights, the study of dance is now revealed in all kinds of theoretical sidelights, uplights, downlights and overall washes. Sometimes it leaves its disciplinary stage altogether, performing in new spaces. The scholar/researcher/student may promenade, constructing all kinds of meaning within the parameters of their chosen perspective. The very self-reflexivity of dance studies today is a sign of its confidence, maturity and on-going vitality. [50]

8. Using Ballet as a Text

The decision to use ballet as a text for academic study throws up a range of problems. Many of these are addressed in the course of this thesis. This section, however, focuses on the two most immediate concerns facing the ballet academic. Firstly, ballet is not a stable text: establishing a shared, authoritative version of a ballet which manages to encompass all aspects of that ballet is very difficult. Secondly, the positioning of the female body in ballet further undermines the unity of the text because the dynamic, attention-grabbing strength of the ballerina is so often in opposition to the text's overt intentions. In both cases the result of these problems is that the theories of text and of looking to which one would usually turn in approaching the performing arts simply do not work when enacted upon ballet.

The response of this thesis to ballet's textual instability is to focus on very specific aspects of Giselle's textual range, and to work within a flexible, permissive definition of textuality.

Agnes de Mille stated that dance is 'written on the air', [51] and indeed, the primary texts that constitute any ballet are both numerous and, often, fleeting. For *Giselle* alone these include the libretto, the score, versions of the score used by different companies, Benesh or Laban dance notation - neither of which is able fully to record all aspects of on-stage movement (Benesh is used at the Birmingham Royal Ballet), descriptions of mime written longhand, possibly videos, as productions (Peter Wright's *Giselle*, for example, which will be repeated for up to thirty years), as interpretations (Ravenna Tucker and Marion Tait's Giselles will be choreographically different as a result of style, interpretation, and physiognomy), as individual performances, as film footage and on video, and as impressions in the minds of audience members

Sally Banes points to the reliance of dance texts on human memory, sating that 'Authenticity is difficult, if not impossible, to verify in dance history'. [52] Recent advances in technology have made the situation a little easier and reliable video archives and commercially available video films give students of dance something approaching stable shared texts. It should be remembered that, unlike company archive videos, commercial videos are usually edited, so the viewer does not have an auditorium view, but rather shares the director and editor's gaze.

This thesis relies upon Birmingham Royal Ballet's own pneumatic archive video of the dress rehearsal of *Giselle* from the Spring season of 1992, featuring the same principals as the public performance of 3 March, 1992, and upon notes taken at that performance. Although they are very similar, there is a shortfall even between these two performed events. [53] In addition, a range of commercial video sources have been used, and these are listed in the Bibliography.

Beyond the attempt to use a video recording as a stable text, dance critics and historians simply 'make the best guess we can about what the dance is (or was)' [54] This statement is not as unacademic as it may at first sound. Historians who take on board the ideas of historiography now work within the notions that our access to the past will always be partial, that attempts to reconstruct it will always be in some part inaccurate, and that human desire and ego will impinge on the accuracy of any reconstruction. If one adds to these caveats a flexible definition of textuality itself, the ballet academic can then attempt work which goes beyond description, but which is also academically licit.

One definition of textuality which is sufficiently permissive to contain ballet is that put forward by Roland Barthes in *Image-Music-Text.* Barthes's definition begins by rejecting the value judgement of texts on chronological grounds, which has tended to marginalize ballet as a serious text.

> 1. The Text is not to be thought of as an object that can be computed. It would be futile to separate out materially works from texts. In particular, the tendency must be avoided to say that the work is classic, the text avant-garde; it is not a question of drawing up a crude honours list in the name of modernity and declaring certain literary productions 'in' and others 'out' by virtue of their chronological situation: there may be 'text' in a very ancient work, while many products of contemporary literature are in no way texts. The difference is this: the work is a fragment of substance, occupying a part of the space of books (in a library for example), the Text is a methodological field.

Nineteenth century ballets, by dint of the bodily contradiction between plot and physicality call up a methodological field: they invite criticism and comparison. The methodology of this thesis is discussed in the following section. Barthes continues:

> 2. In the same way, the Text does not stop at (good) Literature; it cannot be contained in a hierarchy [...] What constitutes the Text is, on the contrary (or precisely), its subversive force in respect of the old classifications.

Barthes here sums up the main aim of this thesis - to show *Giselle* as a text to be a 'subversive force in respect of the old classifications.' In the fourth section of his definition of a text, Barthes refers to the plurality of the text, which has already been shown to be a characteristic of *Giselle*.

> 4. The Text is plural. Which is not simply to say that it has several meanings, but that it accomplishes the very plural of meaning: an *irreducible* (and not merely acceptable) plural.

> The Text is not a co-existence of meanings but a passage, an overcrossing; thus it answers not to an interpretation, even a liberal one, but to an explosion, a dissemination.

Barthes also takes into account another feature of ballet which has previously given cause for criticism: that it is an object of conspicuous consumption, rather than art for art's sake. Barthes frames the intended consumption of a text as vital to a signifying process which includes reading and does not over-privilege producing:

> 6. The work is normally the object of consumption; no demagogy is intended here in referring to the so-called consumer culture but it has to be recognised that today it is the 'quality' of the work (which supposes finally an appreciation of 'taste') and not the operation of reading itself which can differentiate between books: structurally, there is no difference between 'cultured' reading and casual reading in trains. The Text (if only by its frequent 'unreadability') decants the work (the work permitting) from its consumption and gathers it up as play, activity, production, practice. This means that the Text requires that one try to abolish (or at the very least diminish) the distance between writing and reading, in no way by intensifying the projection on the reader into the work but by joining them in a single signifying practice.

Barthes final definition is again highly pertinent to ballet, and would sit ill with those who have sought to exclude ballet from the dance canon. He posits pleasure, and particularly sexually defined pleasure - *jouissance* - as his primary textual approach. Barthes's notion of 'the text' fits ballet, the watching of which is so influenced by a response of pleasure at eroticized bodies (be this response acknowledged or not), perfectly. Beyond this, Barthes asserts that textuality only exists when a textual event and a scholarly event - that is, academic writing - co-exist:

> 7. This leads us to pose (to propose) a final approach to the Text, that of pleasure. I do not know whether there has ever been a hedonistic aesthetics [...] Certainly there exists a pleasure of the work [...] As for the Text, it is bound to *jouissance*, that is to a pleasure without separation [...] the Text is that space where no language has a hold over any other, where languages circulate.
>
> A Theory of the Text cannot be satisfied by a meta-linguistic exposition: the destruction of meta-language, or at least (since it may be necessary provisionally to resort to meta-language) its calling into doubt, is part of theory itself: the discourse on the Text should itself be nothing other than text, research, textual activity [...] The Theory of the Text can only coincide with a practice of writing. [55]

The second major problem of ballet as text, as identified earlier in this section, is that of the female dancing body. Dance academics have tended to align themselves with readings generated by existing theories of narrative or the gaze when approaching nineteenth century ballet. This is unfortunate, because ballet has, as a result, been dismissed and condemned as a series of stories about weak, oppressed, diminished women, or as an arena for fetishistic male viewing. This is inaccurate, and does great disservice to ballerinas who have been powerful participants in ballets, regardless of the suggestions of plot. Hence:

> Privileging plot descriptions over performance descriptions, however, overlooks the most crucial aspect of dance. It is, after all, a live, interpretive art. It is not fixed

> on the page, nor can all its meanings be accurately conveyed through verbal means. And bodies can impart different meanings - sometimes diametrically opposed meanings - than words suggest.
>
> The issue of looking at a plot in relation to performance has enourmous consequences for interpreting representations of women in choreography. The plot may verbally describe a female character as weak or passive, while the physical prowess of the dancer performing the role may saturate it with agency. Thus, even dances with misogynist narratives or patriarchal themes tend to depict women as active and vital. [56]

Taking this argument further, Banes turns to opera studies. She rejects Catherine Clément's 'contention that operas are mysoginist because their plots so often kill off women', and Laura Mulvey's 'theory of the "scopophilic ideology"', and instead refers to Carolyn Abbate, who has asserted that women singing opera generate meaning that opposes plot by the incredible power of their voices:

> Listening to the female singing voice is a more complicated phenomenon. Visually the character singing is the passive object of our gaze. But, aurally, she is resonant: her musical speech drowns out everything in range, and we sit as passive objects, battered by that voice. As a voice she slips into the "male/active/subject" position [...] and stands before us having wrested the composing voice away from the librettist and the composer. [57]

Banes then argues that Abbate's theory is pertinent to dance and in particular to nineteenth century ballet. The sheer strength and brilliance and physicality of the ballerina overwhelms all other aspects of the ballet text and commands the audience to participate in her bodily narrative. In ballet especially

> a dancer may more easily "re-choreograph" her own part. Indeed, especially in the nineteenth century, prima ballerinas were often known to interpolate their own renowned specialty "routines" wholesale into the choreography of ballets written by men. [58]

Banes sees this approach as an antidote to the twin evils of 'celebrationism' and 'the tiresome refrain of *misérabilism*' which dog feminism, and especially feminist studies of dance. Instead Abbate's ideas, when played out on ballet, remake those problems of textuality (discussed earlier in this section) reappear as powerful arguments in favour of the academic study of ballet texts. Those critical theories which, although unfamiliar in the dance studies arena, complement the Abbate/Banes approach, are discussed in the next section.

9. Methodology

This section deals with the methodology of the two chapters that follow, and with the texts and critical approaches used in those chapters. In particular, an attempt is made here to acknowledge and justify departures from standard academic practice, and the use of interviews.

The general structure of this thesis, and the choice of *Blade Runner: The Director's Cut* and *SEX* as touchstone texts for furthering discussion of plot and movement, have been attended to in the Preface. The decision to separate discussion of plot and movement may seem odd in the light of statements in the Preface and earlier in this chapter indicating that current thinking on dances collapses the two together, allowing that movement can subvert an otherwise misogynist narrative. The impulse behind this decision lies with the fact that plot and movement in Romantic ballet do not necessarily share a cultural history.

The stories told on the Romantic stage were derived from folk tales which, although they often depict strong, envoiced women, essentially uphold taboo and reinforce male-authorized social order. *Blade Runner* is a Gothic fantasy text which makes some powerful gestures towards subversion but ultimately tends reinforces traditional perceptions of gender, partly due to the narrative genre to which it belongs, but mainly because it has so quickly been accepted into the science fiction canon. The act of dancing, however, has been seen to belong to a more marginalized tradition, that of the eroticized female body, having much in common with perceptions of pornography and prostitution. In these environments the female body is seen as both a site of power and threat to social order, whilst also being constructed out of and for fetishized male desire. *SEX*, as an example of subversive pornography, was widely and willfully misread when it was published. This thesis suggests that dancing in Romantic ballet has been misread in the same way by similar sections of the academy, not in the ludic, subversive tradition of misreadings by Merck, Barthes, Eco and others, but as an attempt to limit the avalable meanings of a text which did not fit the existing wisdom.

Both *Blade Runner* and *SEX*, whilst often being viewed as normative within their respective genres (dystopian fiction and pornography), actually offer a challenge to the assumptions of those genres which has tended to be effaced or subsumed into the genre by subsequent criticism. The reasons for these texts' difference is discussed in the next two chapters, and makes these texts particularly approproate in discussing *Giselle*, which has a similar history of difference and subsumption

It should be noted all texts have been chosen for the light they shed upon genre, plot, movement and critical response as they exist in relation to *Giselle*. This thesis does not intend to argue that any of these other texts are necessarily good art, but rather that they are useful to a more permissive reading of *Giselle*.

Hence there are three significant departures from standard academic practice in dance studies within this thesis. Firstly, several standard approaches to the study of dance have been rejected, partly because they are more suitable to modern dance than ballet, and partly because they sit ill with the positioning of this thesis within the discipline of English Literature. As a general rule, theoreticians who have generated their own taxonomies within the discipline of dance studies have been referred to less than those for whom dance was not an intended textual target. This, again, is not a value judgement against theorists of dance aesthetics or phenomenology, but merely an acknowledgement of the fact that such theorists have tended to write with modern dance in mind, and that their critical approaches are not geared towards the process Copeland describes, of finding ideas between description and 'abstract system building'. To generate an exhaustive aesthetics or phenomenology of Romantic ballet is not within the purview of this thesis.

Secondly, non-academic sources have been quoted. This strategy is used partially to indicate breadth and strength of response to a text, and partly in the spirit of those individuals whose highly personal, subjective, and popular writing on ballet has, historically, constituted ballet scholarship. Where responses to a certain text were in the public domain, attempts have been made to back this up with academic sources. In addition, dancers' autobiographies and 'coffee table' books have been referred to. Again, these are not a standard academic resource, but have proved useful in illuminating approaches to interpreting *Giselle* , and details of training and educational background. It should be remembered that most of these texts were prepared with an entertainment market in mind, and that some will have been written with the assistance of 'ghost writers'. Thus quotations attributed to certain dancers - for example Margot Fonteyn, in *The Magic of Dance* - may not necessarily constitute that dancer's personal opinion. Wherever possible, ghost writers have been identified in bibliographic details.

Thirdly, critical theory not intended for dance has been enacted upon *Giselle* , which raises questions of appropriateness and match. In choosing to compare a ballet with a film and a book of photographs, and in focusing on the reception of these objects, one has to question whether the theory being transferred is really appropriate, as neither film nor photography presents a live, breathing body as its subject?

One response would be to note that the methodology of this thesis is impressionistic. The approach is not scientific: it is not argued that any one theory can account for all phenomena on stage or in reception. There is a similarity, but not an identical match, between looking at ballet, and at film and photographs. Critical theory is not used here to contain *Giselle* , but to shed light upon glimpses of the ballet. Ballet watching has more in common with film - sitting in the dark, being amazed by bright superhuman bodies in motion, and with photographs - captured moments of stillness made of light which we know rationally were never still - than it does with theories of modern dance which are critically licit, which account for all the phenomena before us, but which are less attuned to the problems and the spirit of ballet.

The intention is to generate ideas, not, in Copeland's words, to build abstract systems: reflection upon bright moments leads to the circulation of languages: to ideas. [59] It is not within the project of this thesis to taxonomize the whole of ballet, but rather to test certain theories on a single ballet.

The methodology of this thesis perhaps conforms best to the idea of 'travelling theory'. Edward Said, in *The World, the Text and the Critic* (1983) identified this phenomenon, stating

> Like people and schools of criticism, ideas and theories
> travel - from person to person, from situation, from one

> period to another [... theory is] to some extent transformed by its new uses, its new position in time and place. 60

Critical methods which were born and practised in certain disciplines have travelled to the site of *Giselle* . This is particularly appropriate to Romantic ballet, which was itself a form of travelling theory, taking and relocating variant styles and narratives in the textual nexus of *Giselle.* If one returns to Beaumont, one notes that the makers of *Giselle* themselves travelled Europe and the world in a manner unprecedented for members of the petit bourgeoisie/proletariat in the early nineteenth century. 61

It is acknowledged that the espousal of travelling theory brings with it new methodological problems. To many theorists 'travelling theory' is a perjorative term which connotes a random shoplifting which has little regard for match between the theory and the discipline or text to which it is applied. This is especially a concern in dance studies, which has moved from utilizing the theories of other disciplines to generating its own theoretical structures. The anxiety that travelling theory is a form of cultural imperialism which impoverishes the innapropriate disciplines upon which it is enacted is now at the forefront of dance studies, at a time when the dance academy is keen to become more critically autonomous and is inderstandably wary of any association with strategies of imperialist appropriation.

In the light of the concerns articulated above, the best use of travelling theory is a highly specific one: the theories chosen work upon *Giselle* because it is a Romantic text and a ballet text: the match of travelled theory and text is careful, and nowhere is it argued that film, photographic or any other theory used in this thesis is necassarily appropriate to all of dance or even to all of ballet.

As indicated earlier, interviews were used as part of the research for this thesis. What follows in an account of the status of those interviews, and their significance, even when unquoted, within the text.

The interviews carried out for this thesis were done so in line with the school of sociological thought which believes that attitude and response cannot be seen as scientifically measurable, but that interviews are none the less valuable if the data is handled correctly, and with the kind of careful method found in the sciences. The interviews used here could be described as 'exploratory' or 'free-style' interviews, rather than standardized forms used for, say, market research. Although the quesionnaires used were perhaps not 'designed' in the sense that a sociologist would recognise, there was a pattern of design, data collection and qualitative data analysis that remained the same for all the interviews. The methodology used could be described as falling between the disciplines of sociology and English.

The interview pattern used was as follows: an initial, pilot discussion was carried out with Michelle Wong, the education officer at the Birmingham Royal Ballet, identifying the project of this thesis, and the individuals she felt could most help with that project. These concerns were then re-worded in a more formal interview which was sent to Ms Wong prior to her interview. This second interview was taped and transcribed before further interview questions were sent to dancers and staff. Everyone interviewed had access to the questions intended for them prior to their interview being taped. This second round of interviews was transcribed, and copies of transcripts were sent to the Birmingham Royal Ballet for viewing by the interviewees. [62]

The questions themselves were of a fairly general nature: 'How do you see the character of Giselle?', 'Do you feel you have enough time to prepare for a role?', 'Has your training prepared you for the work you do in the company?', 'Is the company outreach programme important to you?' Each interview was prefaced with an explanation of the intentions of this thesis, and with the checking of details such as training and career background, partly as a means of putting the interviewee at ease.

Very few responses were other than would be expected, and there was tremendous match within the company, both in terms of training, and in attitude to interpretation. As a result, few quotations have been included in the body of the text. However, one of the reasons sociologists consider interviews so important is that they are a good form of initial reseach, opening up avenues of interest. The interviews carried out for this thesis can be seen as preliminary investigations used to determine more specifically the route this research would take. The overwhelming response to the interviews as a whole was that academic reseach was a good thing, that the dancers themselves were pleased to talk about their work and ideas, and that some were even kind enough to make themselves late for class out of interest in this project. Whilst specific quotations may not pepper this text, the voices of the dancers and staff of the Birmingham Royal Ballet are represented throughout in the form and direction of this work, and also in this text's enthusiasm for the pleasures of ballet.

Notes to Chapter One

1. Banes, p. 24.
Deborah Jowitt, 'In pursuit of the sylph: ballet in the Romantic period', in Alexandra Carter, p. 203.
2. Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975).
3. Beaumont, pp. 9-17.
4. Théophile Gautier, quoted in 'A Quintessential Romantic Ballet', *Birmingham Royal Ballet Spring Season 1992 Programme* , by Marian Smith (London: Royal Opera House Covent Garden Limited, 1992), 9-12 (p. 9).
5. Beaumont, p. 16.
6. Jowitt, p. 208.
7. Banes, pp. 13-23.
8. Banes, p. 25.
9. Banes, p. 38-39.
10. Jowitt, pp. 212-213.
11. Jowitt, p. 204.
12. Beaumont, pp. 39-52.
13. Beaumont, pp. 85-102, 109-119.
14. Banes, p. 26.
15. Banes, pp.5-7.
16. Ivor Guest, *Gautier on Dance: Théophile Gautier selected, translated and annotated* (London: Dance Books, 1986), p. 95.
17. Jowitt, p. 212.
18. Beaumont, p. 36.
19. Beaumont, p. 90.
20. Beaumont, p. 57.
21. Beaumont, p. 72.
22. Beaumont, p. 73.
23. Alicia Markova, *Giselle and I* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1960), p. 25.
24. Beaumont, pp. 45, 67, 103, 121.
25. Alicia Markova, *Markova Remembers* (London: Hamish Hamilton,1986), p. 46.

26. Albert Kahn, *Days With Ulanova* (London: Collins, 1962), p. 54.
27. Barbara Newman, 'Dancers Talking about Performance', in Alexandra Carter, pp. 57-58.
28. Newman, pp. 58-59.
29. Lynn Seymour, *Lynn* (London: Granada, 1984), pp. 120-121.
30. Kirkland, *Dancing on my Grave*, p. 157.
31 Marion Tait, speaking in an interview given for this thesis, 7 November 1993.
32. Ravenna Tucker, speaking in an interview given for this thesis, 21 October 1993.
33. Beaumont, p. 12.
34. Adair, *Women and Dance*, pp. 82-118.
    Ann Daly, 'The Balanchine Woman: Of Hummingbirds and Channel Swimmers', *The Drama Review*, Vol. 31, 1 (Spring 1987), pp. 8-21.
35. Kirkland, p. 35.
36. Suzanne Farrell with Toni Bentley, *Holding on to the Air* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p. 281.
37. Although the use of drag can be interpreted as a radical critique of gender (discussed further in Chapter Three), Wright's rejection of drag as a dramatic strategy is a means of avoiding resonances with the modern Christmas pantomime and its camp dame character.
38. Peter Wright, *National Ballet of Canada Giselle Programme*, (Toronto, Canada: National Ballet of Canada, 1982), p. 17.
39. Beaumont, p. 60.
40. Mary Clarke, 'Covent Garden's *Giselle*', *Dancing Times* March 1992), 528-529 (p. 528).
41. Beaumont, p. 65.
42. Janet Adshead, *The Study of Dance* (London: Dance Books, 1981).
    Francis Sparshott, *Off the Ground: First Steps to a Philosophical Consideration of Dance* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988).
    Alexandra Carter, ed., *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader* op.cit.

43. Rudolph von Laban, *Modern Educational Dance* (London: Macdonald & Evans, 1948).
44. Adair, pp. 13•17, 82-118.
45. Daly, pp. 8-21.
46. Susan Leigh Foster, ed., *Corporealities: Dancing Knowledge, Culture and Power* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 1-24.
47. Michelle Wong, speaking in an interview given for this thesis, 8 September 1993.
48. The Certificate of Secondary Education in Dance was introduced in 1966. One can now study dance at General Certificate of Education 'Ordinary' and 'Advanced' level, as B. Tech.; as Access and Foundation courses; as a Higher National Diploma; entirely or as modules on undergraduate or portgraduate degree courses, and as research degrees of M. Phil and Ph. D. (Alexandra Carter, p. 17.)
49. Carter, p. 12.
50. Carter, p. 12.
51. Banes, p. 7.
52. Banes, p. 8.
53. One further problem is posed by the publicity material generated by the Birmingham Royal Ballet. While the consumption of the texts enables its textuality to be asserted, as later quotations from Barthes demonstrate, the demands of publicity are such that the most photogenic dancers are used to sell a ballet. As in any other production run, there were several casts performing the *Giselle* in question. However, the posters circulated featured Ravenna Tucker and Joseph Cipolla. Tucker is dark-haired and wide-eyed, and conforms to the popular image of Giselle: Cipolla is an American dancer held to be the company 'heart-throb'. An audience entering the Birmingham Hippodrome to see Tait and Yow would have the ghost image of Tucker and Cipolla dancing on their retinas even if only from the posters in the crush bar. Although this unavoidable plurality of even the most simple unit of performance means that *Giselle* is difficult to study, it also reinforces the textuality of the ballet according to Barthes's schema, discussed in the seventh section of this chapter.

54. Banes, p. 8.
55. Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, ed. and trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1979), pp. 155-64.
My use of quotations from Barthes's *Image-Music-Text* is intentionally partial. This should not be construed as an attempt to decontextualize certain passages in order to serve the ends of this thesis. The intention is to set up a clear, usable methodological field in which to place *Giselle* . Those passages which have been excised do nothing to contradict the statements included, but are rather reinforcements of my inclusions, written in a more dense, theoretical and, for the purposes of this thesis, unwieldy style. In the same way that certain aspects of Freud and Lacan are more useful to clinical psychologists than to students of literature, those parts of *Image-Music-Text* I have left out better serve the study of literary theory than the study of *Giselle* .
56. Banes, pp. 8-9.
57. Banes, p. 9. quoting from Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. ix.
58. Banes, p. 10.
59. Copeland, p. 106.
Barthes, *Image-Music- Text* , p. 163.
60. Edward Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic* (London: Vintage, 1983), pp. 226-7.
61. Beaumont gives many examples of the international travels of Perrot, Grisi et al in *The Ballet Called Giselle* , and indicates that, rather than making 'whirl-wind tours', dancers and choreographers often set up home in countries other than their own, reinforcing the argument that there was a cross-fertilization of techniques and narratives.
62. C. Robson, *Real World Research: A Resource for social scientists and practitioner-researchers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 227-231.

Chapter Two
Plot: *Blade Runner* and *Giselle*

1. Introduction

This chapter makes a structural comparison between the plot of the 1992 Birmingham *Giselle* , and *Blade Runner: the Director's Cut*, Ridley Scott's dystopian film vision of Los Angeles in 2019, which was also distributed in 1992. From this comparison shared and similar plot structures and genre antecedents in the two texts are identified. The plot of *Blade Runner* has a radical viewing strategy, built around overt references to discovery and sight, but is now part of a mainstrean viewing industry. In contrast, whilst the plot of the 1992 *Giselle* has elements incorporated in it that prevent our gaze from discovering its subversive aspects, these can be recovered by applying ways of seeing demonstrated in *Blade Runner.*

The next section profiles *Blade Runner: the Director's Cut* , and signals its relation to the first version of that film, issued in 1982. The correspondences between *Giselle* and *Blade Runner* are traced, drawing out the meanings made available to the audience along two axes of categorisation, reminiscent of Roland Barthes notion that a text is an 'overcrossing' of meanings, a textual 'weave'.[1] This is possible because it is unusual for either text to be read by its audience as innocent of its production history. This, along with an inescapable commonalty of imagery in the two, makes a structuralist comparison of such superficially dissimilar texts productive. The tables categorizing plot are followed by a brief discussion of their methodology.

This comparison is followed by a discussion of endings and closures, and the precedents for them in previous genres. Next, an exploration of the construction of bodies and their doubles, the tropes of death and resistance, and finally love and salvation is made.

These discussions are permitted by the self-referentiality of the two texts: *Giselle* is a dance about the function of dancing, *Blade Runner* a picture about the function of pictures. When attending to the plot of *Giselle* it must be remembered that it is not merely a story in dance, but about dance. Dance, as both a structuring presence and a cultural phenomenon in *Giselle*, makes the familiar themes rehearsed within the ballet unstable. As the section headings in this chapter indicate, hackneyed literary values such as 'art and nature' are made strange. The following quotations from the 1830 and 1840s indicate that the perception of such values in ballet is mutable.

> "[Carlotta Grisi's] style is peculiar, a mixture of the impassioned, the graceful, and the powerful, blended with much art'
> "Carlotta danced with a perfection, lightness, boldness [...] she was nature and artlessness personified."2

Once we look through the eye of *Blade Runner*, we see that the plot of *Giselle* has the potential to disrupt our understanding of received values. Hence, ultimately, the project of this chapter is to enable looking where we, as ballet audiences, have been trained not to look.

2. The Two *Blade Runner* s

In 1982 Ridley Scott released the movie *Blade Runner.* Based on Philip K Dick's 1968 novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* [3], it soon became a seminal work for theorists of science-fiction, motion pictures and postmodern literary theory alike. When it was first released, audiences saw *Blade Runner* in a form Ridley Scott considered bastardized and compromised. The studio distributing the movie, Warner Brothers, felt that Scott's original vision was too bleak and downbeat for general movie-going audiences, and that the details of plot were obscure and confusing. In order to ensure box office success, a 'happy' ending, in the Hollywood tradition, was tacked on. A dream sequence of a few seconds which, it was felt, made the hero's status ambiguous, was excised. Finally, a 'Sam Spade' detective genre voice-over was added throughout.

In 1991 (1992 in Britain), *Blade Runner: The Director's Cut* was distributed. The happy ending and voice-over were both dispensed with, the dream sequence restored, and several key scenes re-edited, shifting and purposely blurring their focus and intention. Buffs, critics and public continue to debate the merits of the two versions. Obviously, Scott must believe that *The Director's Cut* expresses his original intention more successfully and with greater integrity. However, many feel that, although the studio reasoning behind the 1982 changes may have been an insult to audience intelligence, this earlier version is 'accidentally' more effective in creating a dark, difficult piece, one which sits more comfortably with Continental film noir of the 1940s and 1950s, than with the numerous upbeat, escapist Hollywood science-fictions of the late 1970s and early 1980s (the *Star Wars* trilogy, for example) with which the studio was hoping to compete.

It is certainly the case that the body of critical work on *Blade Runner* has focused on its postmodernity. Guiliana Bruno, in her essay 'Ramble City' discusses the function of pastiche in the postmodern, calling it:

> an aesthetic of quotations pushed to the limit [...] an imitation of dead styles deprived of any satirical impulse.[4]

This is a description of the film that was seen in the cinema in 1982. Because of the lack of co-operation between the authors of the piece (Scott and executives at Warner Brothers studio), *Blade Runner* is a film which has doubled itself, become its own quotation, a reference not only to its genre but to itself. The *Blade Runner* movies have generated a cult, an audience that was already literate in the details of the film, and self-conscious of the film's genre. Umberto Eco, in his essay 'Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage' defines a cult film as one which requires inter-filmic understanding. He then claims that *Casablanca* was the last movie which in becoming a cult did so unconsciously.

> Other movies will do so [become a cult] with extreme inter-textual awareness [...] cult has become the normal way of enjoying movies.[5]

The second *Blade Runner* was made and is viewed with this 'extreme inter-textual awareness'. Eco then describes film now as existing in a '*Casablanca* universe [...] a metacult - a Cult Culture' From this, Eco decides that

> It would be semiotically uninteresting to look for quotations of archetypes in *Raiders of The Lost Ark* or in *Indiana Jones* [and perhaps similarly, *Blade Runner*]: they were conceived within a metasemiotic culture, and what the semiotician can find in them is exactly what the directors put there.[6]

It seems highly naïve to suggest that a film made as late in the history of the manufacture of motion pictures as *Casablanca* - 1942 - could have been innocent of its own metafilmic nature, or that 'readers' now cannot generate any meaning between the textual spaces other than the ones 'the directors put there'. Eco says of his excursions into *Casablanca*

> Perhaps we have been able to discover here, for the last
> time, the Truth.
> Aprés nous, le déluge![7]

It is strange that a cultural theorist should align himself with the notion of unmediated Truth, implying that it could be found, unsullied, in a movie that represented a highly self-conscious moment in a fifty-year old industry that had always been self-referential. Eco's 'déluge', of 'semiotically uninteresting' cult films includes the phenomenon of the two *Blade Runner* s, films which have generated a sizeable body of semiotic response.

This chapter utilizes exactly the 'quotation of archetypes' that Eco deems 'uninteresting' in contemporary films.

However, although Eco sees the activity of analysing archetypal quotations in modern movies as unproductive, it must be remembered that quotations exist independently of the intentions of their maker: even the most commonplace and laboured quotations of mainstream popular culture can be highly productive. This is especially true of *Giselle* and *Blade Runner* : the quotation has a prior and a future life of its own; both an historical energy and a generative independence. Thus present versions of texts are used to gain access to previous versions, and to imagine possible new readings throughout this thesis. Neither *Giselle,* in 1992, nor *Blade Runner: the Director's Cut* , could help but quote their previous incarnations.

Much that was admired in the first *Blade Runner* film is superficially absent in the second. Because the first was authored by two agents - the studio as well as the director - the process of quotation and juxtaposition was intensified. Thus by the time the 1992 version was produced, quotation was not simply a device within the narrative structure of the film: the film had become a quotation of itself.

In the following description of the action and imagery of *Blade Runner* the points of departure between the two versions are noted. They cannot really be seen to function as separate texts, rather as overlays: the second carries the inscriptions of the first, and a large proportion of the audience would have been aware of these inscriptions. *Blade Runner* has passed into the idiom - its images have become part of the currency that we use to trade in our perception and judgements of the Western urban world. Hence, most of those viewing *The Director's Cut* will unconsciously add the information given in the 1982 voice-over to the 1992 version. This creates the interesting situation wherein, as with *Giselle* , we already know the world we are entering. We have a sense of prior knowledge of a text that we have not actually seen in this form previously.

Throughout this chapter, *The Director's Cut* is focused upon, as it was contemporaneous with the *Giselle* in question. That the 1982 version of *Blade Runner* erupts into or disrupts the later text is due to the fact that a large proportion of the audience was aware of the texts' subsequence, that comparison was invited. Obviously, the conditions of reproduction of a ballet and a movie like this are very different. The movie is manufactured, literally, from the same material as its predecessor, whereas the ballet is a complete remaking of a known story. However, the similarities of plot and narrative are sufficient to support a parallel reading, and the invitation to a directed but subversive reading that *Blade Runner* makes is important in generating a new reading of *Giselle.*

3. The Plot of *Blade Runner*

As both *Blade Runner* movies open, captions give us the following information:

Early in the 21st Century, The Tyrell Corporation advanced Robot evolution into the NEXUS phase - a being virtually identical to a human - known as a Replicant. The NEXUS 6 Replicants were superior in strength and agility, and at least equal in intelligence, to the genetic engineers who created them.
Replicants were used Off-World as slave labour in the hazardous exploration and colonization of other planets.
After a bloody mutiny by a NEXUS 6 combat team in an Off-World colony, Replicants were declared illegal on Earth - under penalty of death.
Special police squads - BLADE RUNNER UNITS - had orders to shoot to kill, upon detection, any trespassing Replicant.
This was not called execution.
It was called retirement.

Los Angeles, November 2019. The first image we see is of a vast, sprawling, industrial city, both strange and familiar. It appears to be night time, but it's hard to tell: the sky is red and sulphurous. All over the city, huge gas jets erupt into flame: the giant image of a blue eye is superimposed over the city, reflecting the flames. Someone is watching.

An enormous building, half skyscraper, half Mayan temple, comes into view. Spacecraft approach, and the camera focuses on one window. Inside it, a man in a suit calls a Tyrell Corporation employee in to take the Voigt-Kampff empathy test. Leon Kowalski is hooked up to a machine monitoring pupil dilation, and asked vaguely Freudian questions about his scruples concerning animals. Asked 'Tell me about your mother", he replies 'I'll tell you about my mother', and blasts his interrogator under the desk with a concealed gun.

We cut to the city at street level. It is a dark, filthy, multi-ethnic slum. Huge video bill boards advertise 'a new life Off-World', Coca-Cola, Atari, Citizen, Cuisinart: the rain falls incessantly. Under a neon Chinese dragon lurks Rick Deckard, played by Harrison Ford. He warily reads a paper, all trench coat and bad haircut. He goes to buy sushi at a stall. (The 1982 voice-over said he was an 'ex-cop, ex-Blade Runner, ex-killer', and his ex-wife called him 'sushi: cold fish.') he is interrupted by another policeman, Gaff, who takes him to police headquarters, in the flying equivalent of a police car, where Bryant (a recognizable genre type - hard bitten corrupt police chief) reinstates him as a Blade Runner, in order to pursue four 'skin jobs' (the voice-over told us he was the sort of man who once called blacks 'niggers'). Leon they have a video of; the others are Pris and Zhora, and Roy Batty, their Nexus 6 leader. Meanwhile Gaff has created a tiny origami chicken. Deckard is told that as a safety function, these replicants have a four year life span in order to prevent them collecting sufficient experience and history to develop emotions or any real sense of self - rather like the battery chickens to which Gaff alludes

Deckard flies through the dust-coloured cityscape to the Tyrell Corporation in order to observe the responses of a Nexus 6. There he enters a strangely classical hall, bathed in artificial twilight. An owl flies past him: a young woman, Rachael, appears, telling him the bird is also artificial. Her uncle, Eldon Tyrell, enters, gnome-like in multi-faceted spectacles. He persuades Deckard to test Rachael as a sort of 'control' experiment. She answers the questions, smoking heavily, and then is asked to leave. She is a replicant, yet took twice the normal number of questions to betray herself. "She doesn't know?', Deckard asks, 'How can it not know what it is?'. Tyrell replies that the company motto is 'More Human Than Human'. Rachael has been given the 'gift' of implanted memories, making it easier to control her emotions.

Back on the street with Gaff, Deckard checks Leon's motel room, finding 'family' photographs, and a reptilian scale in the shower. The model Gaff makes here is a miniature man, complete with erect penis. His models function as both précis and prediction.

We cut to our first shot of Roy Batty: he is tall, blond and perfect. Clenching a dusty fist, he intones 'Time enough'. In the street he meets Leon, and they walk to a cryogenics laboratory, where a Chinese scientist in a fur life-support suit is freezing eyeballs in nitrogen. Roy speaks, misquoting Blake's *America: A Prophecy*.

> Fiery the angels fell, deep thunder rolled around their shores, burning with the fires of Orc. [8]

Ripping open his suit, they demand to know about 'Morphology, incept dates', but the scientist works on 'just eyes'. Their minds were designed by Tyrell: J. F. Sebastian will take them to him. Deckard, meanwhile, drives home to his grim apartment. Rachael is waiting there: Tyrell won't see her, and she is worried that she's a replicant. Inside, she tells Deckard two childhood stories, both conforming to popular notions of the Freudian phallic mother - monstrous, predatory, castrating. He tells her that her memories belong to Tyrell's niece, then dismisses this as a bad joke, telling her to go home. She holds out what appears to be a photograph of her with her mother. (The 1982 voice over, referring to Leon's pictures, comments that perhaps even androids need memories.)

In another part of the city, Pris, who is the Aryan ideal underneath a punk exterior of fishnet, studs and running mascara, hides in a pile of garbage. She terrifies and then makes an ally of a tiny, wizened man - J. F. Sebastian. He takes her up to his home in an abandoned tenement building where he lives with the strange living dolls he has created to be his friends: he is a genetic engineer.

In his apartment Deckard holds Rachael's photograph. He is sitting at a piano. For a moment the mother and child in the picture move, dappled in sunlight. The photograph stabilizes, and Deckard looks along the collection of old pictures on the music stand. He plays a few notes, then seems to doze. Here, in *The Director's Cut*, we see a sequence of only a few seconds - a unicorn galloping through a forest, its mane streaming. Deckard comes to, and takes one of Leon's photos over to a scanning machine. Again, the photograph becomes impossible: the machine not only enlarges, but changes perspectives, looking behind objects in the still photograph, until it finds the hidden reflection of a women, and the glint of scales. Taking a hard copy, Deckard returns to the street.

He discovers that the scale is from an artificial snake, a complex genetic machine like the replicants, and traces its maker, then finally its owner. Pausing to telephone Rachael, he goes to a strip club where Zhora is working - with the artificial snake - as an exotic dancer. He poses as an artists' union representative, but Zhora punches him, and he pursues her through the streets, finally shooting her in the back, her body falling through many layers of plate glass shop fronts. Leon sees him telling the assembled crowd it was a 'routine retirement', and, as Deckard catches sight of Rachael, Leon attacks: holding him by the throat, Deckard admits that their longevity is four years. As Leon is about to shoot, Rachael shoots Leon in the head.

Back at his apartment, Deckard notices Rachael is trembling, telling her that 'the shakes' are normal 'in the business'. 'I'm not in the business', she says. 'I am the business.' As he spits blood into his sink, we hear strains of the standard song 'Too Good To Be True' (picking up on the 'More Human Than Human' theme). There are two distinct musical schemes in this movie: the electronic score written by Vangelis, a lonely, plaintive yet menacing mixture of drawn out wails and bass explosions, and the twentieth century nostalgic scheme, using this song which, decontextualized from its 'muzak' status, forms an extremely affecting and ironic pattern. The second line of the chorus is 'I can't take my eyes off of you'. The eye motif is one of the most coherent and disturbing themes in the movie, and is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Rachael questions Deckard: her longevity is four years, and if she absconded 'North', he wouldn't hunt her, but somebody would. While he sleeps, she looks at his collection of photographs, letting down her hair, softening it, mimicking one of the pictures. She starts to play the piano, and he joins her: she doesn't know if it was herself or Tyrell's niece who learned to play. As she goes to leave, Deckard tries to kiss her: she refuses and he violently slams the door. Then, however, he apologizes with a gesture: Rachael says she 'can't rely on...' (her memories), and he prompts her into a kiss, which she then takes over, saying 'put your hands around me'. The pervasive atmosphere of not knowing who is looking is reinforced by the sense that the replicants do not know what they are remembering. Understanding a movie is based on our looking and our remembering: by calling the reliability of these activities into question through the most sympathetic characters in the film, we are implicitly invited to question our own reading strategies.

Meanwhile, in Sebastian's apartment, Pris is spray-painting a black stripe across her eyes. She cartwheels into the workshop as Roy is entering the building. J.F. tells her he is only twenty-five, but suffers from Methuzelah's Syndrome. Roy walks in, and she introduces him: J.F. cannot help but stare at the perfection he helped to design. As proof of her brilliance, Pris says 'I think, therefore I am', and executes a backward walk-over. They talk J.F. into taking them to Tyrell.

At the Corporation, Tyrell is in bed when J.F. and Roy enter. It is here that Roy demands more life, but Tyrell cannot help him: their DNA is programmed to 'self-destruct'. Roy holds Tyrell's head between his hands, and kisses him hard on the lips. As he pulls his mouth away, he digs his thumbs into his maker's eyeballs, blinding him and then crushing his skull. This sequence is intercut with the blank eyes of the automaton owl.

The next scene cuts to the streets, and we see many strange and threatening beings. Deckard makes his way to J.F. Sebastian's tenement. Pris sits motionless, disguised as a mannequin. She attacks suddenly, throttling Deckard with her legs after a series of handsprings. He breaks loose, and shoots her. Her death throes are violent, bloody and haywire: when she is still Deckard hides.

Finding his lover's body, Roy kisses Pris. Deckard fires and misses, and Roy taunts him; 'Aren't you the *good* man?'. The two men are on either side of a plaster and wood wall: Roy's impossible strength is suddenly absolutely human. His desire to love and to live make him not like a human, but human. He breaks Deckard's fingers - 'For Zhora and Pris', then returns to Pris's body, howling as he smears her blood and make-up on himself. Screaming, Deckard straightens his fingers, and the chase through the building begins, while all the time Roy counts off a nursery rhyme - 'Four, five, stay alive'. He is by now stripped to combat boots and black shorts, yet his perfect physical exterior in contrast to the shambolic Deckard belies his accelerating decrepitude. The earlier shot of his fist clawing and tightening is repeated: saying 'Not yet' he first bites his hand, and then forces a nail through it, as if the pain can stave off death, termination. As Deckard swathes his own wounds, Roy rams his head through a tiled bathroom wall, still quoting his rhymes.

They fight, and Roy, howling like a beast, forces Deckard up onto the roof. The outside of the tenement seems a thing grown not made, organic and ancient. Deckard tries to jump to the next roof, but slips: he is left hanging by his broken hand. For a second there is stillness, and we see Roy, in a halo of light, now clutching a white dove in his hand. We hear a heartbeat, and he leaps to the opposite roof. Looking down at Deckard, he asks him what it is like to 'be a slave, to live in fear?' At the instant Deckard's grip fails, Roy catches him with his nailed, crucified hand, and hauls him onto the roof. Crouching as he watches Deckard in the rain, he says

> I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I watched sea beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhauser Gate. All those ... moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain. [He smiles] Time to die.

In slow motion, the dove flies from his hand, up into the dawn, where we see the first blue sky in the entire movie. Rain drips from his hair and face as Deckard watches.

This thesis uses the plot of *Blade Runner* to assert that the plot of *Giselle* offers something different from other comparable Romantic plots. However, it is also important to note here that both *Blade Runners* differ from the literary tradition of dystopian fiction to which they belong. If for a moment we collapse the two films into a single textual area, we see that *Blade Runner* sits ill with the most well known texts in the dystopian tradition, including Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), Orwell's *1984* (1954), and films such as the *Alien* cycle (1979 -, various directors). [9]

Dystopian fiction is often held to be the premise of the revolutionary, whose projected future serves as a dire warning against the consequences of the ultimate evolution of orthodoxy. In fact the opposite is true, as Tom Moylan has pointed out:

> Unfortunately, the dystopian narrative itself has all too easily been recruited into the ideological utopian expression [...] readers settle for what is [...] the dystopia [is] recontained and enlisted as proof of the uselessness of utopian desire. [10]

The end result of the dystopian reading experience tends to be the replacement of the reading subject in the orthodox hierarchy, more fearful of the consequences of 'utopian desire' than of existing power structures. Two themes can be found running through dystopian fictions which are challenged in *Blade Runner*. These are individualism and sexuality.

In dystopian texts the state proscription of solitude tends to be used to assert the importance of individualism - the existence of an authentic self whose imagination at least is free. Hence in *1984* Big Brother intrudes on all but Winston Smith's most profound 'inner life', the Epsilon Semi-Morons of *Brave New World* live like battery animals, and the spaceship crews in the *Alien* movies are forced into each other's company. Each text claims that their heroes can insist on individual identity in the face of extreme odds - the state's mental or narcotic control, alien attack - and that in fact moments of extreme danger are the moments at which the individual self is most strong.

However, these personal triumphs do nothing to affect the systems which threaten perceived individualism, as Roland Barthes has theorized:

> It can even be said it is when man proclaims his primal liberty that his subordination is least disputable. [11]

Acts of rebellion in dystopian fiction do nothing to affect the material conditions dictating consciousness. *Blade Runner* however does not assert authentic self-hood: rather it argues (through the figure of the replicant, discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections) that consciousness is entirely arbitrary, that we are not individuals whose imaginations (if nothing else) are free, but constructions whose sense of individuality depends entirely on our material conditions of existence.

The discussion of sexuality in conventional dystopian fiction proceeds along similar lines. Dystopian fictions generally perceive that sexuality and sexual activity are political acts. Hence In *Brave New World* sex is ubiquitous, used as 'dope' for the masses. Huxley, in his 1946 foreword to *Brave New World* wrote:

> The dictator [...] will do very well to encourage that [sexual] freedom. In conjunction with the freedom to daydream

> under the influence of dope and movies and the radio, it will help to reconcile his subjects to the servitude which is their fate.[12]

However most dystopian fictions tend to place single 'natural' sexual acts as countering sexual totalitarianism. In *1984* sex is forbidden as 'sex crime', and Smith finally rebels by coupling brutally in a field. In *Alien* the excessive generative sex of the alien mother is seen as perverted, whilst the female protagonist Ripley is replaced in the social order once she takes on the 'natural' role of nurturing, non-phallic mother, in saving first a cat and then, in *Aliens* , a child who calls her 'Mummy'. The natural instinctive act of the 'savage' permits the subject an imaginary freedom which does not challenge the system of gender scripting and sexual prescription.

In *Blade Runner* 'natural' sex is culturalized. *Blade Runner* uses the dystopian convention of presenting sex as a totalitarian tool of control, but it does not posit certain 'natural' sexual acts as countering that control. We see that the sexuality of the replicants is merely an extension of their memory capacity, given to make them more pliable in the hands of their makers. The love Pris and Roy have for each other is deconstructed and perverted by Pris' death - her doll parts are taken apart and the reader realizes that they have watched a sexual expression as 'natural' as Barbie and Action Man copulating. Similarly, Deckard and Rachel's sexual epiphany is framed as entirely subject to the prevailing sexual system. Hence, whilst *Blade Runner* is a dystopian text, and does utilize the conventions of that genre without positing a utopian alternative, it also deconstructs the basic components of the dystopian tendency to replace its subject in the existing system.

4. Matching the Myths

Blade Runner and *Giselle* conform to Roland Barthes's definition of textuality. They also comply with his definition of myth as being 'available both for ideological criticism and semiological dismantling'.[13] *Giselle* is very much a myth that

> consists in overturning culture into nature or, at least, the social, the cultural, the ideological, the historical into the 'natural'. What is nothing but a product of class division and its moral, cultural and aesthetic consequences is presented (stated) as being 'matter of course'.[14]

Blade Runner makes the cultural mythical, but it also supplies us with a means of reading, of deconstructing the social difference that it mythologizes.

Blade Runner and *Giselle* are myths that epitomize, but also deviate from their own moments of cultural production. The deviation in *Giselle*, however, is not immediately apparent. In order to bring out the deviant aspects of the ballet this chapter uses a similar 'methodological field' to that employed by Claude Lévi-Strauss in his anthropological/structural analysis of the Oedipus myth.[15] Once the similarity of the texts has been documented, existing scholarly analysis of *Blade Runner* can be brought to bear on *Giselle*. The approach is selective and there is no attempt to create an exhaustive documentation of ways of reading *Giselle* here: rather, the proliferation of meanings will assert that further meanings can yet be generated. The focus of this chapter remains with those ways of seeing in *Blade Runner* which teach us to look at *Giselle*'s subversive present and past.

Ballet has always been viewed as an interloper among the serious arts, whilst retaining its élitist status; hence it has tended to be displaced from the centre of academic activity. Although ballet's relationship to the literatures of horror and fantasy is clear, that relaionship has not been exploited academically to any great extent. In coupling *Giselle* with a science fiction story which shares the same lineage, this thesis attempts to place *Giselle* in its proper position in the academy.

Were one to study, say, Romantic and Gothic writing, one would work from Wordsworth to Bram Stoker, taking in Hoffman, Mary Shelley and Rossetti on the way. Looking ahead to the modern incarnation of this genre, one would inevitably point to horror and science fiction writing, and the rise of the motion picture as the genre's most common popular form. *Giselle* should come fairly near the start, and *Blade Runner* towards the end of an evolution of the genre. This genre, which we could call 'fantasy', has maintained its tension between populism and seriousness - a tension that has permitted the genre to exist in the mass domain without ever being entirely subsumed into bourgeois values. Similarly, most courses on modernism and postmodernism start with a glance over their shoulders. Hence the neuroses of the 'modern' world are traced to Romantic and Gothic concerns with the dangers of Man's will, and of Man's inability to control the results of his actions. From these worries stem notions of the upheaval of the hierarchies of class and gender, the rise of mass culture, the incursion of science and mechanization into 'Nature'.

The anxieties in fantasy literature are represented through the supernatural and the unnatural, the monstrous and the motherless - above all by the loss of certainty and control, real or imagined, that was perceived to characterize the passing away of the 'old world'. This list itemizes the concerns or absences for which fantasy literature, from fairy tales to science fiction, and including *Giselle* and *Blade Runner*, attempts to compensate. As Rosemary Jackson puts it:

> Fantasy characteristically attempts to compensate for a lack resulting from cultural constraints [...] it is a literature of desire which seeks that which is experienced as absence or loss.[16]

In *Blade Runner* the memories and pasts of the replicants are absent; in *Giselle* the father and a form of authorized expression are missing: the desire to compensate for these lacks is what drives both texts. The ballet and the film have evolved culturally different substitutions for their absences: this is what makes a comparison of the two forms so productive. Thus in this ballet the supernatural dissection and reconstruction of dumb bodies is presented as a universal virtue, because it achieves what is desirable - grace and beauty. *Blade Runner* however, locates its dwarfed and destroyed human bodies in a rhetoric of popular production and consumption, thus generating a critique of absence. This presentation of lack as a desirable value is articulated in the following quotation by Lillian Moore, in the foreword to Ivor Guest's *The Romantic Ballet in Paris*. The excerpt demonstrates that in Romantic ballet fantastic desire is at once represented and suppressed.

> The magic of the Romantic ballet is timeless. Its essential spirit transcends the limits of any one particular period and place. Its symbol, in dancing, is flight: the aerial flight of the ballerina as sylphide, or dryad, or wili; the ballerina as a supernatural being, the visible incarnation of man's idealism and aspiration. In the midst of our materialistic civilization, the Romantic spirit is alive. It lies at the heart of our current cultural explosion.[17]

The ballerina is at once the most free being, and merely an expression of man's desire. Moore, in an attempt to argue the transcendental nature of ballet also subtextually communicates the odd, subversive, resistant tendencies in Romantic ballet which are particularly evident in *Giselle*. In stating the case for universality, she deconstructs herself: 'flight' perhaps, but from what? Should such lovely vision of grace really beget 'explosion'? These issues are discussed overtly in *Blade Runner* and in much science fiction, from H.G. Wells to Thomas Pynchon to Steven Spielberg: the blackness of the abyss, the gaping absence or loss in the modern world that stands in for Man's fantasies of perfection, his desire for Utopia. Romantic ballet and science fiction are genre identical texts which, because their cultural positioning has diverged, seek to substitute ideologically different objects for their structuring absences. In both, form and theme are matched: however, this does not matter until we allow the subversive strategies in *Blade Runner* to redirect our gaze onto the reactionary comforts of grace that reproductions of *Giselle* have used to avert that gaze.

The next step in matching these myths is the move from generalities of genre and culture to the specifics of the texts. Rather than detail the structural similarities between *Giselle* and *Blade Runner* at length, the texts have been broken down into constituent 'mythemes', a strategy borrowed from the taxonomy which nominates phonemes and morphymes as units of language and meaning. The correspondence of these mythemes along two 'axes' - archetypal and narrative - is then demonstrated. These relations are represented in the tables which follow.

In 'Archetypes', by utilizing the notion of mediation in assigning significance to the textual units of meaning, an entirely binary, oppositional reading of the archetypes in the stories has been prevented. For every good/evil relationship, there is a character who calls it into question, who prevents us from being too easily pulled into a dialectical world view, where the only third term can be synthesis. Here, the acceptance of relations and conditions as they stand - that being the status quo - is denied us. It is through the mediating archetypes that we are positioned as resistant to, not supportive of, the hegemony. We are used to reading ballet as structured around simple oppositions. *Blade Runner* demonstrates that *Giselle* is more complex in its relations than we have been tutored to expect. The presentation of culture as nature in hegemonic tales is usually reinforced by the traditional closure of the happy ending. The second table illustrates that, although the events and transformations of each text appear to be leading towards such a closure, it is prevented at the last moment. An open ending empowers us, it gives us responsibility for the ending - or rather the continuation - of the narrative. It is disconcerting and disturbing, but it permits us to imagine divergent, subversive solutions to the old social concerns that have traditionally been woven into such myths and fairy tales.

Archetypes.

		BLADE RUNNER	GISELLE
The Mortal World		Street Life	Villagers
The World of Power		Tyrell Corporation	Court
The Supernatural World		Replicants	Wilis
The World of Mediation	A	Deckard	Albrecht
	B	Bryant/Gaff	Hilarion
	C	Rachael	Giselle
	D	Roy Batty	Myrtha

Narrative

	BLADE RUNNER	GISELLE
1. Common society's informal organisation	Bartering/ criminality	Hunting/ gathering
2. Revelation that Power organises society	Tyrell corporation	Arrival of Court
3. Woman C patronized by Power	Rachael by Tyrell	Giselle by Bathilde
4. Woman loves Mediator A	Rachael and Deckard	Giselle and Albrecht
5. Mediator B tries to destroy love	Bryant and Gaff	Hilarion
6. Woman forsakes her memories	Rachael leaves Tyrell	Giselle goes mad
7. Mediator D briefly overcomes Power	Roy kills Tyrell	Myrtha judges Albrecht and Hilarion
8. Mediator B made powerless	Gaff lets Rachael live	Hilarion killed by Myrtha
9. Mediator D's power ends	Roy dies	Myrtha disappears
10. A and C united and divided by death and closure	Lovers are free for an unknown time	Albrecht is alone, Giselle rests in peace

There are several models for the structuring and reproduction of fairy and other mythic tales currently in academic use, and these are drawn upon in the tables above. The most common are the archetypal and the textual. Also popular are taxonomy and 'science-ism' as means of envisioning these texts. The most useful for the purposes of this study is Claude Lévi-Strauss's notion that all myth, especially at its populist, oral-tradition level, is an encoded warning against social taboo. If, as Lévi-Strauss theorizes, taboos remain unchanged cross-culturally (and that incest and female promiscuity are the most vital to protect against), we can see identical motifs recurring down the ages and across the continents. This model is in keeping with some of Karl Jung's ideas concerning dream symbolism and archetypal imagery.[18] It becomes problematized when one considers the non-universality of language: when we try it against the arbitrariness of language as presented by semiotic theory, one has to question the similarity of not only theme, but of the metaphors that are consistently substituted for themes in fairy tales and myths.

In contrast, the textual model offers us the notion of fragments of story which are transferred wholesale from one culture to another - orally or by the discovery or translation of a recorded text. The 'new' teller will simply add locally coloured details to make the tale their own. This is a practical enough model, and it at least allows in some margin for the human cunning so beloved of these tales - unlike the massive cataloguing projects of Vladimir Propp and others.[19] This approach demonstrates that fairy tales do overlap cross-culturally, but not why, or (most importantly for this thesis) with what effect.

The borrowing of structures from science - wave-theory, chaos-theory, string-theory, genetic-theory - perhaps also seems attractive because it contains as it explains, it makes finite and safe the metamorphic boundaries that surround fairy tales. To defuse this slipperiness is not the aim of this chapter, and at any rate, scientific language is far from free of either mystificatory processes or semiotic fragmentation.

Neither the archetypal nor the textual (or narrative) models most frequently used in the explanation of the cross-cultural similarities between myths fully satisfy the needs of this thesis. Hence use is made of two 'axes' of analysis, using both narrative mythemes and archetypal mythemes loosely suggested by Frederic Jameson's notion of the 'ideologeme', a single unit of ideological meaning. [20] Where simple oppositional systems do appear, they are here called into question by the noting of a third term, or the highlighting of an echo or resonance where one perhaps 'ought' not to exist. Marina Warner has recently written on the analytical dilemma of those who consider myths and stories as their texts. Firstly, they encounter a 'false universality' - a kind of false consciousness for fairy tales - the notion that, because we can demonstrate links and similarities between tales, we can also claim that they are universal. Secondly, the tendency to over-classify, to taxonomize, has resulted in reductive, convergent and oppositional readings. The details of similarity between fairy tales tend to avert our gaze from the differences in cultural production between matching tales. Warner comments:

> There are problems of vagueness with these [archetypal] comparisons; when it comes to details of narrative and particular plot features [...] a literary source can usually be identified [...] However universally distributed [these taxonomies are], stories spring up in different places dressed in different moods [...] and with regional details and contexts which give the satisfaction of particular recognition to their audiences. 121

Warner identifies one of the most important concerns of fantasy literature: the familiar, or, as she terms it, 'particular recognition'. It is not in the general, or 'literary' aspects that such stories are radical, but often in the added, familiarizing details of locale and moment. *Giselle* and *Blade Runner* may be the same story, but it is their familiar details that make them radical or reactionary. These are the details upon which this thesis focuses, and it is only familiarity which can make a text defamiliarizing, uncanny, taking it into the realms of Hoffman and Mary Shelley. This is particularly important for ballet, which has for some time sought to remove itself from the familiar and become merely decorative. In the 1992 *Giselle* we can see the accumulated attempts to tame the radical details of the ballet: *Blade Runner: The Director's Cut* can direct our eyes back towards these details.

The decision to tabulate the components of *Blade Runner* and *Giselle*, and hence to bring to bear varied and perhaps antipathetical schools of theory could be compared to Sally Banes' use of interpretative grids in her discussion of the marriage plot, with specific reference to dance, in *Dancing Women.* As the quotations below illustrate, her approach incorporates Warner's ideas concerning communities of women, and the affective value of dance noted in the Preface. In addition, Banes specifically parallels the concerns of Romantic Ballet with those of the theory of Lévi-Strauss.

> To look at women's roles and the marriage plot is to examine kinship networks and to analyze how women fit in (or not) according to the community's rules [...] in terms of incest taboos, endogamy versus exogamy, physical attributes and disposition.
>
> In analyzing the marriage plot for each dance, I use an interpretative grid that distinguishes between two sets of binary oppositions: whether the outcome of the marriage plot is a failure or a success; and whether the affective value of the marriage, as it is portrayed in the choreography, is positive (euphoric) or negative (dysphoric).
>
> Although ballet is often criticized as embodying a fantasy world, whereas modern dance is seen as more realistic, there is clearly a shared movement since the nineteenth century in both ballet and modern dance toward showing marriage as problematic (dysphoric) and as ripped away from social context - that is, family as well as community. [22]

In the table of archetypal mythemes, there are three fairly distinct worlds that subdivide the two tales, those of the Mortals, the Powerful, and the Supernatural. Each of these presents in some detail its familiar inhabitants, their rituals, relations and languages. The main protagonists are never the epitome of their world; instead each is somehow estranged from their origin. Thus they are mediators. They disjoint what at first appears the base stuff of fairy tales and myths - the social ranks who are happy with their natural lot. What truly characterizes the myth is the mechanism by which the 'nature' of social order is shown to be culturally engineered - that is, the trick of disguise, of metamorphosis, possessed by the hero or heroine. Regardless of whether the protagonist's ability to mediate, to move between worlds, is a gift or a curse, it enables the audience to see clearly the otherwise transparent matter of ideology.

With a tight economy of sign, and richness of signified, the encrusted, jewel-like texture of language and proliferation of meaning that is peculiar to such stories, allows a very small number of characters, acting as alienated mediators, to generate, comment on and give access to a very broad range of social structures. *Blade Runner* 'lets us in' to issues of gender, sexuality, class, alienation, power relations, wealth, labour and the socially encoded nature of language as they are represented, but submerged, in *Giselle*. In addition, the film discusses race and blackness, the media, technology and the construction of identity. One doesn't have to look beyond the surface to realise that these two 'classics' of their genre - the folk tale/ballet story, and the detective/sci-fi movie, offer us more than simple heroes and villains, with a happy ending that rewards the unresisting audience member who reads correctly. The pleasures of these texts can be altogether darker and more forbidden. As an older text, existing in a more codified and hierarchical social location, Peter Wright's *Giselle* has hidden these pleasures.

In keeping with the specifics one would expect to discover when plotting the narrative similarities between the two texts, the second table is more complex. It details events and transformations that not only find a counterpart in the other text, but that in many cases are characterized by an identical sign or image - a metonymic index of the function, whereby one part of the narrative sequence is substituted for the whole.

In sequence 1, the index is one of produce. We see the frantic scenes of barter and exchange - sushi, meat, machinery, artificial animals - in *Blade Runner*. Here we are also introduced to the twenty-first century of produce, signalled by the omniscient neon and video signs that advertise watches, computer and electronic goods, soft drinks and 'off-world' holidays - Aiwa, Coca Cola, Pan Am, Cuisinart, Sanyo and so on. These are the first familiar details of the movie. This kind of meta-cultural discourse, literally made of signs, alerts us early on to the process of watching, as we become or are subsumed into the great eye overlooking the city that features in the opening sequence. What at first seems to be a thriving local community market, albeit drab and dirty, is soon revealed to be a ghettoized black market, where life itself is commodified. The advertising indicates an economy of unobtainable desire. Status and happiness are represented as purchasable through material goods, yet without status one cannot earn enough to attain the desire generated by advertising, so one works harder or steals more, reinforcing the stereotypes that accompany one's lack of status ... and so it goes on. As Eldon Tyrell says 'Commerce is our goal, here at Tyrell'.

More idealized, but no less telling, is the carefree grape harvesting of the Rhineland peasants in *Giselle*. We see the profusion of grapes, and also the game birds caught for Bertha by Hilarion. Yet by the simple presence of the castle (as unobtainable and yet as tantalizing as the advertisements of 2019 Los Angeles) on the backdrop, and the immediate arrival of the court of the Duke of Courland, it becomes obvious that there is a social and economic hierarchy: the labours of the lowly are not for their own benefit. By the presence of these images, we are instantly locked into an understanding of life as a process of material exchange and ownership. Human hearts, bodies and lives are available for exchange: the invaluable has its price. Each story explores the repercussions of an attempt to buck the system of ownership, and the economic oppressiveness of desire.

Banes makes explicit that this opposition between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' - those inside and those outside the community, and the attending tensions between the literal inside and outside (i.e. outdoors) are a specific concern of Romantic Ballet.

In the second narrative sequence, the metonymic figure is that of a bird of prey. When we meet the inhabitants of the magic fortress - the Tyrell Corporation building and the Duke's castle - their entrance is marked by an owl in *Blade Runner* . We later learn that the owl is 'artificial', although the audience knows the director must have used a 'real' bird, making it somehow super-real. In *Giselle* the entrance is heralded by a falcon, which is also super-real, as it too is a living creature, and not a stuffed one from the props department. In both cases the bird interrupts our relationship with the text; 'realness' erupts into the fictional narrative, whilst simultaneously carrying with it a wealth of traditional narrative symbols. Not only does the bird bring with it associations of deadly power and privilege, it also forces us to question how we define what is real. We are invited to negotiate with our understanding of reality.

In *Blade Runner* , the owl is a reference to *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?.* In the novel, social hierarchy is indicated by the grade of artificial animal one owns, from insects upwards. The Deckard of the novel is beset by worries that he cannot afford the H.P payments on his artificial sheep, and that the transcendental religion of the twenty-first century, a melting pot of pop psychology and virtual reality called Mercerism, is simply a capitalist ploy to sedate the workers with consumerism. The live falcon in *Giselle* is also a reference to earlier ballets, when ballet was a 'spectacle', nearer to what we now regard as pantomime, with live ponies and monkeys being commonplace on stage.[23]

By accident or design, realness of the order of the owl and the falcon disrupts our sense of verisimilitude, and calls attention to the status of the text - and its 'people' - as made things. In both these texts, the reading experience can be an uncomfortable one. We are never fully able to commit ourselves to a stable reading position in *Blade Runner* . The same is potentially true of *Giselle* . A wholly self-referential text allows us to compliment ourselves too much on our sophisticated reading strategies. A wholly escapist text allows us to dismiss any lurking social concerns in the knowledge that it is mere fabrication. Yet *Blade Runner* and *Giselle* , involving us as they do in mixed strategies, license the confusing and perhaps painful pleasures of the text that questions reality by aligning itself with - loving - artificiality. Deckard asks of Rachael 'How can it not know what it is?'. Yet once she knows she is merely a replicant, she cannot stop desiring the pleasures and comforts of human flesh. The 'dance about dancing' still loves to dance, even when dance becomes a murderous punishment. And the 'picture about pictures' never overcomes its love for celluloid, whether as a genre or a captured 'memory'. We know that in *Blade Runner*, replication (which could also be termed 'picture making') is self-destructive; in *Giselle* dancing is self-destructive. Both fictions play out the end of their mythology of film and dance from the beginning of the film and the dance.

Both texts thus offer a very powerful and empowering way of engaging with the ideological process, with the construction of consent to inequality. And there it is, tied up in the image of itself, this beautiful bird that is at once admired and held captive, allowed perhaps to hunt, but never for its own benefit, and whose power and ability to instil fear is harnessed simply in order to reflect well on its keepers.

Sequence 3, which follows on, deals with similar issues by making its metonymic index that of a priceless gift. Rachael, nothing but a Skinjob (perjorative slang for 'Replicant'), is given the gift of memories (and thus, effectively, a past) by her 'uncle', Tyrell. And Giselle, a fatherless peasant, is given a jewelled pendant by Bathilde. It will be noted that in both, the trappings (and entrapment) of wealth are symbolized through richly textured fabrics. Worth, be it social acknowledgement or self-esteem, is bestowed, not inherent; it is in the gift of the power base. Each woman is granted elevated status; she is seen to be beyond the rank for which she was intended. Yet she pays for this with her eventual destruction. Gifts and curses are often indistinguishable in fairy stories. Whether or not the heroine consciously asked for her 'gift', she must be punished for it, rather as Snow White is for her beauty. Indeed, Rachael, the familiar dark-haired *Giselle* , and Walt Disney's archetypal Snow White are mirror images of each other; lips as red as blood, hair as black as ebony, and skin as white as snow. Once again we see this economy of material possession and unattainable desire in operation. It activates in us both an awareness of material conditions immediate to the text, but also the unbroken evolutionary line of symbolic and subversive fantasy genre to which these texts belong.

Clothes are highly important in both stories, here especially, where they reinforce the resonances generated by the image of the gift. They indicate social status and emotional condition. After the rags, functional work clothes and cyber-punk of street level Los Angeles, it is almost shocking to see Rachael's hour glass figure in its 1930s black satin sheath, high heels clicking as she stalks the Corporation's Aztec skyscraper. The expensive clothes are not her own: they too are gifts from Tyrell. As, throughout the movie, she descends into the world of Deckard and the replicants, her high collared 'real' fur coat becomes more and more incongruous amongst the manufactured Lycra and P.V.C. of the gutter dwellers. In *Giselle* the function of clothes is expressed slightly differently. Bathilde first notices Giselle when she kneels to touch the fine fabric and embroidery of the noblewoman's robe. This seems touching, if fey: a poor girl admiring what she cannot have. However, her mime to Bathilde communicates a more complex situation. Giselle does not gather and tread grapes: she is a seamstress. It was she who made and embellished Bathilde's beautiful gown. The dislocation of labour and ownership is repeated. Beauty is deconstructed: it is a commodity, not a 'natural' gift. By looking through *Blade Runner* it becomes obvious to us that *Giselle* contains a radical deconstruction of beauty.

The fourth sequence, in which Rachael and Giselle not only fall in love but commit themselves to Deckard and Albrecht, is denoted by the image of a weapon (a gun and a sword, respectively). Beaumont picks up on these objects and makes a connection between weaponry and salvation - a trope discussed in greater detail later in this chapter - stating:

> The two acts into which Giselle is divided might well be entiltled: I. The Sword; II. The Cross; so great is the influence of these two objects upon the development of the plot [...] the whole meaning of the ballet depends upon the proper appreciation of their significance. There is, too [... an] association in these two objects, for an inverted sword [...] becomes a cross. [24]

Central to this part of the narrative is the transference of love from the mother to the lover. Love becomes sexualized, and the two women must negotiate a location for their sexualized selves amongst the selves of memory. It is important that, although this negotiation is also transgression for Rachael and Giselle, its eventual punishment is perhaps less severe in the twentieth century narrative. For both, however, the reward for adult sexuality and for defying the boundaries of class and status, is exile and eventual death. In order for society to find a safe site for transgressive women, the 'unnatural' must be represented as the supernatural. In a traditional fantasy text, this strategy would effectively contain the subversive potential of such a presence. However, the open ending of both texts is an indication that these tales do not support a consensual reading of this set of relations; rather, attention is drawn to them, and they are denaturalized.

In both stories there is also a sense that the transfer from mother to lover involves taking on board an understanding of the culturally constructed 'nature' of masculinity. To be masculine is to be perfidious and violent. We could glance back at the Blue Beard myth, in which a young woman overcomes the power of the patriarchal word to look into the chamber in her husband's castle that she has been forbidden. There she finds the gory bodies of his former wives: she is only saved from the same fate by her mother. This tale was retold by Angela Carter in *The Bloody Chamber*, revising the myth, and allowing us to look again at it, as *Blade Runner* does with *Giselle.*[25] We see that many traditional fairy stories serve as cautionary tales against any wife making too exhaustive an enquiry into her husband's true nature. Giselle and Rachael must act as witnesses to their lover's 'natural' masculinity as a rite of passage into the world of adult sexuality. Rachael must see Deckard blasting his way through the filthy streets of Los Angeles. Giselle has to watch as 'Loys' 'recognizes' his own sword then ignores her entirely, turning his attention to his fiancée Bathilde. The women then have the paltry choice of ignoring what they find, or acknowledging their discovery, but then turning it upon themselves. Giselle kills herself, Rachael kills a Nexus 6 Replicant - one of her own kind, and thus, functionally, herself.

This process of witnessing followed by internalization is the trauma, the return of the primal scene, as Freud would have it, that results from the transfer of affection from the maternal object to the sexual object. Freudians would also point to the phallic imagery attendant on the over-representation of weaponry here. The shift to the adult world is also the shift to the symbolic - the metonymic - world. The infant, already having passed through the 'mirror stage' in which it becomes aware of its self as an individual in the external world, acquires its world's language, and is constructed as a subject in that world. Lacan's point was partly that identity is constructed through language, and that identity is authorized by the patriarchy through a phallocentric language. Lacan famously stated that 'the male has the phallus, and the female is the phallus.'[26] Immediately we see that woman is constructed as an object of desire, but without desire of her own. Lacan generated a complex psychic economy of ownership of the symbolic penis, which is probably more useful to clinicians than to literary theorists. However, if we remake his phrase as 'the male has the power, and the woman is the power', it becomes resonant and illuminating for us at this point.

In many traditional tales, the underlying (masculine) concern is with uncontrolled fertility - fecundity become grotesque. Hence the monstrous progeny, innumerable offspring and insatiable appetites that characterize 'bad' women in myth from Ancient Rome to Victorian Britain. (These include Lillith, of Hebrew myth, Hera's Calibos, Sycorax's Caliban, the child eating witch in Hansel and Gretel and the female vampire Carmilla.) The warning is against reproductive power (and its origin, female sexuality) that is not actually or ideologically controlled by males. Both Giselle and Rachael make the mistake of acknowledging their own desire. Hence they have perverted their place in the male ordered economy of desire, where woman can be wanted, but not want (this echoes Lacan). For this they must be traumatized to the point of self-destruction, by their unlicensed entry into the adult, symbolic world. This encoding of the entry into the symbolic world, and thus the knowledge of sexual difference in Blade Runner is commented on in Guiliana Bruno's 'Ramble City'.

> Rachael accepts the paternal figure and follows the path to a 'normal', adult, female sexuality: she identifies her sex by first acknowledging the power of the other, the father, a man. But Roy Batty refuses the symbolic castration which is necessary to enter the symbolic order; he refuses, that is, to be smaller, less powerful, than the father.[27]

Bruno has perhaps decided that *Blade Runner* is an orthodox, hegemonic text. However, it can be argued that *Blade Runner* shows orthodox relations solely to call them into question. Bruno's commentary is on the 1982 version of the film, which perhaps better supports such a reading. Even so, the Rachael of the first text still has no assurance of certainty at the end of the movie, and her sexuality, as shown by her undisciplined hair, is too immoderate to be considered normative. Bruno's critique conspires with the old ideology which states that desire is the preserve of the male. If anything, Rachael subverts her femininity through desire, whilst Roy makes the most orthodox entry to the symbolic order imaginable; he is crucified, the ultimate submission of the individual to the paternal.

If entry into the symbolic order is signalled by a gun and a sword, a traditional totem of masculinity; a hard, real, unequivocal thing, then exit from it, into a world where the signification process has broken down, must have as its index a feminine gesture; the fluid, multi-layered action of letting down the hair. Rachael and Giselle both unloose their hitherto glossy, helmet-like hair at the moment they can no longer reconcile their culturally given status with the actual events and relations of recent hours.

In sequence 6, Giselle goes mad and Rachael flees to Deckard's apartment: an unpleasant truth intrudes on their understanding of social organization. Giselle finds her lover to be a prince engaged to a fine lady, Rachael discovers she is a replicant, a skinjob with no past and precious little future. Thus the process by which they have ascertained the truth in the past has proved false. They deconstruct the culturally constructed surface of their hair, whilst longing for the certainty of life before adulthood, when the object of desire was their mothers. Each enters a world where meaning and significance are chaotic, and discourse is disjointed. They experience their aphasias in a manner suitable to each text's moment of construction. Rachael, a creature of a technological age, stares at a picture of herself as a child, with her 'mother', in a scene that can never have existed. For a moment, the light changes and we see the image move. Giselle, ever the romantic heroine, becomes beautifully mad, her insanity manifesting itself in the breakdown of her field of linguistic organization - correct ballet technique.

This breakdown of linguistic correspondences can be related to Roman Jakobson's essay 'Two Aspects of Language and two Types of Aphasic Disturbance' (1956). Jakobson would have classified Giselle's aphasia as 'contiguity disorder', in as much as it related to the metaphorical aspect of language, in which one linguistic field erupts into another. [28] The beauty and the bad dancing that characterize Giselle's breakdown are not points of interpretation: when Tait frames her face with her hands to indicate beauty, and when her toes turn inwards, she is performing steps that were made for Carlotta Grisi by Perrot. The subversive tension between beauty and madness was present in the first *Giselle* .

'The Moving Still' and Giselle's aphasia are discussed at greater length later in this chapter. Here it is sufficient to note the corresponding images in the two texts, and their allusion to the wealth of mythic imagery concerning unloosed hair and (perverted) femininity. This tradition is also explored by Marina Warner, who traces its history from Lillith and Persophone through the Whore of Babylon to Blonda and Rapunzel. She identifies abundant and unruly hair as a beastly, animalistic symbol, alluding to the nearness of woman to the Devil and his creatures, due to her part in the temptation of Adam and the expulsion from Eden. This tendency is usually contained in the insistence that the 'good' heroine of hegemonic tales be blonde - a visible return to the tow-haired innocence of childhood, with maidenhair to show for her maidenhead: that she be, in every way, fair. Both Rachael, and the traditional Giselle the Birmingham Royal Ballet chose to put on their publicity material (Ravenna Tucker), are very dark. They are thus deviant, and their perverse attempts to participate in the masculine economy of desire must be punished; exile and destruction must follow.

The penultimate narrative sequence, where Roy and Myrtha's powers are ended, takes as its index the image of dawn. This is of course a widely used conceit; the horrors of the night are over and light can once again be shed on the proceedings. In *Giselle* , this is linked with the sound of church bells, as the evil Myrtha is sent back to her restless realms: the Wili is a species of vampire, so this is hardly surprising. For us, the image of the vampire vanquished by the first rays of morning is so commonplace now as to barely warrant comment. At the time of writing, this image is being used to advertise breakfast cereal.[29] Blade Runner is perhaps a little more affecting. Until we see Roy's dove fly into the drizzly blue sky, we don't realise that we haven't seen any such sky in the film before now. There has been night, and neon, and Tyrell's massive artificial twilight, and ill-lit clouds of sulphur - but never real sky. Roy Batty is not defeated, rather now, he *is* the light.

If we follow ordinary fairy tale logic, a man can be aggressive and transgressive, but if he dies a good death he is redeemed. No such second chance for Myrtha, who is condemned by her excesses of passion and appetite. But *Giselle* and *Blade Runner* are not ordinary fairy tales. Wakefield, in the essay 'Space on Flat Earth: *Blade Runner*' has also identified the scene of *Blade Runner* as instrumental in preventing it becoming an ordinary fairy tale. Not only do these narratives collapse the difference between the simulation and the object being simulated, but it uses the locale of that collapse as an index of simulation also:

> Like Disney, the scene of *Blade Runner* is entirely that of simulation, but it is a scene that accommodates tensions [...] it manages to interrogate that particular moment at which simulation merges with that which it simulates. In doing so, it allows the intrusion of irony. The frame of reference that is invoked is not reality but simulation itself [...] It is this [...] that distinguishes *Blade Runner* from Disney.[30]

The last moments of Roy and Myrtha are strangely unsatisfying and incomplete, like a well-known piece of music finished with an odd, unfamiliar minor chord. This is a tale where, just when we feel we ought to, we cannot hate the villains. No matter how icily beautiful and vengeful these two are, they are too clearly the victims for us to mistake them for the villains. The playing of Roy Batty's script by Rutger Hauer, and of Myrtha's choreography, danced by Sandra Madgwick, contribute greatly to these impressions: both are a long way from the robust pantomime stereotypes that colour similar stories. Each imparts a delicacy and pathos to their roles, thus setting up a mood that denies any opportunity of a simple happy ending, the sense of resolution, of 'all's right with the world' that are part of less remarkable closures. As the final scene unfolds, we are left with a dawn that lights two worlds signally not returned to the order that characterizes more carnivalesque narratives.

The short concluding sequences, where Deckard and Rachael make their escape, and Giselle leaves Albrecht and goes to her eternal rest, have already been referred to as 'open' - and thus radical, subversive 'closures'. This effect is compounded by the fact that the audiences of both genres - classical ballet and science fiction movie - tend to be informed. They have, in a sense, 'already read' both texts - and their alternative variations. So, beyond the multiple resolutions made available by the action of the narrative, others are being internally dramatized by the audience. As we watch Rachael and Deckard see the little silver unicorn left by Gaff, we are simultaneously watching them speeding over forests and mountains, and hearing the voice over we recall from the first version. Indeed, the title of the 1992 text insists that we do this: it is *The Director's Cut* - an authorized version, something to compare and contrast, one person's partial view. We can collude or resist, but we have a choice. Equally, a large percentage of this *Giselle's* audience will have seen other Giselles, and hence will be projecting other Albrechts onto the actual figure of David Yow. [31] They may recall an Albrecht who seems happy to return to Bathilde as she enters the glade, or who is found and given at least some consolation by his squire.

Hence this chapter argues that the final metonymic figure is that of the forest. It is obviously there in *Giselle*. In *Blade Runner: The Director's Cut*, it is there too, but as a subliminal image, or the picture that stays on your retina in bright sun, even after you look away. Either we are haunted by those final out takes from *The Shining*, cut in at Warner Brother's behest, (Ridley Scott chose not to shoot extra footage. He did the few takes of Deckard and Rachael in the aircar on a studio lot: all the glorious countryside is out-takes from the Stanley Kubrick horror movie *The Shining*) or we are flashed back to the forest of the dream sequence by the tinfoil unicorn. When Deckard nods after seeing the origami figure, it is a nod of recognition as well as assent. Evidently we are intended to recognize its significance too. In another 'bite' from the novel, the 'Electric Sheep' of the title has become a mythic beast, and many buffs have pointed to this as Deckard's realisation that he too is a replicant. (The evidence often cited is Bryant's original assertion that six replicants have mutinied off-world: Roy, Pris, Zhora, Leon, one killed during the Tyrell break in, which leaves one unaccounted for.) It barely matters whether technically he is or is not a replicant: the point is, that ideologically we all are skinjobs. In Kaja Silverman's words:

> *Blade Runner* insists that Deckard is fully as much of a replicant or a copy as is Rachael. His identity, like hers, is a composite of images that come to him from elsewhere, a representation of pre-existing representations [...he is] a fiction.[32]

This effect is reinforced by the fact that the Deckard of *The Director's Cut* is himself inarticulate - he is a poor communicator, lakcing the down-beat wit of the 1982 voice-over. This further problematizes and in effect feminizes Deckard, taking him out of type and placing him with the marginalized, emotional/hysterical characters. He is translated before our eyes: having seen the original film, we perceive the *Director's* Deckard according to what he lacks. This is also the case for Albrecht: mirroring Giselle's first act hysteria, he too becomes inarticulate, a 'bad dancer', in Act Two as the Wilis drive him to dance to his death. It is interesting to note that contemporary French audiences of the first *Giselle* may well also have perceived Albrecht as lacking - ballet was so much a women's art in the 1830s and 1840s that audiences often felt male dancing to be markedly inferior to that of Taglioni, Grisi and their peers.

Giselle and Albrecht, like Rachael and Deckard, also experience the existential trauma that attends the discovery that we are all just a collection of fictions, a collision of narratives. Both narratives close with their skinjobs dying among the trees: the scene superimposes the chaos and uncertainty of the natural world over the naturalized hierarchy and pre-ordained death dates of the technological world. Freedom, for Giselle and Albrecht and Rachael and Deckard, seems as cruel as their previous ideological slavery. But this is our liberation: denied access to either an Arcadian, idealized natural world, or a restored, hierarchical social world, we must negotiate a more complex, difficult understanding of both the narratives, and of the structures and strategies through which we construct the world.

These last two narrative sequences (9 and 10) are also linked by a less specific thread of imagery - that of crucifixion, introduced in sequence four. In *Giselle*, the ever present cross-marked grave takes on a new significance towards the end of Act II, as we see Albrecht's salvation in terms of Giselle's sacrifice. The image is reinforced by the way Albrecht holds his sword - blade pointing down, hilt gripped to his chest, crucifix-like, and by his final movements before the curtain falls. The prince advances toward the audience, his cloak fallen from him, with arms opening and imploring, in a gesture consistent with the most common nineteenth century iconic depiction of Christ crucified. Crucifixion imagery was central to much Romantic art, and is especially prevalent in women's poetry, which is discussed later in the chapter. The androgynous, emaciated, self-sacrificing Christ became a powerful encoding of middle-class women's experience, embodying both extreme self-denial and absolute self-possession and subversion of existing social structures. This was an image through which one could at once kill and glorify what Virginia Woolf later called 'The Angel in the Home' the crystallization of ideal nineteenth century femininity. The iconography of Christ also takes into its realm the heightened dissection, encoding and eroticization of the human body that occurred at this time. Almost as important to the era was the presentation of the artist as a Christ figure. He was a man abandoned and alienated, denied earthly parentage and spiritual certainty, starved both literally and emotionally, and torn between the desires of the flesh and the other-wordly aspirations that enshrined both extreme religiosity and the death wish in the crucifixion aesthetic.

The imagery in *Blade Runner* is even more marked, and again signals the metaphorical relationship between Romantic and Gothic texts, and works of science fiction. In this case, the Christ is Roy Batty. The replicant's body becomes more and more exposed throughout the film, until he is clad in only a latter day black Lycra loincloth. His physique is perfection, every muscle and sinew defined. Like the Christs of children's illustrated Bibles, he is tall, blond and blue eyed, an Aryan King of the Jews. He is equally aware of his approaching death ... his 'retirement'. So he crucifies himself, driving a nail through his own hand, as though the presentness of extreme pain can somehow act as a prophylactic against the immediate future and the nothingness it will bring. He too, near extinction, becomes salvation, grasping Deckard's also mangled hand as he falls from the tenement roof. Roy has captured or found a white dove, and he is clutching it as he speaks his final words; 'time to die'. This is the ultimate self-knowledge, of the moment of one's own death, as was 'father, into your hands I commend my soul' for the Christ dramatized for us by the New Testament. Life ends, his head bows in the rain, and the dove, like a soul migrating, ascends to the dawn. In both texts, a dense concentration of images has proliferated meanings and resonances as far flung as the attack ships and sea beams that Roy saw glittering in far off constellations.

5. Endings and Closures

In the final scene of *Blade Runner:The Director's Cut*, only Gaff speaks on the tenement roof, saying 'It's too bad she won't live - but then again, who does?' Returning to his apartment, Deckard finds Rachael alive, but asleep. He wakes her: she tells him she loves and trusts him. As they leave, they knock over a silver origami unicorn, and as they step into the elevator together, Gaff's final comment echoes again.

However, in the penultimate scene of the 1982 version, Deckard's voice-over cut in on the roof; we heard him musing as to why Roy acted as he did - 'perhaps at that moment he loved all life more than he loved his own. He wanted the answers to the same questions we all do: who am I, where do I come from, how long have I got? But I could only watch him die.' Gaff appears, speaks, Deckard returns to his apartment and, as he leaves with Rachael, seeing the unicorn, we hear the voice over again: 'Gaff had been here, but he'd let her live.'

The final scene then shows the lovers flying over miles of wooded countryside (familiar to American movie-goers as Big Sur, the countryside used in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*), and Deckard's voice comments that Tyrell had told him Rachael had no incept date - he doesn't know how long they have together - 'but then, who does?' The camera pans to the scenery below them, and 'Too Good To Be True" is heard once more. Indeed, Deckard's comment that Rachael has 'no incept date', sounds unreasoned and unlikely in comparison with the detailed scientific reasoning Tyrell supplies Roy with: Scott leaves us with an ending that is 'too good to be true'.

In the 1982 version, the ending, although compromised in Ridley Scott's view, was entirely appropriate to the subject matter.

Those final, studio sanctioned moments were, in their own way, a replication:

> This conclusion works not only to problematize further the notion of the 'natural', but to extend *Blade Runner'* s critique of referentiality to its own final images, which constitute a literal implant.[33]

By accident or design, *Blade Runner* achieves absolute self-referentiality; it doubles itself in dealing with doubleness. This notion of the double, or dopplegänger has long been represented in science fiction, and its generic predecessor,.Gothic fantasy.

The resonance of meaning in the 1992 version is concentrated upon the origami unicorn. This image bears the same pressure of communicating doubleness as the whole final scene in the original movie. It is a creature so incongruous and unlikely in the 2019 we have been shown, that we ask why Gaff should accidentally imitate Deckard's dream so accurately? One can only guess that Gaff has access to Deckard's memories in the same way Deckard had access to Rachael's (implanted) memories. Certainly, it reinforces the notion that Deckard is Bryant's missing replicant. Whether this is the intention or not, the effect is a final blurring and loss of difference between humans and replicants. Replicants are 'other' only because they are labelled thus:

> *Blade Runner* indicates that to be a replicant is to occupy the servile position ... humans and replicants [are] in a binary relation [...] it also immediately troubles that opposition by suggesting that it has no natural or essential base [...] that it may be purely positional.[34]

The two quotations above are taken from 'Back to the Future', by Kaja Silverman. This, and other contributions to the available scholarship on *Blade Runner* , focus in particular on its ending(s), thus enabling us to read the end of *Giselle* in more detail. In order to do this, we need to view a text's closure in the context of the form of the entire narrative. As Roger Webster has pointed out:

> The ideological dimension of narrative has been particularly evident in theories of narrative closure. The significance of the ending is clearly paramount in the way the narrative works. [35]

Giselle is a nineteenth century text: *Blade Runner* has the roots of its genre in the same century. Yet in terms of narrative structure and especially ending, both deviate from that monolith of nineteenth century form, the classic realist text. In this, the ending, or closure, is specifically constructed to restore and reinforce the 'truth' of certain social and economic relations. Hence the 'correct' reading strategy, which colludes with a particular world view, is rewarded with a closure which renders the narrative intelligible and gives a certain reassuring pleasure to the reader.

Many nineteenth century narratives have a superficially closed ending. Examples include *Great Expectations* (1861) by Charles Dickens, [36] and *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) by Jane Austen. [37] This is not to say that they cannot be read otherwise, or that they do not subvert the literary conventions of the day whilst presenting a culturally acceptable surface. Twentieth century genre descendants of Romantic and Gothic writing, including romances, and detective and spy stories, all of which trade in complex situations which are unravelled and solved to society's satisfaction, such as *Jamaica Inn* (1936), by Daphne Du Maurier,[38] and Captain W. E. Johns' *Biggles* (1930s) stories, [39] tend to lack the subversive or ironic strategies of their originators, showing more markedly conformist closures. Every character is re-placed in the hierarchy according to his 'correct' social status: any obstacles to true love are removed, virtue is rewarded, and vice punished. However, we can see from both *Blade Runner* s that Peter Wright's version of *Giselle* has the potential in it to go beyond the subtextually radical endings of the nineteenth century. Both texts generate endings that overtly refuse closure and deny the pleasure of 'right reading'.

The first, permitted pleasure we could ally to Roland Barthes's notion of *plaisir* - 'linked to the cultural enjoyment of identity, to a homogenizing movement of the ego': and the second, unlicensed pleasure to his term *jouissance* - ' a radically violent pleasure which shatters - dissipates, loses - that cultural identity, that ego'. [40] *Plaisir* is also associated with a repeated, expected, familiar enjoyment: *jouissance* with a singular, unrepeatable, defamiliarizing, sexual joy. This latter pleasure is the one that *Blade Runner* and *Giselle* engender, and in this, they are similar to two other nineteenth century Gothic narratives, *Frankenstein* (1818), [41] by Mary Shelley, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). [42] In both form and subject matter, these texts throw light on the narrative strategies of the subsequent revisions of the ballet and the film, and in particular upon their endings.

The first production of *Giselle* , a vampire story, was made fifty-six years before Stoker's *Dracula* . However, the modern mythology of the vampire has been deeply marked by this later narrative, and by popular images of the female vampire derived from it. *Blade Runner* , and to an extent every science fiction story featuring a constructed human also, was in some way a version of or a response to *Frankenstein*. It is immediately noticeable that all four texts share a narrative strategy - that is, they call attention to their own means of production. They are self-referential, or metafictional.

It has already been noted that *Giselle* is a dance about dancing, and *Blade Runner* is a picture about pictures. In the same way, *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* are writings about writing. Neither uses the 'transparent' and 'unmediated' first or third person narratives of classic realism that proceed from explanatory opening to clarifying closure without interruption, frame or metafictional reference. Instead, each is told through a series of letters, *Dracula* alleging several hands, *Frankenstein* one which tells another person's story. In this way, the fictive nature of the narrative is made clear, as is the partiality of the writer, and the construction of an 'intended' reader. Above all, the opaque nature of language is referred to. Rather than reproducing the world unmediated, language here is that which is constructing the world in these texts, as pictures construct the world in *Blade Runner* , and as dance does in *Giselle* .

Dracula and *Frankenstein* enable us to place the first *Giselle* , and the origins of *Blade Runner*, in a context of production and textuality. By looking back to those texts that contributed to the milieu in which the roots of Romantic ballet and science fiction were created, we can discover their original radical and reactionary impulses. The two Gothic horror stories are eponymously titled: so are *Giselle* and *Blade Runner* . By naming rather than explaining the central self of each of the texts in the titles, each is calling attention to the project of these narratives. That project is to study what it means to be that named self and ultimately what it is to be - or not be - human. In both novels, we see that the protagonists are faced with a linguistic split in the way they construct the world, and upon this split rests their existential crisis. Is one, in ascertaining the nature of one's existence in the world, to attempt to depict the world, or to explain the world? Is one to be scientific, or artistic? The deluding assumptions concerning language that are inherent in this schism, are actually the agents that permit the difficult, self-shattering, yet empowering open, subversive closures of all these narratives.

So what is happening, in terms of narrative, and particularly closure, towards the end of each of these two novels that is so illuminating of *Blade Runner* and *Giselle* ?

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* takes the form of a mariner's letters to his sister in England, relating in absolute detail Victor Frankenstein's testimony, given aboard the seafarer's ice-bound ship. (It is a structure borrowed by Joseph Conrad for his study of monstrous humanity, *Heart of Darkness* , published in 1902. [43]) In the final letter, the sister and the reader are informed of Frankenstein's death from pneumonia, the monster's reappearance, and his repentant confession and disappearance:

> He sprang from the cabin window as he said this, upon as ice raft which lay close to the vessel. He was soon borne away by the waves and lost in darkness and distance. [44]

Thus we are not informed of the monster's actual end, and are left with the presentiment that the young writer of the letters is, in experience and ambition, a twin of Frankenstein. Neither the monster, nor, more importantly, the human conditions for his creation, are satisfactorily destroyed. Although this bizarre, Gothic, proto-science-fiction tale bears the words 'The End' at its conclusion, we may not console ourselves with the certainty that it is either finished, or unique and unrepeatable. In both theme and form, *Frankenstein* denies us the familiar, anticipated pleasures of closure. Admittedly this 'They said it could never happen here' tone was later adopted by the genre to reinforce highly orthodox political notions (in particular in the 1950s science fiction films and television such as *It Came From Outer Space* (1953), [45] and *The Invaders* , thinly disguised McCarthyite parables against 'Reds under the beds'). *Frankenstein,* however remains a model of meta-fiction, alienation, textual subversion and deferred closure, written over a century and a half before these terms became fashionable.

Of those texts referred to above, the one that has made itself most open to 'subsequent production' by dint of its ending is *Frankenstein* .[46] The most well known remaking is the 1931 film of the novel, directed by James Whale and starring Boris Karloff as the monster. Although setting, plot and era are altered greatly, Karloff's flat headed, bolt necked creature, wearing a too small suit, gave us not just the defining image of Frankenstein's monster, but *the* image of the constructed and unnatural human body for the twentieth century. The movie is also meta-fictional, using a filmic framing device, whereby the action commences with an M.C. entering a stage to inform the audience (titillatingly) that this is not a film for the frail and easily shocked. This is followed by a kaleidoscope of eyes (interesting, in the light of the eye symbolism discussed later), and the opening titles.

The closure of this *Frankenstein* film is important because it echoes the end of *Dracula,* and of some reproductions of *Giselle* . The monster is pursued into an old windmill by the villagers, which is then set alight. We see the beast pinned down under a burning beam. The action then cuts to a quite bizarrely incongruous and upbeat scene, wherein the servant girls and the Baron stand outside the closed bedroom doors of Henry Frankenstein and his new bride. Amid much giggling and wine, the Baron makes a toast: 'Here's to a son for the house of Frankenstein'. It is very likely this was intended to provide a positive ending for Depression audiences, and to mollify the censors, the Hays Commission, and studio, Universal, with a happy, family-centred ending. We can read the ending more darkly, permitting an ironic subtextual reading of Frankenstein's 'son'. To modern eyes the sequence resembles those supposedly uncanny moments at the end of horror movies; happy music slides into a minor key, and we glimpse the monster, who remains unvanquished, thus promising a further sequel. The very strangeness and plurality of this ending, rather than closing the text, leaves us even more disturbed by it.

In the light of this, it is significant that of all these texts, the most obviously closed ending is that of *Dracula* . After over four hundred pages of open and self-referential discourse about sex, death, power and blood, in the final one thousand words Dracula is killed, Mina Harker (a vamp-in-waiting) is redeemed, and we learn that the Harkers' young son grows up happily ever after, being dandled on vampire-hunter Van Helsing's knee. In the whole text, there is nothing quite so surreal or bizarre as these final couple of pages, sitting so very uncomfortably with the rest of the narrative.

This is a suspect restoration; there is something perverted about such sweetness and light when it follows such absolute darkness. Our desire to 'read right' is twice corrupted. Once by the nature and structure of the tale, and once more by the closure. Thus contaminated, the reader loses his taste for the certainties of realist fiction. The only way to make the closure genuinely disconcerting is to revert to the classic form, because then we realise that 'plaisir' is no longer enough, that our reading pleasure can only come from deviation. *Dracula* also draws attention to the 'storyness' of the tale. Like every truly subversive fairy tale, *Dracula* makes us aware that the telling of a story is a mediation, that language intervenes between its own production and reception. The telling of such stories must have an inherent strategy for his own reproduction: 'replication', in fact. Indeed, even amid the righteous excesses of *Dracula*'s final pages, there is a subtle deconstruction. None of his remaining papers or notebooks, Harker adjudges, is sufficiently authoritative to give proof of their experiences in Transylvania.

> We could hardly ask anyone, even did we wish to, to accept these as proofs of so wild a story. [47]

The story cannot - must not - be proved. It can only be told. So it is that so many 'end' not with 'The End', but (as Marina Warner points out) with '... and in your hands I leave it.' [48]

One of the most remarked upon features of many nineteenth century fictions is the concern with the limits and excesses of science and with the extent to which an individual can do good through scientific endeavour. Always there is the warning, the horror of science grown monstrous. The impossibility of fully and beneficially explaining the world without vile and destructive consequences is mirrored in these texts by the overt demonstration, through form, of the impossibility of representing the world through language (or pictures or dance). The textual testimony that we never speak language, that it speaks us, generating unintended meanings, enacts the Victorian, Gothic fear that science, and especially 'natural' science, will always unleash more than we intend it to. This is most presciently manifested by those closures over which the authors consciously deny themselves control. Instead, meaning is able to generate unchecked: this mimesis of the ramifications of scientific activity throws the constructedness of the natural into focus.

What is especially interesting is that in the closures of these narratives, the 'natural' that is being at once constructed and deconstructed, is somewhat different from that which is usually naturalized; that is, an unequal social hierarchy. Here the natural is also the oddly Victorian conception of the elemental and physical construction of the world. This notion is at once an act of acknowledgement of God's wondrous creation, and also of Man's even more wondrous ability to catalogue, to explain - to possess and master - creation. Thus the open closure, a closure in which the natural is seen to be both culturally constructed and only partially controlled, is an admission of Man's failed attempts at mastery of the world.

Hence when a choice is made about closure, we also see that these choices are rooted in assumptions about gender and sexuality in the modern Western world. When such endings proliferate meaning, it is at the end of texts whose focus has been the pleasure and self-destruction that come from sexual desire and its consequence, procreation. In these tales of gender and generation, the shared anxiety concerns the effect of men who can 'breed'. Barthes detailed his theory of the pleasures of reading as being analogous to sexual pleasures. Nowhere is the text more about sex, more about desire and pleasure, or the assertion and the passing away of self (the mastery and the *petit mort* of orgasm), than in that moment just before closure, climax.

These tensions provide us with a variety of available reading positions. The story that is being told about the role of gender in society is available for interpretation. On one hand, we can read from all these texts a condemnation of masculine, patriarchal values. If taken to the absolute limit, whereby even gestation and parturition become male domains, thus wholly excluding 'feminine' values, we see the world monstered and destroyed. Creation can only be beastly. (It is significant that Frankenstein's monster and Roy Batty in *Blade Runner* do their greatest violence when denied a female 'other', the bride that Giselle represents.)

On the other hand, this gender story is just as easily recruited to the ranks of orthodox phallocentric thought. That is to say, when women desert their traditional role, or worse, usurp the male role of profligate sexual pleasure without responsibility (represented in *Giselle* by her love of dancing), they force men into the 'unnatural' position of having to bear and rear the race's children: this is a concern we can see articulated again and again from the nineteenth century onwards. Thus by showing the result of exclusively male generation, the text is not demonstrating the folly of masculine values, but rather demanding that women keep their place, or the monstering of the race will be their fault.

The extent to which either of these reading positions is adopted has to depend, to a great extent, on the material conditions surrounding the production of any given version of the text. Mary Shelley's novel and Ridley Scott's film seem to be absolute condemnations of the treatment of all groups outside the power base in a society governed by a masculine value system. And yet much of the criticism aimed at the 1982 *Blade Runner* focused on the inhumanity, the coldness of its women, implying that Scott's filmic progeny were monstrous because there were no more 'proper' women around in his kind of Hollywood. Equally, the many *Frankenstein* movies have tended to include a romantic sub-plot that reinforces the rightness of women as wives and mothers - that by fulfilling this role they are negating Frankenstein's misguided need to procreate.

Similarly, we can see how Giselle and Mina Harker are re-placed into the 'correct' symbolic order by the closures of *Giselle* and *Dracula*. Like the fool on Carnival day, they can play awhile at self-possession and sexual desire, but tomorrow they will be re-encoded as sainted virgin, maternal wife, or damned whore. (Even in the most recent celluloid *Dracula,* [49] directed by Francis Ford Coppola in 1992, all attempts to present female desire are made in terms of writhing, sex-starved rock-video glamour.) Although we are offered the possibility of women who are complex, multiple and able to act on their own desires, too often what is received by the reader is women who are cyphers. Although *Blade Runner* can help us look at the radical aspects of *Giselle,* texts such as *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* demonstrate the ability of surrounding cultural conditions to subsume these subversive tendencies.

6. Bodies

At the end of Act One, we watch a choreography of consumption: Giselle is both the commodity to be purchased, and the weak tubercular patient. Giselle's body, before and during death, is passed from one claimant to the other, appearing passive, but with the active participation of the ballerina. She is propelled, textually by her madness and memories, and technically by the ballerina's strength, in a dark and deadly parody of the Christian marriage service. In the latter, the bride's hand is held by her father until it can be given by the vicar to her new husband. The symbolism is clear: woman is both goods, to be owned and traded by men, and child - an incompetent, incapable of self-ownership for fear that she will do herself damage. After the sequence in which Giselle and Bathilde mimed their espousal to Albrecht with a gesture towards their left ring fingers, Giselle enacts a grotesque version of this, the wedding ceremony she had anticipated.

Her death is followed in Act II by her body's resurrection, veiled and white-clad, almost the bride she should have been. Underlining the lack of intrinsic value of the bridal goods, she is reconstituted as Wili, etherealized, remade as literally nothing. She joins the other nothings in the forest, the group of once-women who have been condemmed to eternal purgatory for failing to be incorporated into gender difference and the symbolic order through marriage. The fact that they are, by definition, jilted, and not inherently rebellious, does not absolve them of the accusation of unnaturalness. In Gautier's libretto these women were unable to 'satisfy their passion for dancing', being possessed of 'tanzlust'. This lustful appetite symbolizes sexual desire or, far more dangerously, desire for a voice.

Like Charles Dickens' Miss Havisham, the malevolent and wistful Hecate of *Great Expectations* and another woman whose only 'fault' is to be mislaid property, Gautier's Wilis also become a repository for perverted and monstrous femininity and a school for vengeful, and therefore supernatural, female power. Myrtha is to educate Giselle into the Wili's cabal of revenge in the same way Havisham does Estelle. Gautier described the Wilis as 'cruel noctural dancers, no more forgiving than living women are to a tired waltzer', characterizing Myrtha as 'resorting to an infernal and feminine device', meaning the ability to entice and destroy.[50] In order for this initiation to occur, there must be a doubling of Giselle's body; she must join the ranks of dolls and deities that constitute ballet's usual treatment of 'abnormal' female experience.

In Act II, Giselle's body is remade as a perfect, if immaterial, copy of her own body. She is a simulacrum. That is to say:

> simulation is completely dominant as the effect of the existence and operations of the simulacrum. The unreal is no longer that of dream or of fantasy or a beyond or a within, it is that of hallucinatory resemblance of the real with itself. [51]

Except of course that this is Guiliana Bruno's description of Rachael in *Blade Runner*. Yet this and the following quotation could easily apply to Giselle as she not only simulates but becomes the simulacrum of a real person (in this case, herself). She and the replicants go beyond aping the real from which they were copied; they inhabit the real, and its operations.

> Perfect simulation is thus [the] goal, and Rachael manages to achieve it. To simulate, in fact, is a more complex act than to imitate or feign. To simulate implies actually producing in oneself some of the characteristics of what one wants to simulate. It is a matter of internalizing the signs or the symptoms to the point where there is no difference between 'false' and 'true', 'real' and 'imaginary'. With Rachael the system has reached perfection [...] To say that she simulates her symptoms, her sexuality, her memory, is to say that she realises, experiences them.[52]

Thus the etherealized Giselle and the replicants are not 'like' humans: to all intents they are humans. The theories of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu are particularly relevant when considering the figure of the simulacrum in relation to ballet because they acknowledge the importance of movement in social positioning. Bourdieu noted that gendering and indeed 'classing' of the body happen as a result of certain naturalized bodily practices - stance, gesture etc - being taken on below the level of consciousness, but not in the Freudian unconscious either. In his terminology the doxa - naturalized assumptions about class, gender and the like - are embodied in the hexis:

> Bodily hexis is political mythology realized, embodied, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable way of standing, speaking, walking and thereby of feeling. The opposition between male and female is realized in posture, in the gestures and movements of the body. [53]

Thus the simulating bodies in *Giselle* and *Blade Runner* feel as they move: they feel as humans because they move as humans. Significantly, Bourdieu sees early childhood experiences within specific social settings as being particularly significant in constructing the habitus - group (family or class) conditions - which dictates the hexis. Whether real or implanted, it is the memory of family experience, the habitus of Giselle and the replicants which makes their hexis identical to that of those who are not Other, who are central to the production of ideas which embody Bourdieu's doxa. The crime of the simulacrum is not to be different, but to be the same as those who occupy the power base.

And yet the actual treatment of these simulacra, their positioning in the social and symbolic orders would suggest inferiority in every way. It seems that the ideological and artistic positioning of their bodies easily permits either collusion with a dominant reading (relief that these unnatural beings have been removed from real human - i.e.white heterosexual male - society) or at best a liberal reading (twinges of sympathy for creatures so 'like' humans.) Critics have made similar criticisms of both texts. Of *Blade Runner* it was said:

> When signs of humanity are so fleeting in both humans and replicants, the audience has no stake in their life or death.
>
> *Blade Runner* has nothing to give the audience [...] it hasn't been thought out in human terms. [54]

And Evan Alderson concludes of *Giselle*::

> the etherealization of the female body that is imaged in *Giselle* represents a particular moment within the general history of patriarchy in which the ascendancy of private economic relations called forth an image of woman. [55]

Admittedly, *Blade Runner* is full of technology and violence, and *Giselle* of over-represented women who seem little more than chattels. But before we accept these signs as meanings, we must take into account two aspects of the texts. The first is their status as popular and public art, and the second is the ideologically resistant figure of the simulacrum that dominates them both.

When creators of popular narratives stemming from nineteenth century traditions deal with the encoded female body, they have to balance their comment with the prevailing cultural climate. Where inscribing all their comments upon one body would be too subversive, two bodies are used: the radical narrative is safely preserved, but also compromised, for co-existing inscriptions become oppositional. One example is Charlotte Brönte's narrative strategy in *Jane Eyre* (1847). [56] Brönte commences her climactic chapter with the words 'Reader, I married him.' This clearly suggests an imagined or implied reader who is used to the conventions of the serialized romantic fiction of the day. Indeed, Emily Brönte's introduction to *Wuthering Heights* (1846) tells how the sisters resolved to write for publication. [57] If Charlotte meant only to write a romance, it seems doubtful that she would have included the figure of Bertha Rochester, the dark, shambolic and lunatic first wife of Jane's future husband and archetypal 'mad woman in the attic' in her Yorkshire landscape. In order for Charlotte's story to be acceptable as a book, she had to keep the two aspects of femininity - the licensed and the unlicensed, the natural and the unnatural - in two different bodies, although they belong to the same psyche.

This is the popular artist's dilemma, the likelihood that in making one's central character whole only subtextually, one is reinforcing the publicly authorized fragmentation of female power, experience and knowledge. This fear of letting women gather together and pool their understanding (which is represented in *Giselle* in the heroine's interrupted relationship with her mother) dates back to Medieval times, when large groups of 'gossips' would be ridiculed and persecuted even to their deaths, during the great witch hunts which followed the Black Death across Europe in the fourteenth century. Marina Warner notes that originally a gossip was a godparent, but by 1362 meant the female friends who were invited to the 'gossiping', or christening feast. By 1600, it referred to a woman who engaged in malicious and idle chatter.

> Gossip was perceived to be a leading element in women's folly, and in the sex's propensity to foment riot. Yet the changes in meaning of the word 'gossip', however perjoratively weighted, illuminate the influential part of women in communicating through informal and unofficial networks, in contributing to varieties of storytelling, and in passing on their experience.[58]

By the nineteenth century these capabilities had become socially and artistically over-expressed to the point where more than one aspect of femininity could not be seen to co-exist in one body, be it a an individual woman's body, or a social body of women. Banes points up the growing social unease with such groups of articulate women at this time as overtly reflected in Romantic ballet.

> Surely, however elegant they looked on the ballet stage, the Wilis, that threatening mob of spiteful women, must have called up cultural memories of activist women during the Revolution and the Terror [...] As dance historian Joellen Meglin points out, "The Romantic ballet communicated a horror of congregations of women [...] Women acting in concert were characterized as vindictive, wrathful and remorseless." [...] This message of peace and reconciliation [Giselle's self-sacrifice and Myrtha's defeat] coming from the tamed Furies, was what French post-revolutionary audiences wanted to hear from women. [59]

Banes draws our attention to two other groups of women capable of causing a similar social tension: nuns and spinsters. Both can be glimpsed in the Wili's make-up - their shrouded, silent sorority, and their failure to marry. Nuns had long generated dis-ease ... the intimation was that they were somehow the unholy antithesis of their stated selves:

> The Wilis ... were in a sense anti-nuns, dedicated to an unholy mission .. the idea that nuns indulged in homosexual activities was already a familiar theme in literature at least since the eighteenth century [...] de Sade's *L'Histoire de Juliette* (1797) [has] the adolescent heroine initiated into sapphic love at her convent school. [60]

Meglin sees this as a specifically post-revolutionary anxiety, wherein reaction against fraternity, so prized during the Revolution, was inverted into a fear of sorority.

> Illicit relations or incest with a [...] sibling or a sister of the convent, were an obsession and sin célèbre. [61]

Spinsters were not merely an ideological threat, but a literal, economic burden on social order.

> The spinster brought shame on the bourgeois family ... The Wilis were like a pack of surplus single women - unprocreative old maids (still a sexual threat, since celibacy was as frowned upon in French society at this time as promiscuity) or potential prostitutes. [62]

So intense was the revilement of women who were at variance with the marriage convention that the most common subversive strategy for nineteenth century proto-feminists, was to hide their radical notions behind a cloak of absolute adherence to social expectations. This form of protest - the simulation of extreme self-denial and piety - was ultimately self-destructive: there was as yet no voice of resistance. The only other alternative was silence. Hence when the doubled heroine locates the radical aspect of her self in an other who is socially unacceptable, she is pursuing a risk strategy that may ultimately result in the destruction or subsumption of them both. But at the very least, her work attains public status, where there is the opportunity for deconstruction in reception. This risk strategy is embodied in

Giselle : whilst it can be seen to present the demands of early feminist movements as the Saint-Simonians, who required sexual equality and marriage for love only, it also 'assuages those anxieties' about such demands. '*Giselle* presents an individualistic rebellion aginst the conventions of marriage, only to soften the message with centrist compromise.' [63]

Of course, the choreographers of *Giselle* , Petipa and Coralli, were male, and the libretto was written by a man, Théophile Gautier. We can surmise from his writings that many of Gautier's views on gender certainly upheld the status quo at *Giselle's* moment of production, and would be seen to be reactionary nowadays. He held the belief that 'an actress is a statue or a picture which is exhibited to you, and can be freely criticized'. Three years after Gautier made *Giselle*, his fascination with the perceived division in woman's 'nature' was demonstrated in this comment about Marie Taglioni:

> What rhythmic movements! What noble gestures! What poetic attitudes and above all, what a sweet melancholy! What lack of restraint, yet how chaste! [64]

With *Giselle* he was able to perfect the form this dualism should take - a woman who is both spiritual and sensual, but in whom these qualities are sited in separate, identical bodies. In this sense, Giselle is the ideal Romantic heroine, satisfying male fantasies whilst assuaging male fears.

Its immediate male authors notwithstanding, *Giselle* is also located in a wider tradition of European folk tale and fairy story - a tradition that has accommodated many aspects of female experience, and that has often been a female art form: until male retellings by the likes of Perrault and Gautier, such stories were safe guarded within a female oral tradition. Gautier may have inscribed on Giselle's body orthodox notions of gender relations and gendered movement, but traces of an earlier, more subversive *Giselle* are clearly visible under the diaphanous layers of the sylph's white dress.

While we must concede that Giselle's final actions bring Albrecht salvation through love, thus conforming to her proper role in society, this is almost an incidental consequence. The one overriding act that characterizes Giselle is refusal. She refuses to let her body be codified as either virgin or whore: she will not play submission or monstrosity. The older female tradition wins a partial victory through her rejections, but Gautier's vision demonstrates that, in nineteenth century Europe, there was no outlet, no home for such a woman, and that her refusals would end in her extinction.

There is one other aspect of the doubled body of Giselle that makes this a radical text, which has previously been referred to as the 'ideologically resistant figure of the simulacrum'. Thus far, this chapter has presented the doubling process as a risky subversion for women, and a fantasy fulfilment strategy for men. However, doubling introduces a quality to the piece that is consistent with Giselle's relation to the Gothic branch of Romanticism. That quality is what Freud called the 'unheimlich'; the uncanny. It is significant that one of the pieces upon which Freud based his discussion of the uncanny was *The Sandman*, by E.T.A. Hoffman. [65] This compact Gothic tale involves a 'replicant' - a perfect female automaton who is so identical to a 'real' girl (and beautiful with it) that a young man falls in love with her. Like Rachael and Giselle, she is uncanny because she is at once familiar and strange. This process of making strange the familiar, like so many other aspects of these texts, can be colonized by radical and reactionary concerns.

To see woman doubled, taken out of the social hierarchy and re-placed, identical but suddenly oddly visible, can have the effect of allowing the audience to re-view the positioning of women within the conventions of femininity. It makes literal before us the constructedness of gender difference. Learning that Giselle and Rachael are 'manufactured', and yet still identical to their previous selves also makes strange our acceptance of the 'natural'. That the opposite can be true, that the presence of a replicated female can reinforce and exaggerate the socially constructed expectations of feminine perfection, is demonstrated by Mandy Merck in *Perversions.* [66]

Merck identifies simulated women as a device intended to mock supernatural perfection when exhibited in 'real' women, and to indicate their role in castration anxieties: they are phallic mothers. She pulls together several Freudian notions - the uncanny, the metaphorical phallus and the castration complex - and locates them in the image of the overseeing eye that frequently denotes narratives of simulated femininity. This eye (which dominates *Blade Runner*) not only creates a subtext of phallic imagery that undermines the radical potential of the doubled or artificial woman (a doppelgänger). It also sets up a dynamic of looking: we are positioned as spectators, as visual consumers of these women, as Albrecht is of Giselle. Concentrating on the texts *Friendship's Death* , a modern science fiction film of a female android who befriends a war correspondent, and *The Sandman* , Merck notes:

> The Sandman steals children's eyes, and the eye, Freud argues [...] is consistently equated in unconscious thought with the male organ. The young [hero] is threatened with a visit from the Sandman [...] later he discovers that the beautiful woman he spies upon is a clockwork automaton with ruined eyes [...] his obsession with her is the narcissistic regard for a projected self. [67]

Finding the same theme in *Friendship's Death,* Merck observes of the journalist's daughter:

> Notably missing is her mother, or, indeed, any adult woman - a structural absence which makes perfect sense if we conclude that this is a drama of male narcissism, rather than that of the 'Other.' [...] this sad tale of a lost superwoman is very much a man's story. [68]

Merck's words recall the 'structuring absences' noted at the beginning of this chapter. By using *Blade Runner* 's narrative of looking to redirect our eyes in *Giselle,* we perceive these structuring absences more clearly.

The blue, overseeing eye of *Blade Runner* not only makes us self-conscious of the process of looking, it also demonstrates that even when we look, we tend to see that which we have been ideologically trained to see, and not that which is actually apparent. Kaja Silverman, in 'Back to the Future', defines this eye as a site of collapse for our ideological expectations:

> It [the blue eye] is never explicitly claimed by any of the film's characters, although it could conceivably belong to Leon, Batty, or Deckard. The [...] shots of the blue eye thus do not work to map out a spectatorial position for us on one side or other of the human/replicant divide, but to posit vision as the site of a certain collapse between those categories. [69]

In the 'Voight-Kampff' empathy test, in which certain scenarios are presented to the subject, whilst scanners monitor pupil dilation responses, the eye is set up as the location of true humanity. However, Silverman observes an anomaly that, once pointed out, illustrates how we are trained to see authorized ideological constructions:

> whereas Leon's eyes are emphatically blue, the eye imaged on the video monitor is unquestionably green. In the later scene in which Rachael is given the Voight-Kampff test, the video monitor again shows a green eye, although hers are chocolate brown. From the very onset of *Blade Runner*, we are encouraged to understand the primary difference organising the world of Los Angeles, 2019 - the difference, that is, between replicants and humans - as an ideological fabrication. [70]

In *Giselle*, looking, and the function of looking in the ideological process, is couched in an older device, whereby costume is used to indicate the constructedness of social status. At Albrecht's first appearance in the ballet, we see him divest himself of the trappings of his nobility: his rich cape and jewelled sword. This is a simple but effective theatrical conceit that is often seen in Shakespeare, demonstrating that the person of the king is only recognisable as such when he wears the garb of the office of the king. Again, social difference is being signalled as constructed, not natural or inherent. We also note that Giselle does not 'exist' independently; she is brought into being by the gaze of others. Even when she performs her first 'solo', it is because Albrecht has knocked at her cottage door, and is watching her. Thus the audience is placed in a position of privilege along with Albrecht. However, as in *Blade Runner* , the function of the eye, and the positioning of the spectator, is later problematized.

The first instance where the propriety of the controlling gaze is called into question is towards the end of Act I. Having already seen Albrecht the Prince (as opposed to Loys) hailed into existence first by the sound of the hunting horn, and then specifically by his discarded royal clothes, we watch as our faith in the objectivity and mutuality of vision disintegrates during Giselle's breakdown. Her 'language' becomes interrupted and fractured: her references become unstable. There is no essential link between sign and signified. Giselle is obviously 'seeing' objects and events that are not apparent on stage. This makes it clear to us that language mediates the world, rather than revealing or expressing it. In other words, one's own world is not *the* world. This fact is exaggerated in the extreme dislocation of the conventional gaze that Giselle's madness demonstrates.

This collapsing of accepted spectatorial positions is echoed in Act II by the partial, occasional visibility of the Wilis, and the further use of clothing; veils, bridal gowns, Albrecht's cape, to signify the ephemeral, cultural status of those things we tend to consider to be concrete and natural. These signs, because they carry with them certain licensed meanings including mourning, virginity and power, are a sort of reactionary ideological antidote to the subversive narrative of looking at and thus consuming the human body that is being generated subtextually.

Blade Runner is more effective than *Giselle* in using the bodies within it to deconstruct the metaphorical bodily assumptions that have been routinely used to justify social inequality for centuries. This is mainly because we are of the same moment as the film; we are 'cyber-literate', and thus better equipped to engage with both subtext and its potential antidotes. *Blade Runner* is also far more overtly a narrative of looking: it makes the consumption of the body as commodity very literal. It is no coincidence that when Deckard locates the renegade replicant Zhora she is working in a strip joint (with a replicant snake to complete her act). Indeed, he tells her he represents a union that checks on artists' working conditions, including whether the management tries to watch performers through dressing room peep holes. Zhora makes a point of dressing in front of him, but in an outfit that most fully reveals her body to casual viewers. Her death is equally visible and consumerist, crashing at speed through pane after pane of sheet glass in a shopping mall.

This is a moment when, as with the ending of the 1982 version, the film itself is the replicant. The scene's very tackiness (retained in the 1992 version) seems to reinforce our reading strategy: the dying Zhora is obviously a male stunt double in a bad wig. The replicants express their difference, the 'otherness' of their bodies in death. Their otherness is cultural, not actual: if they are to be treated as other, then death, the cessation of the body, seems to be the moment of resistance, the moment when they assert their difference as power not weakness. That this is also true in *Giselle* gives rise to the next subject area in this series of 'misreadings'.

7. Death and Resistance

Difference in death is an expression of and resistance to the commodification of the body: the life and death of the replicant Pris will be the next focus of this chapter. The audience is first introduced to her as a machine within a machine; a computer readout denotes her as a 'standard pleasure model'. When first we see her walking through the trash-piled Los Angeles streets she is, in Kaja Silverman's words 'the veritable incarnation of punk'.[71] In fact she is - or rather, has become, if we take her moment of production to be 1982, rather than 2019 - one of the first cyberpunks. Cyberpunk is a genre, an aesthetic that has added the incongruously tawdry sleaziness of high-technology (porn on the internet, virtual sex etc.,) to the social disaffectation of punk, with a good measure of trendy deviant sex thrown in. In its etymological history, 'punk' once signified a prostitute, usually male, or 'rent boy', especially in prison, and Pris, played by Daryl Hannah, exhibits in her clothing socially acknowledged signs of both androgeny and commercially available sex and enslavement: high heels, a bedraggled fur coat, smeared make-up, stockings and suspenders - and a studded dog collar.

Of all the replicants, it is she who most clearly identifies herself with machinery and automata. Once inside J.F. Sebastian's tenement, she is positioned with Sebastian's toys and dolls, both physically and culturally. Merck's analysis of *Friendship's Death* (the original short story featured a male android) comments on the functional relation between women and machinery:

> Friendship [the female android] claims kinship with the typewriter itself [...] when pronounced by the childlike male android of Wollen's original story, this identification with a machine so lowly ('something in between tool and machine') and so culturally feminised has a certain impact. Coming from this self-possessed female successor, it seems merely coy.[72]

Writing about gender trends in information technology, Sadie Plant (described by the *Guardian* as a 'cyberfeminist') agrees with this identification, but finds some alteration in attitudes by 1995:

> An incredibly high number of men log on [to the Internet] as women [...] Most older feminists would say this is just men playing around, it doesn't alter the power structures. That's

> probably true in lots of cases, but there is something interesting going on, partly because of the scale of it. I am interested in the notion that there is a process of feminisation. I think this is connected with our being more integrated with machinery. Historically, women have been more intimately connected with it, that is, women have been machines for men - secretaries, telephonists, the communicating machine, passing on messages for men. [73]

Pris actually pretends to be a doll at one point in the movie, and she takes delight in performing, doll-like, for her men, Roy and J.F. She paints her face with an air brush one can imagine being used to colour in toy soldiers in a factory. She unflinchingly plunges her hand into boiling water to retrieve an egg. She performs gymnastic stunts that appear super-human in speed and flexibility. She dangles the severed head of a Barbie doll by its hair, more in recognition than cruelty. And she dies like a mechanical doll also - a furious, insane automaton, thrashing and stamping and heaving in movements that owe more to shorted circuitry and spurting hydraulic fluid than to broken bones and seeping blood. This is her resistance. If she must live like a doll, then she will die like one too. But she is not a doll, and we cannot doubt this, for it is she who speaks the Cartesian maxim 'I think therefore I am'.

In Gelsey Kirkland's first autobiography, her captions beneath pictures of her as Coppélia (a mechnical doll whose story is based on Hoffman's *Sandman*) and Giselle, are in the same vein. 'Not a doll', and 'Not a Wili', she wrote. By writing her memoires - her memories - Kirkland was resisting being encoded as doll or

Wili. This section is an exploration of the close relationship between resistance, death, and memory.

One of the most key features these texts deal with is the notion of memory as a form of resistance. The very act of remembering is seen as inherently political, and is thus identified as being a threat to the dominant ideology. This chapter has made repeated references to these narratives as myths and fairy tales, both of which are forms of telling that allow ritualized re-telling. That is, they provide a highly resistant structure for a collective act of remembering. Thus one enshrines a story in a narrative strategy which, by its very nature, resists destruction with the death of any one teller. For many cultures, to remember in this way is to resist the death of the culture. Examples of this trope include the presentation of the Bible as children's stories, or the way doggerel for children is integrated into the Jewish Passover ceremony, thus ensuring that it and its inscribed cultural and religious lore, is fondly repeated every year.

For individuals - specifically for Giselle, Myrtha, Roy and Rachael - remembering is their way of resisting their deaths. To re-tell, to re-remember the past is to re-invent the self, to imagine it as other than an index for death. These four characters all resist their cultural inscription as modernized versions of the medieval Death from the Danse Macabre. They are figures from a morality play, cyphers that represent only death. Roy and Rachael are constructed to die in four years, a strategy intended to prevent them gaining access to sufficient memory to allow resistance. Roy knows that having a story to tell gives him some chance of cheating death. Ultimately, as his final words show, he has died because he has failed to pass his story on, and everything he has witnessed will be lost 'like tears in rain'.

Several analysts have noted the importance of memory in *Blade Runner* and linked it to Freud's notion of the primal scene, in particular, Elissa Marder in her paper '*Blade Runner* 's Moving Still'. She focuses on the Voigt-Kampf empathy test as the central location of the 'return of the repressed', the traumatic remembering of the primal scene.

This can be taken further; the whole of both *Blade Runner* and *Giselle* can be viewed as 'empathy tests'. If they are a dance about dancing and a picture about pictures, then each entire piece is self-referential in the extreme: memory is nothing but a reference to self. Each narrative is a reconstruction of the original moment of a child's transfer of affection from subject to object, and the attendant awareness of sexual difference. According to Freud this traumatic event is repeated through memory and dream later in life, but only through a process of substitution - representation through symbol. This is because the mind of the witness is invariably too young to comprehend the scene as it happens, so it must return, in more adult but more traumatic terms, over and over until it is understood. Hence parentage and sexual difference are of prime importance in each narrative. *Giselle* and *Blade Runner* are two returning primal scenes wherein the stories of the protagonists function as symbols or substitutions for the subject/object relations engendered by representation in film and ballet. The movie itself is the replicant, the ballet itself the Wili. By watching them, we are analysing our status as audience and as human subject, through their reconstructions and their re-rememberings of 'the past'. Silverman concludes:

> We are exposed to the terms through which human subjectivity is ostensibly defined throughout the film (and through film generally).[74]

That the same is true of *Giselle* and its relation with the medium of dance can be seen in Giselle's breakdown at the end of Act I. Her reconstruction of the past - the return of the repressed - is clearly both traumatic and metaphorical. She 'remembers' before the audience by repeating the familiar sequences of steps, the *leitmotifs* , from her courtship, but she does so in a fractured, disordered grammar - her 'language' becomes aphaisic. Her feet turn in, she stumbles and falters, and she fails to satisfy the requirements of correct classical technique. However, at no point does her movement actually become ugly: Giselle is still beautiful, even when she is not graceful. Beauty tends to recuperate a conservative reading from a potentially disruptive area of the text. The specific tropes wherein this ideology of beauty is sited, are the focus of the next section.

8. Love and Salvation

All texts, and all interpretations of texts, are partial. They have at their heart, concealed or stated, a political position to support and promote. This position may be mixed, and of course will vary with the reception of the text, and the material conditions surrounding it. This chapter has argued that *Blade Runner* is a radical text, and that, by using it to read *Giselle* we can recuperate that ballet's subversive components. However, there are certain thematic aspects that limit this potential. Central to the limitations placed on the story of *Giselle* are the figures of love and salvation. These are the archetypal models, the tropes, that protect and reproduce the beauty which Alderson describes as 'an absolute defence of ideological naturalization'. [75]

This image of beauty as an ideology that is self-protecting and self-generating is a useful one. The models in which it is conserved, love and salvation, although originally made manifest in Romantic art, are reproduced in Gothic and science fiction narratives also. A survey of the episodes of love and salvation in both texts demonstrates this. In the nineteenth century there was a moment when beauty became a compensation for a limited life. *Giselle* and *Blade Runner* also deal with limited lives:

> I want more life, fucker!

This is the demand made by Roy Batty: Giselle requires to be read as making an identical demand to Roy Batty's. However, subversive nineteenth century texts produced by women had to be cloaked in the discourse of extreme comformism, which was then at its height. This peak came in the second half of the nineteenth century, with the poetry of women writers such as Christina Rossetti and Emily Dickinson. Scholarship on the work of these women has been particularly focused on ideological issues that are present, but less obvious, in the two texts from which this thesis draws.

The second act of *Giselle* is constructed around references to love and salvation; not as separate notions, but functioning together, creating an economy. We see two salvations, and a considerable number of damnations, if we are to count all the Wilis as well as Hilarion. The economy is a simple one: if you are loved, you are saved; if you are rejected, you are damned. It hardly seems fair that the earthly fortunate are so rewarded in the afterlife also. Hilarion, Myrtha and all her Wilis are the spurned, the jilted. Yet there is little solidarity between the disaffected, and Hilarion is unwaveringly sent to his death.

However Albrecht, a misguided youth at best, an opportunistic Lothario at worst, is saved by dint of Giselle's love for him. Whether her own salvation is due to this unselfishness, or because the beauty of her etherealized self has finally earned Albrecht's true love, is unclear: it is one of those areas of instability that alters with subsequent performances. Whichever may be the case, one can draw little in the way of a politicized reading from these options at first glance.

The relationship between love and salvation forms a more complex web in *Blade Runner*. In keeping with the overall weariness and cynicism of the piece, any notion of salvation must be more limited than the apparent transcendental absolutes of Giselle's Romanticism. Rachael loves and is loved: thus she and Deckard are saved. Yet theirs is not the everlasting salvation of divine grace, but rather a stay of execution. Whether we can see Roy Batty as saved is debatable: certainly he takes on the aspect of Christ crucified as he dies. In the 1982 version, Deckard says 'maybe he loved life more than he loved himself'. In the *Director's Cut*, we are left with a more vague connection to make, between Roy, Pris and Deckard, while we wonder what a replicant's salvation could be; for all the 'lucky' ones, it seems a bleak comfort.

Whether we consider the paltry salvation of *Giselle*, cloaked in blissful ideology, or the self-avowedly limited salvation of *Blade Runner* , and the loves that permit them, it is clear that in each text deferral, negation and deflection are the tactics employed by the protagonists as they attempt to gain their eternal rewards. The desire to better the material conditions of one's existence - that is actively to resist the ruling hierarchy - is encoded as too selfish or too futile, and is thus made socially unacceptable. When this ideology has been internalized, the desire for material freedom is sublimated into the desire for spiritual transcendence: the desire to save oneself from oppression into the desire to save one's love object from damnation. The fact that such tactics are necessary gives us an insight into the permissible social relations and licensed inequalities of the moments of production of each narrative. We can usefully illuminate these strategies by locating them in other texts.

The figure of the talented and able woman who had become an invalid, or a religious hermit, for life, was one that held great fascination in the iconography of nineteenth century mythologies.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Florence Nightingale both fall into this category. These were women whose noble passions so depleted their delicate energies that an untreatable and debilitating hysteria forced them to become invalids. When there is no permitted space for resistance to take you, the only other option is to inhabit the space of one's oppression to an extreme degree. When there is no available voice of protest, silence is the only means of resistance. This is what we see from *Giselle* , from the replicants, and from the works of Rossetti and Dickinson.

William Michael Rossetti wrote that his sister Christina was 'replete with the spirit of self-postponement'. This contemporary view of her work and life is echoed by Gilbert and Gubar's phrase 'hers was an aesthetics of renunciation.' [76] Both in her writing and in her life extreme religiosity came to take the place of the earthly desires that society demanded she defer. She has been described by Virginia Woolf as:

> Using a coy playfulness and sardonic wit [...] and an extraordinarily pure lyric beauty [...] to reduce the self, but at the same time to preserve for it a secret inner space. [77]

The same thing can be said of Giselle's dancing and the replicant's collection of pictures of their 'pasts': each strategy asserts identity whilst ultimately negating it. Indeed, Rossetti's poem 'After Death' (1849), below, could easily be a description of the functions of love and salvation in Act II of *Giselle*, or even Deckard's questioning of the drowsy Rachael before they escape, for their 'salvation' has an oddly morbid feel to it, as if told by a speaking corpse.

> He did not touch the shroud, or raise the fold
> That hid my face, or take my hand in his,
> Or ruffle the smooth pillows for my head:
> He did not love me living, but once dead
> He pitied me; and very sweet it is
> To know he still is warm tho' I am cold. 78

Gautier's own description of the second act of *Giselle* , notes that the peasant girl has become a *dancing* corpse, and also articulates the nineteenth century fascination with the premise that a corpse experiences the grave as would the living:

> Giselle's shade, stiff and pale in its transparent shroud, suddenly leaps from the ground [...] she bounds and rebounds in an intoxication of liberty and joy at no longer being weighed down by that thick coverlet of heavy earth. 79

Rossetti, like so many published and clandestine woman poets, aligned herself with the asceticism of Christ's suffering on the cross, making use of religious imagery. Especially important is the model of redemption through the renunciation of earthly desire, with the espousal of vicarious suffering and love as self negation, as the permitted rebellion against the narrow constraints of her material existence. In her most famous work, 'Goblin Market' (1859), a story of sisters Lizzie and Laura, in which she borrows elfin creatures and earthy temptations from European mythology (analogous with the Wilis and grapes of

Giselle), this appropriation of sacred and sexual imagery is very clear:

"We must not look at goblin men,
We must not buy their fruits:
who knows upon what soil they fed
Their hungry thirsty roots? " [...]

Do you not remember Jeanie,
How she met them in the moonlight,
Took their gifts both choice and many," [...]

thought of Jeanie in her grave,
Who should have been a bride;
but who for joys brides hope to have fell sick and died. [80]

We come across these same tactics, and a similar tone of religious anguish and gentle irony, in the poems of Emily Dickinson. Hers is a different range of referents, however: as American as *Blade Runner*, in the same way that Rossetti is as European as *Giselle*. Images of freedom and restraint are broader, covering huge territories and vast coastlines. She invokes both the breadth and the lawlessness of a frontier life that has not long passed, and the repressive puritanism stamping order onto social chaos. Aspects of this America are also recalled in Ridley Scott's positioning of street life and the Tyrell Corporation. Again, an extreme and idealized attachment to suffering, death and deferred love is the model for resistance.

3
Exultation is the going
Of an inland soul to sea,
Past the houses, past the headlands,
Into deep eternity.

15
For each ecstatic instant
We must an anguish pay
In keen and quivering ratio
To the ecstasy.

90
I cannot live with you.
it would be life,
And life is over there
Behind the shelf

And you were saved
And I condemned to be
Where you were not,
That self were hell to me,

So we must meet apart,
You there, I here
With just the door ajar
That oceans are, and prayer,
And that white sustenance,
Despair. [81]

The tropes of love and salvation, it has already been noted, have been singled out by other scholars as a hiding place, a disguised space, where resistance can be enacted, in the poems of Dickinson and Rossetti. It can be a self defeating camouflage, for it most resembles that which the poet least wishes to be. Love and salvation are thus the 'handmaidens' of Beauty, so ideologically overwhelming that subversion is almost always reabsorbed. That this is recognized in these women's poetry helps us to recuperate similar readings from *Blade Runner* and *Giselle*. It also enables us to locate these narratives within a much broader history of genre that that which is usually permitted. Hence *Blade Runner* and *Giselle* can be seen to have a structural and thematic commonality with the acknowledged range of Romantic, Gothic and devotional texts upon which theoretical discourse and discussion are widely enacted.

This thesis concerns itself with the positioning of *Giselle* amongst Romantic ballets, within which genre we find the treatment of love and salvation tends to be equivocal or ambiguous. However, it is useful to note here that the plot of *Giselle* departs significantly from dominant patterns when compared with contemporary opera plots - particularly those based upon the Undine myth.

Undine was a water spirit who acquired a mortal soul on her marriage to the noble knight Huldbrand. He abandoned her however, and she finally reappeared to draw him down to a watery death. *Undine* was one of the most influential opera stories of the period, and productions of the story were being made from 1811 onwards. Its narrative was based upon a European mythic tradition, which included the the Rhineland Lorelei tale, and whose roots may lie in the Sirens that drew Homer's Odysseus towards the rocks with their song. These nymphs and mermaids were possessed of dangerous voices which needed be silenced so that society could return to its 'natural' order.

The first *Undine* was composed by E.T.A. Hoffman (1776-1822). The libretto was written by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, based on Teutonic mythology. *Undine* had been a legend of Central European folk tales, originally conceived by Paracelsus as an elemental spirit of the waters. The oldest version of the myth tells that she was created without a soul, and could only gain one by marrying a mortal, and bearing him a child. In return she had to pay all the penalties of human existence.

Hoffman's opera version premiered at the Theatre Royal in Berlin, and was highly Romantic in that its plot told of the clash between spirit and mortal, between natural and cultural. Its scenic design, by Karl Friedrich Schinkel, also reflected Romantic interests in historical accuracy and colour, and in 'poetic' atmosphere: for example, the distant blues and green of the backdrop, representing a turreted Rhineland castle. It is similar to the drop curtain that still backs most first acts of *Giselle* , which is based upon that first created by Paris Opéra designers in 1841. [82]

In 1845 the same story was successfully re-presented by Albert Lortzing. Undine's mortal competitor was here named Berthalda. *Giselle* has both broad thematic notions in common with *Undine*, but also specific details of plot and character. The theme of conflict between mortal man and spirit woman, or vice versa, was frequently retold, notably in Wagner's *Lohengrin.* In this opera as in *Giselle* encounters between the mortal and the spirit world tended to be tragic, or at best unsatisfying. We see the Romantic ideal of the union of man with nature repeatedly being exploded in the musical mythology of the period. The human lover, inconstant in love or faithless in promise, is ultimately punished, left isolated from one or another aspect of his or her life.

Stories resembling *Undine* continued to appear on European stages throughout the nineteenth century. Opera forms included those stagings by Lvov (1848), Semet (1863), and Rogowski (1920). Jules Perrot staged *Undine* as a ballet at the Paris Opéra, in 1843, just two years after his first production of *Giselle* . It starred Fanny Cerrito and Arthur Saint-Léon, who also went on to become ballet master in St. Petersberg after Perrot, adding to the cross-pollination of such stories throughout Europe and Russia. The original choreography has since been lost, but that the German opera story was known to the French ballet choreographer is vital in establishing the unusual nature of *Giselle* in the context of contemporary musical theatre.

From all these stories, we can see that *Giselle* fits well into the surrounding mood, aesthetic and narrative tradition of musical theatre in the nineteenth century. Yet *Giselle* has at its core a radical difference. When Giselle comes back for her lover, rather than taking her revenge and destroying him, she saves him. Hence she recuperates from her madness a sanity, from her nothingness a greatness perhaps, which is at odds with the child/animal/fiend of nature characterization which was inscribed upon other spurned and supernatural women.

The function of the trope of salvation in many Romantic texts was to give women a means of absolution for their original sin through an act of self-sacrifice and thus self-negation. This sin was signalled by their exclusion from the main social body, or their identification with spiritual or supernatural practices. Romantic ballet plots fit very well into this mid-nineteenth century trend; there is much evidence that plots and themes were shared between prose, poetry, dance and drama. *Giselle* follows the dominant trend whereby women pay for their uncontrolled and dangerous sexuality by selflessly enabling the salvation of a man prior to their etherealization. However, Giselle alone spares her inconstant lover. In every other scenario, the premise that woman is destructive, irrational and sexually insatiable is reinforced by the ending, whereby she joins the ranks of the spurned and vengeful she-monsters of classical myth, the Gorgons and the Sirens, destroying her man and thereafter every man. *Giselle* resists these constructions, and in doing so, initiates a different type of heroine who complicates the simple, binary understandings of femininity that flourish elsewhere in Romantic art. Love, in this context, becomes a radical force.

9. Conclusion

When we read the plot of *Giselle* through that of *Blade Runner*, we are able to recuperate both those moments that were radical at its original moment of production, and those aspects of Peter Wright's *Giselle* which are subversive in comparison to other twentieth century readings of that ballet. It would be inappropriate to use *Blade Runner* to de-historicize the first *Giselle*: when we view *Giselle* in the context of other nineteenth narratives, we see a common pattern of women denied access to life, and the subsequent sublimation of their desire into the salvation of men. However, Giselle is not simply a plot, but a dance, made of movement. This fact queries the assumptions and certainties of the ballet's plot: the way in which movement in *Giselle* renders it at odds with other nineteenth century performed plots is discussed in Chapter Three.

Notes to Chapter Two

1. Barthes, *Image-Music-Text,* p. 51.
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3. Beaumont, p. 71.
4. Bruno, p. 184.
5. Umberto Eco, 'Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage', *Modern Criticism and Theory*, ed. by David Lodge (London: Longman, 1988), pp. 445-455, (p. 454).
6. Eco, p. 455.
7. Eco, p. 455.
8. William Blake, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. by David V. Erdman (London: Longman,1988), p. 51.
9. Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (London: Triad Grafton, 1977).
   George Orwell, *1984* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1954).
   Alien , dir. by Ridely Scott (US: Brandywine/Shusett, 1979).
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   Alien^3 , dir. by David Fincher (US: Brandywine, 1993).
10. Tom Moylen, *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination* (London: Methuen, 1986). pp. 8-9.
11. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. by Annette Lavers (London: Paladin, 1973), p. 82.
12. Huxley, p. 14.
13. Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, p. 166.
14. Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, p. 165.
15. Claude Levi-Strauss, 'The Structural Study of Myth', *European Literary Theory and Practice: from Existential Phenomenology to Structuralism*, ed. by Vernon W. Gras (London: Delta Books, 1973), pp. 289-316.
16. Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen, 1981), p. 3.
17. Ivor Guest, *The Romantic Ballet in Paris* (London: Dance Books, 1972).
18. Karl Jung, *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious,* trans. by R. F. C. Hull (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958).

19. Vladimir Propp, *The Morphology of the Folk Tale*, trans. by The American Folklore Society (Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 1970).
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21. Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1994), p. xviii.
22. Banes, p. 7.
23. Ian Woodward, *Ballet* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977), p. 96.
24. Beaumont, p. 103.
25. Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and other stories* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1979).
26. Jacques Lacan, in Lodge, pp. 79-106.
27. Bruno, p. 190.
28. Television advertisement for Kellogg's Crunchy Nut Cornflakes, in which a vampire braves the daylight in order to eat another bowl of cereal.
29. Jakobson's theory, as it relates to literary criticism, is discussed further in Roger Webster's *Studying Literary Theory: An Introduction* (London: Arnold, 1990), pp. 42 - 44. Webster notes that Jakobson considered the metaphorical (as opposed to metonymic) pole of language to be most capable of sustaining subversive and disruptive meanings. 'Story-telling', such as that found in folk-tales like Giselle, is a form of metaphorical discourse.
30. N. Wakefield, 'Space on Flat Earth', *Postmodernism* (London: Pluto Press, 1990), pp. 116-131, (pp. 129-130).
31.

> Our customer surveys indicate that a sizeable proportion of audiences for a classic ballet like *Giselle* are coming because they've seen the ballet before and know they are coming to see what they like. This happens in London as well, although you get a lot of one-offers - tourists and so on - as well.

Su Matthewman, Marketing Officer at The Birmingham Royal Ballet, speaking in an interview given for this thesis on 8 September 1993.

32. Kaja Silverman, 'Back to the Future', *Camera Obscura*, 27 (1991), 108-183 (pp. 129-30).
33. Silverman, p. 130.
34. Silverman, p. 110.
35. Webster, p. 152.
36. Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (London: Everyman, 1955).
37. Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972).
38. Daphne du Maurier, *Jamaica Inn* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1936).
39. For instance: W.E. Johns, *Biggles Flies East* (London: W. E Johns, 1935).
40. Barthes, p. 9.
41. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994).
42. Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994).
43. Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979).
44. Shelley, p. 215.
45. *It Came from Outer Space*, dir. by Jack Arnold (US: Universal, 1953).
46. *Frankenstein*, dir. by James Whale (US: Universal, 1931).
47. Stoker, p. 449.
48. Warner, p. xxi.
49. *Dracula*, dir. by Francis Ford Coppola (Columbia, 1992).
50. Théophile Gautier, 'Gautier's Letter to Heinrich Heine', *Gautier on Dance*, trans. and ed. by Ivor Guest (London: Dance Books, 1986), pp. 94-102 (pp. 100-102).
51. Bruno, p. 188.
52. Bruno, p. 188.
53. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 70.
54. Silverman, p. 89.
55. Alderson, p. 301.
56. Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985).
57. Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (London: Collins, 1978).

58. Warner, p. 33.
59. Banes, pp. 30-31.
60. Banes, p. 31.
61. Quoted in Banes, p. 31.
62. Banes, p. 32.
63. Banes, p. 35.
64. Gautier, p. 295.
65. E.T.A. Hoffman, 'The Sandman', in *The Golden Pot and Other Tales*, trans. by Ritchie Robertson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 85-118.
66. Mandy Merck, *Perversions* (London: Virago, 1993).
67. Merck, pp.188-189.
68. Merck, p.187.
69. Silverman, p. 110.
70. Silverman, p. 111.
71. Silverman, p. 109.
72. Merck, p. 187.
73. Jenny Turner, 'Perspectives: Travels in Cyber-Reality', *Guardian*, 18 March 1995, p. 28.
74. Silverman, p. 93.
75. Alderson, p. 292.
76. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, 'Christina Rossetti', in *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. by M. H. Abrams (Ontario: Norton, 1986), pp. 1501-1502 (p. 1502).
77. Virginia Woolf, 'Christina Rossetti', in *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, p. 1502.
78. Christina Rossetti, 'After Death', in *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, pp. 1503-1504.
79. Théophile Gautier, *Théâtre, Mystére, Comédies et Ballets* (Paris: Charpentier, 1872), p. 366.
80. Rossetti, 'Goblin Market', pp. 1508-1520.
81. Emily Dickinson, 3, 15 and 90, in *The Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. by James Reeves (London: Heinemann, 1959), pp. 57-152.
82. *Oxford Illustrated Dictionary of Opera*, ed. by Roger Parker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 123.

Chapter Three
Movement: *SEX* and *Giselle*

1. Introduction

The following chapter gives a close reading of the movement in *Giselle*, and asks whether that movement tells a different story from the one put forward by the plot of the ballet. In order to explore some of the meanings made available to, but often unseen by, audiences of *Giselle*, comparison is made with *SEX*, a book of photographs featuring the performer Madonna. These readings are given focus by the fact that Madonna's body is perceived to be that of a dancer.

This chapter locates Madonna in the cultural economy of the 1980s and 1990s, then gives a description of *SEX*, the public and media responses to it, and the methodology this thesis enacts upon *SEX*. This is followed by historical and methodological discussions of the cultural practices shared by *SEX* and *Giselle* : pornography and photography. By re-making the bonds which ballet was once seen to share with pornography, we can find in *Giselle* those qualities of the body which so excited critical comment about *SEX*. By then turning to photography we can look differently at how bodies move in *Giselle*, and what those movements can mean. Roland Barthes's writings on photography are brought across from *SEX* to *Giselle*, giving us a way of reading that is at once appropriate and different from standard approaches in dance studies. Finally, specific images in *SEX* are used to read aspects of the movement in the 1992 *Giselle*. This chapter concludes by returning to the notion of love, asking whether *Giselle* represents a different way of seeing love, both within its textual fabric, and as a critical idea that informs our reading of all texts.

2. Madonna and *SEX*

This section comprises a brief background to Madonna and her work, given because, although much publicized, this information may not be common knowledge within the academy; and a summary of the content of *SEX* and of the public and academic responses to *SEX*. This is followed by a discussion of the methodologies brought to bear by the use of *SEX* as a text.

Madonna Louise Ciccone is an Italian-American Catholic who grew up in a large, lower-middle class family in Detroit, U.S.A. Her mother died when she was five; after leaving High School she moved to New York to study dance. There she became interested in popular music. First success came with the singles *Holiday* and *Lucky Star* in the mid-1980s. At this moment Madonna changed her initial 'street-urchin' image to that of a voluptuous soignée blonde in the style of Marilyn Monroe, with whom she has often been compared.

With the release of the film *Desperately Seeking Susan* (1985), a cult success in which she co-starred, Madonna became a superstar. [1] Musically she moved from the cheeky, flirtatious style of her famous *Like A Virgin* album to a harder sound and image. Informed by a variety of cultural influences including postmodernism and gay disco, Madonna started producing less 'poppy', more adult musical and video material, reinforced by her now highly trained and muscled physical appearance. Catholic imagery, sexual role playing and fetishism featured regularly in her work, and, although her huge stage shows were still sold out, and her records did well in the charts, the adoration that once accompanied her work was replaced by ambivalence ranging to revulsion in the more conservative parts of society. Rapidly changing hair colours, and bodily images, along with mixed success in her acting career, have accompanied the change in her public status. [2]

Some of the academic discussion of Madonna has taken place in the daily press and in glossy magazines, as well as in academic journals and conferences. This is in part because it is desirable for critiques to be consumed by those who also consume the subject of the critique. The best and most current review of academic literature on the subject can be found in Pamela Robertson's *Guilty Pleasures: feminist camp from Mae West to Madonna* (1996), Chapter Four. There are now several seminal collections focusing solely on Madonna: these include Lloyd's *Deconstructing Madonna* (1993), *Madonnarama* (ed. Frank and Smith, 1993), *The I Hate Madonna Handbook* (ed. Rosenzweig, 1994), *I Dream of Madonna: Women's Dreams of the Goddess of Pop* (ed. Turner, 1993) and Schwichtenberg's *The Madonna Collection* (1993). [3] The kind of response generated in popular and academic discourse by arguably the most famous female performer in the history of the Western World is represented below. The first two quotations are from Camille Paglia.

> Madonna is a dancer. She thinks and expresses herself through dance, which exists in the eternal Dionysian realm of music. Dance, which she studied with a gay man in her home state of Michigan, was her avenue of escape from the conventions of religion and bourgeois society. The sensual language of her body allowed her to transcend the over-verbalised code of class and time.[4]

> Madonna is the true feminist. She exposes the puritanism and suffocating ideology of American feminism, which is stuck in adolescent whining mode. Madonna has taught young women to be fully female and sexual while still exercising control over their lives [...] Feminism says 'no more masks'. Madonna says we are nothing but masks. Through her enormous impact on young women around the world, Madonna is the future of feminism.[5]

If Camille Paglia represents one pole of response to Madonna, then the quotations below, the first a description of a conference, taken from *Playboy* magazine, the second from Robertson, and the last by journalist Kate Muir, writing in *The Times*, indicate the loathing or simple indifference felt at the opposite end of the scale.

> Pulling out a copy of Madonna's book *SEX* [...] she [Nikki Craft] holds up the book to the audience [...] "I need some audience participation here". Twenty women rush the stage and gather around the book. Shreds of it fill the air. The crowd cheers wildly as the debris floats to the ground.[6]

> In a survey of 'Madonna Haters', Madonna is called anti-feminist and a backward step for women: further, she is likened to a social disease, a narcissist, a succubus, a vampire and - linking her sexuality and her commercialism

> \- a prostitute. *The I Hate Madonna Handbook* also compares her to a prostitute and features a quiz: 'Feminist or Slut?' 7

> The great thinkers of the New World sit around eating tortilla chips and watching pop videos, just like ordinary teenagers. The difference is that while teenagers consign such information to their mental trash cans, the academics feel it necessary to consign it to their word processors [...]. The step from pin-up to the pages of a dozen doctoral theses was a forgone conclusion [for Madonna], given the growing peculiarity of academe [...there is an] outbreak of Madonna analysis across America in hitherto respectable universities. Madonna panels have already met, dates for 'Madonnathon' conferences are being pencilled in, and it can only be a matter of time before the creation of a Material Girl Chair in Madonna Studies. 8

Often locating themselves between these poles are the academics who respond more to Madonna as text, as an accumulation of work, as a site of meanings and perhaps as a gauge of 'where we are now' in feminism. Even this more distanced approach is easily subsumed into 'choosing sides': perhaps one of the most shocking and useful things about Madonna is that she reminds us that texts do generate feelings as well as ideas, and that, as with popular texts, awareness of our love, hatred or indifference for canonical, non-'MTV' texts should not be ignored. The first quotation is by Linda Leung.

> Madonna's sexual politics are anti-feminist because they do not subscribe to feminist concepts of powerlessness [...] This is evident in Madonna's work, which may be classified as anti-feminist because it is, in parts, pornographic and reinforces the traditional role of women as sexual objects. Yet is can be countered that Madonna rejects this supposed

> powerlessness, and instead, recognises female sexuality as a powerful vehicle of expression. 9

Steve Anderson denies that it even matters which side of the 'Madonna divide' we inhabit:

> The tidal wave of Madonna's renown has swept over adulators and detractors. Once a flesh-and-blood superstar, she's now a metaphysic unto herself. Not that she doesn't have feelings, desires or stomach gas, but she's achieved such ineffable 'being-ness' that old controversies - is she Pop incarnate? Glamorized Fuckdoll? - are largely irrelevant. The only aspect left to consider is Madonna's resonance in the minds of the public for whom - like it or not - she's become a repository for all our ideas about fame, money, sex, feminism, pop culture, even death. 10

Whilst we may not ever reach (or wish to reach) either a concensus or even a majority in the academic vote on Madonna, there is certainly agreement that her work, even for those who avoid buying in to the popularity contest and choose to look at textual meanings instead, is as confusing and even exasperating as it is ubiquitous. Layton has pointed out that:

> Madonna presents the perplexing case of someone who accepts the concept of a natural hierarchy of power but attacks the version of the concept that excludes women, gays and minorities. 11

Similarly, Tentler finds Madonna's work problematic, noting that some aspects of it, such as her espousal of pornographic discourse, repel feminist sensibilities and attempts to find woman-friendly meanings in the texts:

> These are the glitches that make a feminist cringe, the ruptures in my faith. Can her life, her songs, her videos really stand in as the visuals for my feminist politics? [12]

The subject of these comments claims not to read her critics, whether pro- or anti-herself or her work:

> Madonna doesn't follow these arguments - she has never read Camille Paglia's homages 'because she's a horrible writer. I don't really know what she's saying. She seems to contradict herself, just to hear herself talk'. [13]

Although *The Times* may not consider Madonna to be a 'respectable' subject for academic activity, this thesis nonetheless devotes another few thousand words to her: not as a woman, a role model or a *bête noire*, but as a site of contradictory critical and popular discourse which can throw light on an equally contradictory but less contested site - *Giselle*.

Madonna is unique in the volume of analysis and comment she has generated, both in the popular media, and in the academy, particularly in America. It could be argued that this is because her work invites us to read, and not simply to watch. It has also been noted that Madonna's work asks us to decide where we stand in relation to her, and how she stands in for us. Some will feel she bears no relation to, and does not represent them. However, some, including many women academics, have reacted very strongly to Madonna, feeling that she has either 'put feminism back twenty years' or, as Paglia has it, 'is the future of feminism'. These reactions have been very personal, the assumption often being that Madonna is either a role model or a substitute for, a projection of the reader. This has also been noticeable in popular responses to Madonna's work. Her body, her music and her image have constantly altered, and she has aligned herself through her work with a wide variety of social and cultural positions. Although she is a white Midwestern woman, she has also been associated with a range of cultural references and practices, including black music and experience, with homo- and heterosexuality, with Eastern religions, with masculine as well as feminine social positioning, and with a range of body types and appearances.

The protean nature of the image she presents, along with her outspoken views on sex and sexuality, and in particular her economic success and control (which includes heading her own production company and record label, Maverick) mean that Madonna has become a cultural space in which a very wide variety of readings have been possible. Many commentators have been 'turned on' by the reading space Madonna offers; not necessarily directly through images which cause sexual arousal, but through the desire to colonize and own the texts, and by the fact that this space matters to them. One of the effects of this has been to locate popular and academic responses in the same space.

Part of Madonna's appeal is that her fame has followed the same pattern of love and loathing, deification and revulsion, that has characterized the public careers of many Western 'superstars'. She insists, however, that she is not a victim. However, there is more to the Madonna spectacle than the mythologizing of a saviour/scapegoat figure. Margaret Thatcher, Bill and Hilary Clinton, Oliver North, Kurt Cobain, Diana, Princess of Wales and O.J. Simpson have all excited and polarized the reaction of both popular pundits and 'serious' academics. Madonna, in particular, has become a form of popular reference, a metaphor, a way of talking about culture. The opening sequence of the Quentin Tarentino film *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) made this clear. Tarentino's films are highly self-referential, structured around references to 'cult' moments in popular culture. By opening with a scene in which a group of criminals discussed in great detail the meaning of several of Madonna's hit records, Tarentino was tapping into a subject upon which everyone had an opinion, thereby including his audience in the 'in-joke' of his chosen references. [14] By the end of 1992 however, the joke was over. Madonna had altered and, some argued, perverted and abused this sense of public investment in her.

Truth or Dare , marketed in Great Britian as *In Bed with Madonna* , was released. [15] It was a feature length documentary of her international Blond Ambition Tour, made in a 'fly-on-the-wall' style: much was made of the 'warts and all' strategies the movie employed, although some commentators believed that certain sequences were staged for the camera. The response was a mixture of affection and loathing, along with critical praise for the director Alek Keshishian's cinematography, parts of which were in black and white. Responses were strong:

> Madonna is the degenerate Queen of Sleaze. [16]

> David Ansen of Newsweek declared the film to be 'fascinating [...] no-holds barred, and provocative. The questions Madonna poses about sexuality, power and persona make her the most stimulating pop icon around, and the most fun to follow.' [17]

> 'Truth or Dare', concurred Jane Maslin in The New York Times, 'can be seen as a clever, brazen, spirited self - portrait, an ingeniously contrived extension of Madonna 's public personality'. [18]

One of the central oppositions evinced in *Truth or Dare*, that of Madonna's attitudes towards her dancers - both maternal carer and 'career bitch' dominatrix - has resonance with *Giselle*. Once the peasant girl has become a Wili, by definition vengeful and unnatural 'she becomes precisely the figure of the consoling caregiver and partner so prized by the emerging bourgeois domestic ideology.' [19] It has been precisely with Madonna's translation into superstar superwoman that she has taken on the maternal role, both professionally and with the birth of her daughter Lourdes in 1996. For many the former situated her as phallic mother or matriarch, and the latter saw suggestions from parts of the press that motherhood was simply the playing of another role.

Madonna's previous promotional video *Justify My Love* (December 1990), set the tone for *Truth or Dare* and *SEX* with a highly stylized black and white mixture of pansexual imagery and aggressive modern dance movement. It was banned by many radio and TV stations, including the popular music channel MTV. The single and video reached the top five in the music charts in

America and Britain. The volume and vigour of the response to *Justify My Love* and *In Bed with Madonna* was limited in comparison with the storm generated by *SEX*. By 1992 the complexity of public and academic perceptions concerning what Madonna stood for or stood in for allowed certain Western anxieties to be played out upon the site of her work. With the publication of *SEX*, on October 21, 1992, Madonna stopped being merely a blue collar idol and cartoon heroine of post-feminism. She became one of the most contested sites of late twentieth century Western popular culture. The polarized response to *SEX* was not simply because the text was pornographic, but because it failed to conform to normative cultural expectations of pornography: it threatened existing ways of seeing eroticized and/or colonized bodies: it could not be accomodated within existing taxonomies. This thesis argues that the movement in *Giselle* poses the same threat, but that its disruptive potential has been disguised.

The threat posed to existing classifications of pornographic bodies was not the in nature of any of *SEX's* images, but in the graphic design which framed them, which had been generated by Fabien Baron and associates of Baron and Baron inc. These graphics prevented a simple single reading of the images: they confounded the expectation that this would be a series of easily accessible, culturally available nude photographs. By providing a critical as well as a literal frame they allowed even the most heterosexual of images to generate queer readings, and for the queer images to be more than stereotypically camp.

The purchaser of a new copy of *SEX* had to untie a ribbon from around the book before reaching the text, this being a material invitation to partake in a secret. Packaging at once mimicked and mocked the opaque plastic wrappers put around 'top shelf' pornography in Britain and America. (Madonna had already done something similar with her album *Like A Prayer* by including a condom and safe sex instructions in the packaging.) The front cover had 'SEX' embossed upon it: a version of this page was photographically reproduced immediately inside the book, with misspellings and errors scratched out. The title and end pages were printed on brown woodchip packaging paper. The photographs in the main body of the book were black and white: they were taken by Steve Meisel and members of his studio. Importantly, they were not on glossy paper, but heavyweight cartridge, matt and textured: the very fabric of the text created a tension between the usual social positioning of such pictures, and the function that was implied by their material condition. Except for the images themselves, this looked very much more like a book of child's construction paper than a copy of *Playboy* or *Penthouse*.

Some of the pictures were whole page shots, some had a frame of sorts. Many were tinted in a single, garish shade, in the manner of cheap comic books, or had been printed in negative: some pictures were superimposed over others. There were whole pages of text, some handwritten, scratched or painted, some in various printer's fonts. At times image covered text, or text image. Some of the text was a quotation from the CD single, *Erotica* , which accompanied the book, or the album of the same name.

There were pages which appeared to be contact sheets; others photo-stories; still more resembled a scrap book montage. Often photographs had been arranged in collage, including cut-outs, tear-outs, frames of film and strips of computer print-out. Several collages had been assembled using hundreds of staples, again forming frames.

At the end of the main book was included an A4 size photo-comic strip, also featuring Madonna, entitled 'Dita in The Chelsea Girl.' It too was a collage of bright primary colours and black and white or tinted photographs, but it included the familiar devices of thought and speech bubbles, arrows and pop-art explosion symbols. It was the most obviously funny part of the book, imitating the incompetence of similar home-produced comics, made badly on a tiny budget, with non-professional players. The back cover had the symbol '(X)' cut out of it, and the serial number was stamped on the bottom.

The design of *SEX* was seen by some as being pretentious and 'arty', or simply a bad choice of fragile and impractical materials: however, such design has a profound influence on the readings each of the images makes available. Even the design of the text did not prevent the majority of media inquiries from focusing on the extent to which the book was autobiographical, the propriety of certain poses, and whether Madonna was exploiting her image for personal gain. Here was a popular text openly referring to itself as a piece of merchandise. The fabric of the book states that it is a thing packaged. It is for sale, existing for the market. So many conceits of the popular postmodern have been included that the refusal to see the images in any terms other than as glossy 'glamour' shots represents an elision that is analogous to the elision of the political and sexual aspects of ballet.

The first factor to note about the actual images is the appearance of Madonna herself. In *Truth or Dare* her hair was a matt, bleach-blonde white, tightly curled or scraped back, make-up applied heavily for the stage, body very thin and highly muscled - obviously trained to the limits for the demands of touring. In keeping with the epithet 'Blond Ambition', the look was hard and uncompromising, epitomized by the famous pink quilted Jean-Paul Gaultier bustier with its exaggerated conical breasts. [20] For *SEX*, Madonna was once again another body. Her hair was soft, shiny, pale blonde without dark roots, and mainly waved in an unstructured 1950s style. The make-up she wore was subtle, 'classic', and in places she appeared to be wearing none at all. The most noticeable change was to her body, which was here rounder, heavier, with less muscle definition, although still obviously a very fit, trained body. By appropriating this image, Madonna was identifying her body with consumer goods: 'The 1950s blonde was the girl to match the new utopia that postwar America was aspiring to. She was glossy, artificial, and bigger than anything that had gone before'. [21] Madonna's use of this blonde idiom refers both to nostalgia and the revival of consumerism.

Bordo takes issue with Madonna's changing body, stating that her change from rounded would-be star to thin, muscled superstar was mere 'self-normalization', a giving-in to dominant standards for the female body.[22] While this is in part true, Bordo does not take into account the role of exercise in the creation of Madonna's new body. Exercise makes the body 'more', in terms of muscle, whereas dieting makes it merely less: exercise also implies preparation for further strenous activity. Overt muscularity is as out-of-step with the ideal as is a heavy body. It is popularly held that to be supermodel-thin or muscled in a way that suggests training for athletic competition (rather than social gym attendance) also defies the feminine ideal. In *SEX*, Madonna's body has been remade to *discuss* the standardization and consumption of the female body, rather than simply to be consumed itself.

The general bodily softening, as part of an overt scheme of popular consumption, primarily allowed Madonna to interact with, rather than dominate, the other players in the book (although many critics have argued this was not the case). During the preceding tour, one of her stage routines revolved around her domination and command of her troupe of dancers: 'Standing on the stage in her ponytail and bustier, Madonna ran over to her dancers and pretended to slap them around [...] "I," she shouted as the throng roared, "am the boss around here!"'[23] Although she remained the focus, there were scenes in *SEX* where Madonna was dominated, and even appeared to be a victim. She was *pretty*, as opposed to the striking image she had been using for the previous twelve months.

These changes were also in keeping with the demands of still photography, demands which often create problems for photographers of dancers. It is noticeable that very thin ballet dancers with high muscle definition are often not used in still publicity shots, especially those that become posters. An emaciated body in motion gives the required sense of ethereal lightness. More junior company members are frequently used for publicity material if they provide a more appealing, healthy image for the public, still, face of the company. [24] This is because a still emaciated body photographs very badly, revealing the realities of starvation and tortured muscles; the photographs of Gelsey Kirkland in *The Shape of Love* illustrate this. On the anorexic tendencies seen in many dancers, Alderson comments that

> the Romantic ballerina, and more particularly Giselle's apotheosis in death, is a stylization, a socially sanctioned version, of some of the impulses that take a diseased - and unbeautiful - extremity in anorexia. [25]

Based on the same principles, although for perhaps more complex reasons, Madonna in motion was lithe and wiry. Still, she was smooth and rounded, the curves of her body diffusing the light, creating a gentle chiaroscuro that on her touring body would be a much harsher composition of lines and angles. Not only the contents and themes of the pictures in *SEX* , but the shape of the central body itself, was in keeping with the conventions and devices of the genre in which she was being imaged and imagined.

After the title pages, there was a negative silhouette shot of Madonna, followed by the lyrics to the song *Erotica*. The last line -

'I'll teach you how to fuck' appeared on the following page. The last word of this line was not spoken on the single, but was still obvious due to the rhyme scheme of the song. Facing this was Madonna, alone and masked, her pose auto-erotic, in a black leather bondage-style bikini. The next series of photographs showed Madonna with two lesbians conforming to the 'butch dyke' stereotype, in that they had mainly shaved heads, large body tattoos, body piercing and combat clothing. A sado-masochistic fantasy in which Madonna was bound, gagged and threatened was enacted. Shots were included in which the three women appeared to be laughing together at the acts they were representing.

The next sequence was shot at The Vault, an S/M styled nightclub in New York: whips, cages, candles and studded leather clothing were in evidence. Here the men were the stereotypes: skinheaded gays, large bikers, a camp bondage master. Text was interspersed, referring to the co-existence of pain with pleasure. The infamous 'ass-fucking' page took the form of a dialogue between 'Dita', a persona based on a 1920s actress that Madonna had been using for years, and 'Doctor', apparently a psychoanalyst of sorts. This dialogue continued throughout the book, a self-conscious attempt at pre-empting prurient, commonsensical responses. The reference to analysis also sets up a textual trope that refers to the process of confusion, analysis and cure. Rather than engage with the ideas Madonna was unpacking about analysis, this reference was taken as further biographical evidence, resulting from Madonna's well documented experiences in analysis.[26]

Two male skinheads were shown in a rape scene in a High School gym: Madonna was wearing the remnants of 'preppy' clothes, her books on the floor. This picture was positioned between numerous other shots of the same two men: in all the others they appeared as gay men in bondage strapping, being dominated by Madonna. The next sequence was of full page and contact sheet shots of Madonna kissing two very young, long haired men, with narrative text. The photograph was surrounded by white letters scratched into black, including the words 'I don't need to have one between my legs. I think I have a dick in my brain.' There were some double exposed pictures pairing previous sequences, including a scene where the gay male skinheads, and the two lesbian skinheads were all standing in front of urinals with their combat trousers down. A couple of studies of Madonna followed, including the toe-sucking picture that attracted so much British attention. There were more short story pages, and some hand written 'letters' concerning a triangle of lovers, Dita, Ingrid and Johnny. One full colour shot of Madonna holding her breasts as she looks in a mirror was followed by some Fifties-style 'cheesecake' pictures with her wearing a bunny tail.

A long series of pictures taken in a gay strip club ensued - a herd of naked male dancers commanded by an older and a younger man in dinner clothes. At one point they were shown riding on the backs of the reined dancers. They were observed and prodded by Madonna, who was shown revelling in their attention, and dressed in Hollywood movie star style, with diamonds and a beaded white fishtail dress (previously worn to the Oscars, in 1991, when she was accompanied by Michael Jackson). There were more individual studies of Madonna: on a beach; by a pool; naked on a Miami lawn but for handbag, high heels and a bottle of Evian water; a double page picture of her crotch as she executed a backwards somersault in a swimming pool; more photographs with mirrors or appearing to masturbate; letters to 'Johnny'; and meditations about 'my pussy'.

The next sequence included images of Madonna semi-nude with an elderly man, who appeared to be a businessman of some sort, and a series of photo-stories with celebrity guests. In one, Madonna and Isabella Rosselini (Ingrid Bergman's actress/model daughter) played on a beach, with other female models, each taking turns at being naked, or at dressing in men's outsized suits. The role of nurturer was alternated in the poses they assumed. Elswhere Madonna lay in a group embrace which included the 'supermodel' Naomi Campbell. Next was a sequence of shots with the rap music singer Vanilla Ice. Wearing only either a short frilled skirt or lamé shorts, and a very long wig, Madonna was shown flirting with the singer in a variety of public places: a lawn, a toilet, a beach, and a freeway in Miami, stopping the traffic.

The final set of images began with a study of Madonna alone on the edge of the freeway, thumb out to catch a ride, cigarette between lips, naked but for the shoes and old-fashioned handbag again. Even funnier was a similar shot, standing at the counter in a pizza parlour: the slight look of guilt on her face appeared to refer more to the large pizza slice she was eating than to her public nakedness. The last collage showed her stopping at a petrol station, filling up, and then being driven through the night-time streets, standing up in the convertible, all the time wearing black lace trousers and a black basque which had been hitched down to show her breasts. There is more Dita/Doctor dialogue: 'Every time anyone reviews anything I do, I'm mistaken for a prostitute'.

The next page had a small picture of the chair to which Madonna was tied at the beginning of the book, with the discarded whip and fetters beside it, then, before the photo-comic and the credits, a page final of text, handwritten white on black in an eccentric script - 'A lot of people are afraid to say what they want. That's why they don't get what they want.'

In a silvered plastic pocket at the back was a CD single, *Erotica*, which also appeared on a video and LP of the same title which were released simultaneously but sold separately from the book.

The publicity that surrounded the launch of *SEX* was commented upon at many levels, but the pro- and anti-censorship branches of academic feminism played a particularly bitter game of Capture the Flag over the text. The following quotations give some impression of the intense feeling that there was something personal and vital at stake in the battle to define and contain the meaning and the morality of Madonna.

> The sex that *SEX* celebrates is not only vigorously perverse but also highly conceptualized. The fact that Madonna regards the book as essentially comic - even the S&M poses are 'meant to be funny' - shows how

> overevolved and tangential her own sexuality has become. And although love gets a single approving mention, there is no suggestion that younger readers should get some corny erotic morality behind them, before delving into this glazed and minatory aestheticism. More generally, and more personally, there is the feeling that *SEX* is no more than the desperate confection of an ageing scandal-addict who, with this book, merely confirms that she is exhausting her capacity to shock. [27]

> This is the worst mainstream pornography that I have ever seen [...] a lot of chains, a lot of bondage. I just don't put up with these kind of images any more. [28]

> These are fantasies I have dreamed up [...] everything you are about to see and read is a fantasy, a dream, pretend [...] Nothing in this book is true. I made it up. [29]

> I tried to make a statement about exploring your sexuality, but people took it to mean that everyone should go on a fuckfest and have sex with everyone, and that I was going to be the leader of that. [30]

The first statement was made in the *Sunday Times* , the second at an international anti-pornography conference, the third is Madonna's prefatory statement to *SEX*, and the last is from a reflective interview with Madonna, given in 1994. Two things were noticeable from the initial furore. Firstly there was the wildness and inaccuracy of many statements commenting on and describing *SEX*. One wonders just who the 'younger readers' referred to above might be? Many Madonna's videos are easily available to children on television: however, *Justify My Love* was banned or shown after the watershed, *Erotica* had limited showing, *In Bed with Madonna* had an '18' certificate and *SEX* was not sold in the children's fiction section of bookshops. *SEX* was neither a G.C.S.E. text nor a bedtime story. Often descriptions of the images confirm merely that readers saw what they expected to see. In *The Sunday Times* article Madonna is variously described as half-naked (which sounds salacious) when she is wearing only shoes (which is merely funny); and as 'consorting' with an 'alsation' which is evidently a small mongrel. These tiny but important points illustrate the extent to which *SEX* was both very 'readable' and highly contested.

Those individuals who wrote or broadcast about the book tended to want Madonna as their champion or as their object of blame; there was a prevailing sense that to desire this text was disreputable and sordid in itself. The book retailed for around twenty-five pounds, and the limited print run of *SEX* (one million copies in Britain, with no second edition) sold out almost instantly, both in Britain and America. Importantly, this was a text which limited itself to a mere million copies, but whose publicity presented it as a highly available popular text. A similar statement could be made about *Giselle* ; the few hundred or thousand people who see a ballet per night is minuscule in comparison to those watching television or motion pictures. 2.8 million adults currently attend ballet each year, although around half of these will be watching modern ballet. [31] A similar proportion of the adult population will have had access to *SEX* . In the case of *SEX* however, some of the less explicit pictures were viewed more publicly because they were reproduced in the national press and in magazines. This could be compared to the ubiquity of posters advertising ballets on the London

Underground, or around Birmingham on bus shelters: the majority which sees the posters will not see the ballet.

Thus the media were ambivalent towards *SEX* because of its unquantifiable textual status. Some of the images were genuinely disturbing. It was certainly 'dirtier' than anything that had tested the limits of MTV and the like previously. There was a desire to feel that the book communicated the 'truth' about Madonna, that the rambling and often obscure written text of the book was autobiographical. Yet one reads on consecutive pages: 'We come together, waking up the neighbourhood', and 'Screaming and loud noise really annoys me ... I was sure the whole neighbourhood could hear us'. Rather than read the contradictions of the text, critics seemed more concerned to verify parts of the book as 'true'. Certainly television interviews tended to focus upon ascertaining those activities depicted in the book in which Madonna herself had participated. Her answers were oblique. Hence, when she includes in her texts these words,

> When I first moved to New York I thought about working in a topless bar. I was really naïve and I read the Village Voice and it said 'dancers wanted' and I was a dancer at the time, I was studying at the Alvin Ailey School and I thought 'God, a hundred bucks a night! That's good money!' So I'd go to these agencies and these big fat disgusting bald men would be in these offices and they'd say 'Okay, take you clothes off. Let me see you in your underpants. We'll put some music on and you can dance around' I'd go 'Oh, it's that kind of dancing'.[32]

and they were obviously similar to biographical accounts of the young Madonna's first experiences in New York, [33] they were deemed to be autobiographical. Part of what tantalized, perhaps, is the fact that to date there has been no autobiography. The desire was to authenticate *SEX* as such. This response has to be seen as naïve: certainly the use of quasi-autobiographical material in art is not unusual. *SEX* was carefully constructed to appear confessional. This was to be expected, as Madonna has always traded in the ritual and imagery of Roman Catholicism; 'the [...] figure of the crucifix which (in case we had forgotten) Madonna has said she revers 'because there's a naked man on it', as Mandy Merck has commented. [34] Critics seemed concerned that Madonna's strategy was actually a lie, a cynical and wicked attempt to deceive a loyal public.

The response to *SEX* demonstrates the widely held ideological division between popular and high art. Madonna was sanctioned until she tried to be disruptive of her own milieu, until she borrowed strategies considered to rest in the domain of 'serious' writers or photographers. The obverse of this situation is the notion attached to ballet, that High Art should not sully itself by dwelling in the realms of the material. The potential of each to matter is defused by the tacit agreement that neither should cross into the other's territory. What is most interesting is that we see in *Giselle* and in *SEX* attempts to mix fantasy and classic realist styles in order to question the role and function of both forms.

The methodology that this thesis utilises in using *SEX* as a means of re-reading *Giselle* is similar to that employed by Linda

Leung in her essay 'The Making of a Matriarchy: a comparison of Madonna and Margaret Thatcher'. [35] Leung uses the more discussed subject, Madonna, to throw light upon the subject generating less academic discourse, Margaret Thatcher.

> As there was only a minimal amount of academic literature available on Thatcher, juxtaposition was a useful methodology given the wealth of articles and essays which had been written about Madonna. It provided an opportunity for theoretical frameworks to be transposed and exchanged, and may therefore be appropriate for future research into cultural icons and media presences. [36]

Although this sharing out of academic attention may seem the wrong way around, one could note that, similarly, whilst the New York Public Library Dance Collection features only five items concerning Madonna, the British Humanities Index has one hundred and five such items, but only four on *Giselle*. Whether academics are writing about the 'wrong' things or not, this transference of critical material from one subject to another is a productive strategy.

Leung's essay also points to ambivalence of conclusion (which seems almost unavoidable when approaching Madonna's work, as opposed to Madonna herself) as a useful outcome: that the generation of contradictory meanings is in itself of value. This too is relevant to the following discussion of *Giselle*, although Leung sees the 'lack of resolution [... in] the public identities of Madonna and Thatcher' as specific to and normative in the postmodern era, whereas this thesis argues that what remains unresolved in *Giselle* is what sets it apart from its own historical moment. [37]

The methodology used here also mirrors that of Curry's approach to studying Madonna's work, this being that one must see each text as part of an accumulation of work, rather than assuming that any one video, song or image stands in for the 'meaning of Madonna'. Hence:

> what adheres to Madonna's cumulative image from her varied and multiple performances is her status as a kind of meta-masquerade. [38]

In using a cumulative approach one limits the temptation to make academic writing about Madonna, rather than about the texts she has generated. Even a discussion of a single text, as here with *SEX*, is then grounded in its moment of production. Additionally, as the quotation from Curry intimates, discussion then moves on to the point where we can assert (or not) the presence of some kind of critical framework in the texts we study.

If we approach *SEX* as Leung and Curry have approached other Madonna texts, we need not ask whether *SEX* is good or bad, art or pornography, feminist or anti-feminist, but if our viewing of it can find a critical framework through which to view it and other texts. It is the assertion of this thesis that *SEX*, like *Giselle*, contains just such a critical framework as part of its textual material, although those frames have been elided in the majority of responses. It is these frames which make *SEX* and

Giselle different from other pornography and other Romantic ballets, which prevent their images from being free-floating, suggesting instead that they be read as humour, irony or parody.

Waldemar Januszczak, reviewing *SEX* in the Guardian, commented that

> *SEX* [was] a book which employed a strategy that was commonplace in the New York art world, but which it made uncommonplace by unleashing it on the non-art world. [39]

Januszczak, although sceptical of Madonna's 'artistic' intentions, was correct in noting that *SEX* utilizes a critical viewing strategy displaced from 'High' to popular art. Bordo condemns the absence of frame in Madonna's earlier video, *Open Your Heart to Me*, stating that the playful and parodic aspects of the film, which shows Madonna as a dancer in a peep-hole show, are overwhelmed by its lack of framing device:

> as in virtually all rock videos, the female body is offered to the viewer purely as spectacle, an object of sight, a visual commodity to be consumed. [40]

Bordo notes that the female body in this video offers no challenge to the audience's identification with the seedy men watching the peep-show, and that the ending, in which Madonna is shown escaping the porn theatre to skip off into the sunset dressed as a young boy, merely implies that Madonna's very real financial and social power allows her to play at being an objectified body without having to inhabit it. Bordo compares

Open Your Heart to Me to the rap lyrics of Ice-T, which appear to celebrate rape: she warns against recourse to postmodernism as a valorization of all images and ideas in popular culture, and argues for:

> recognition of the social contexts and consequences of images from popular culture, consequences that are frequently effaced in [the] postmodern. [41]

Whilst the images in *SEX* are very like those appearing in previous videos and photographs featuring Madonna, this thesis argues that they carry with them a critical point of view which grounds them far more firmly in material concerns such as those to which Bordo alludes. In the introduction to her book, *Unbearable Weight*, Bordo puts forward her anxiety that postmodernism tends to make the body immaterial:

> postmodern tendencies thoroughly [...] 'textualize' the body [...] If the body is treated as pure text, subversive, destabilizing elements can be emphasized [...] but one is left wondering, is there a *body* in this text? [42]

Bordo reminds us of Marx's assertion that material conditions determine consciousness, and refutes the Cartesian notion that thought - imagination - constitutes existence. The human body is material, and Bordo locates 'the continuing social realities of dominance and subordination' in the postmodern tendency to efface this. [43] The material conditions of real bodies are not effaced in *Giselle* and *SEX*; rather, their effacement is the subject of the texts. The construction of this subject through still images is discussed below.

3. Photography

This chapter chooses to look at the movement in *Giselle* by referring it to still photographs, and by applying those critical theories of Roland Barthes which were generated for photographic images. Chapter One argued that the use of travelling theory was approriate to *Giselle* because the ballet itself was constructed in the same way. In this chapter one specific area of theory travels to *Giselle*. In ballet and in photography, the artist attempts to interrupt and capture something in motion, an event which is lost in the instant it happens. The photographer and the dancer try to snatch a moment's stillness from perpetual motion. The photographer works with light and lenses and film: the image they take is then preserved. The dancer, however, trades in a bodily sensation of stillness, a kinetic snapshot which passes away as it is perceived, but which nonetheless bears bodily resemblance to a photograph.

The sensation of dancing ballet feels to the dancing body like a photograph: what is preserved is not the moment but the knowledge that the subject of the moment, as it existed during the photographic instant, is already dead. The ballet audience, transfixed in its own dynamic stillness, exerting great physical control in order to view the overwhelming embodiment of the dancer, sees ballet as photographs are seen, not simply as captured moments, but as moments already lost.

Ballet movement is built upon stillness. The entire language of ballet teaching is infused with words and phrases that encourage even the youngest dancers to see their body as an instrument of stillness. The aim of a jump is not to move up or across, but to snatch a moment of stillness from gravity's clutches. The intention of *pointe* work is to elide the mechanism of the foot to such an extent that the ballerina appears to be floating, propelled without effort. Ballet teachers are ever reminding their classes that one's *jetés* should 'hang in the air', that when *pirouetting* one should focus on retaining a frozen position, and not upon spinning, and that one's *echappé relevés* were thus named because they give the impression that the feet have escaped from each other for a moment. Key moments in *Giselle*, in particular, are informed by what could be described as a photographic stillness. Examples include the series of hops described previously danced at the Festival of the Vintage in Act One, and, in Act Two, the sequences performed by Giselle at Myrtha's behest, when she spins on one foot whilst holding most of her body very still.

Gelsey Kirkland writes of this instantaneous stillness and motion in *The Shape of Love*, as she recalls preparing to dance in Kenneth MacMillan's staging of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*, with the Royal Ballet in 1986.

> I opened a book of da Vinci reproductions to a place I had marked. I had become fascinated by the strange figure Gabriel in The Annunciation, an unlikely place to start my search for Juliet, but there was a certain quality in the

painting that captivated me. The way the angel seemed to be reaching out with both heart and mind, and yet resisting, kneeling without allowing his knee to touch the ground or shoulders to fall forward - without losing his dignity. I wrote in my journal:

> How is it possible for a figure that is perfectly still to look like it is moving? If I can accomplish only that much on the stage, I will have succeeded ... the curve of the back and the outstretched arm blurring the distinction between heaven and earth. I have to find a place for this wonderful creature. Sneak him into the theatre if I can ... disguised as me. [44]

Kirkland, looking at photographs of Leonardos, identified an aspect of the still image which is crucial to this chapter's reading of *SEX* and *Giselle* : that is, the ability of an image, be it photographic or bodily, to captivate, to demand entirely our attention.

In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes theorized photography and photographs, both as an academic study and as a personal voyage from the death of his mother to his own death. The Preface referred to Barthes's notion that we are in love with certain photographs. By basing its discussion upon this premise, *Camera Lucida* combines the personal and the intimate with the academic. In doing this Barthes provides a framework for a new way of seeing *Giselle*, a text punctuated with moments of photographic stillness. Barthes's reflections as to why we love certain photographs, and the repercussions of this love upon critical theory, centre upon his notion that photographs can be composed of a studium and a punctum.

In Barthes's scheme of interpretation, the part of the photograph he calls the studium exists in the order of docility, being uninterupted by any sort of detail, or punctum, that 'attracts or distresses me'. The studium type photograph he calls unary, meaning that it is single and simple:

> it emphatically transforms "reality" without doubling it, without making it vacillate (emphasis is a power of cohesion): no duality, no indirection, no disturbance. The unary Photograph has every reason to be banal, "unity" of composition being the first rule of vulgar (and notably, of academic) rhetoric: "The subject," says one handbook for amateur photographers, "must be simple, free of useless accessories; this is called the Search for Unity".

Thus Barthes finds banality and vulgarity in the academic insistence on consistency and unity. Similarly, photographs of a unary nature, exhibiting only the studium, do not carry with them the ability to disturb or 'wound' the viewer. One example Barthes gives of such photography is the news photograph: he states that

> No detail (in some corner) ever interrupts my reading: I am interested in them (as I am interested in the world), I do not love them.

Here we must take into account that, even though Barthes admits that 'the unary photograph is not necessarily tranquil', news photography has changed since this text was written in 1980: certainly there are many news photographs taken before and after that date which could be seen by some as 'traversed, lashed, striped by a detail (punctum)'. Vital to Barthes' structuration of photographs is the notion that the punctum is absolutely personal: when he denotes the punctum of a photograph of black Americans as the old-fashioned bar shoes one of the women wears, it is clear that this may not be the punctum for everyone looking at the picture, and that, indeed, it may be a unary photograph, a picture of the studium order, to many. He then goes on to state that:

> Another unary photograph is the pornographic photograph (I am not saying the erotic photograph: the erotic is the pornographic that has been disturbed, fissured). [There is] Nothing more homogeneous than a pornographic photograph. It is always a naïve photograph, without intention and without calculation [...] it is completely constituted by the presentation of only one thing: sex: no secondary, untimely object ever manages to half conceal, delay or distract. [45]

As an example of the erotic, Barthes gives the photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe: 'he shifts his close ups of genitalia from the pornographic to the erotic by photographing the fabric of underwear at very close range: the photograph is no longer unary, since I am interested in the texture of the material.' In perceiving a punctum in a photograph, Barthes writes that he must 'give myself up'. It is in this investment of self, this giving away of something vital as we read a photograph, that denotes the love he writes of, and which informs aspects of this thesis.

As pornography, *SEX* is fissured in many ways, particularly by its framing devices, which literally disturb the unity of the images in the book. We can also think of *Giselle* in the same way.

Although we are encouraged by the presentation of the ballet to perceive *Giselle* as unary, even the most conservative reproductions are fissured by the earlier imprints of radical impulses upon its palimpsest.

According to Barthes's scheme, the images in *SEX* are of an erotic nature, for the unity, the studium of their superficially pornographic appearance is shattered, disturbed by a detail, a punctum, ' a partial object' or framing device. One of the most noticeable examples of this is the two page shot of the faces of Madonna with two lesbians. The studium of that photograph is obviously Madonna's face: it a beautiful face, a glowing face, but the picture of the face is unremarkable, undisturbed. Some critics have focused on the centring of Madonna's beauty as one of the most reactionary and offensive aspects of *SEX*. Robertson, discussing Champagne's criticisms of *SEX*, notes:

> [There is] a sharp contrast between Madonna's blond glamour and the dark-haired, pierced and tattooed lesbian skinheads, or between her whiteness and African Americans [...] Madonna is at the center of virtually every image, foregrounded, and mugging for the camera [...] *SEX* reinstates middle-class privilege because it expresses the same revulsion toward sexuality as it claims to contest. [46]

Without making us insensible to such problematic and even unacceptable aspects of the text, Barthes's theory allows us to find our meaning in what is not 'at the center of virtually every image'.

The punctum of the pictures to which Robertson and Champagne object, is the tattoos on one woman's back - a large dragon and two hands holding a Star of David and a 'gay' triangle. They force one to 'give oneself up', but not simply because they are unusual, failing to conform to the usual conventions of tattoo art. What transfixes, wounds and 'changes my reading' is that the Star of David and the triangle look newer than the line work of the hands and dragon needled into her skin. These two badges which signify her personal wounds are in fact barely scabbed wounds in themselves: they have, in the glaring lights of the photographic studio, the slightly raised, rough appearance characteristic of freshly healed tattoos.

Thus, like Barthes, one finds oneself asking a series of questions about the punctum that do not concern the studium of the photograph. Had the woman had these tattoos done especially for this photographic session? Or, perhaps more likely, and a common practice for large tattoos, was she having the work done in 'instalments' - had the badges been inscribed ahead of schedule so that the images would be complete for *SEX* ? Was she excited, getting ready to have these new stigmata of old wounds photographed? One is drawn in, touched, by what Barthes calls the 'blind field' of the punctum: the point of detail, of fascination, that only the viewer can add to the picture, but 'is nonetheless already there.' The blind field is that which 'emerges from it [and] continues living: a "blind field" constantly doubles our partial vision'. The blind field that a punctum induces allows us to endow parts of a photograph with an external existence. It demands that we read, rather than acknowledge.

It is significant that Barthes demonstrated the effect and function of the blind field using his personal thoughts on certain pornographic and/or erotic photographs. His thoughts on pornographic photographs can help in locating the punctum, the blind field, in the *SEX* sequence, and in the second act of *Giselle* . *Giselle* and *SEX* do not conform simply to the unary, studium order of Romantic ballet and pornographic pictures: they are separated from their own genre by the existence of the punctum within these texts. Because the punctum is the thing we love in a text, Barthes theorized, it allows us to reimagine love and desire as radical forces in those texts in which it is present.

Barthes's theory of pornography, however, is based on extremely personal value judgements: this is vital if the reader is to locate their own punctum within art. As a result, we must remember that parts of his theory are not on a general, 'universal' level. Barthes has no fear of the revelation of his own desires: he is not imprisoned by 'the holy terror of love'. [47] Hence for anyone seeking to apply what they find in *Camera Lucida* it is perhaps less the theory itself, and more Barthes' approach to theory that is useful in imagining a different academy, the 'Postmodern University' of Fogel, as well as in finding the subversive qualities of *Giselle* and *SEX* . Thus Barthes sets up a theoretical system which allows its reader to disregard his judgements whilst retaining the theoretical spirit of those judgements. Hence when, with *Giselle* and *SEX* in mind, one reads

> The presence (the dynamics) of this blind field is, I believe, what distinguishes the erotic photograph from the pornographic photograph. Pornography ordinarily represents the sexual organs, making them into a motionless object (a fetish) [...] for me, there is no punctum in the pornographic image; at most it amuses me [...] The erotic photograph, on the contrary (and this is its very condition), does not make the sexual organs into a central object.

one can choose to disagree with Barthes separation of pornography and erotica, noting that Barthes's complexity of theory here rests on rather simplistic definitions of the erotic and the pornographic. So, although one may not agree that these definitions properly communicate the multiple reading positions that 'non-erotic' pornography offers, the blind fields that Barthes generates from these same definitions are empowering for the reader. One example of this can be seen in the detailed mediatations found on the following passage concerning a Robert Mapplethorpe photograph:

> This boy [...] incarnates a kind of blissful eroticism: the photograph leads me to distinguish the "heavy" desire of pornography from the "light (good) desire of eroticism; after all, perhaps this is a question of "luck": the photographer has caught the boy's hand (the boy is Mapplethorpe himself, I believe) at just the right degree of openness, the right density of abandonment: a few millimeters more or less and the divined body would no longer have been offered with benevolence (the pornographic body shows itself, it does not give itself, there is no generosity in it): the photographer has found the *right moment*, the *kairos* of desire.[48]

Barthes implies that the photograph, and pornographic photographs, are highly writerly, or perhaps 'photographerly' texts. If one were to articulate the obverse of his theory on the generosity of texts, to make it readerly or 'viewerly', then one could say that, rather than the text giving or showing itself, we take or get the photograph. Thus we take the erotic: erotic viewing is active, but we get or receive the pornographic, which is passive. This is more generally useful, because it places the onus of the functional definition of sexually themed photographs upon the viewer, making such pictures available for many different reading positions. It also generates a structure into which one can place the viewing of ballet, both traditionally and potentially.

So do we take or get the lesbian S/M sequence in *SEX* : do we take or get Act Two of *Giselle* ? By taking, we as viewers are projecting these texts into the realm of the punctum, the blind field: we liberate them from the unary nature of the studium. Historically, pornography and ballet have been 'got': Barthes' description of pornography as lacking in generosity of both readability and of love (meaning self-investment) could be colonized as an apt description of ballet in the second half of this century, and certainly of the ballet that the major companies have now constructed as being historical and traditional. Ballet has become highly conservative in as much as it presents its defining function as being the conservation of the favourite ballets, a traditional training and audiences that support these projects. The importance of the preservation of steps obscures any kind of re-making or re-reading project. In other words, the audience is expected passively to receive ballet, rather than actively to take it for themselves: we are not permitted to engage with the generosity of meaning that lies unused within the art form. That ballet dancers are passive in this process is also apparent from their own descriptions of the process of learning roles, and, on a wider scale, from their experiences of education.

Although both watchers and makers of ballet can be seen to be passive in the production process, we can at least address the position of the audience through Barthes's theory. We are simply unused to directing our gaze towards moments which could be called punctums: blind fields which would set up a proliferation of meaning are effectively prohibited. We must deconstruct the historical means by which our gaze has been directed if we are to re-imagine ballet as a readerly text in which we can discover our own punctums.

Ballet criticism has been one of the main agents in the promotion of the acknowledgement, rather than the reading, of ballet. Since the 1930s, ballet criticism in England has tended to prescribe the focus of the audience. The leader of this prescription was Arnold L. Haskell, with his book *Balletomania,* published in 1934. [49] Haskell studied ballet himself, and travelled with and observed The Ballets Russes and other influential companies and dancers at the beginning of the twentieth century. His was a very informed and enthusiastic prescription: he coined the word 'balletomania' to describe both his own passion, and the 'ballet fever' that followed the establishment of the Vic-Wells Ballet. The strictures of wartime touring only seemed to strengthen the young ballet companies in Britain, and the war was followed by the ballet boom, its peak being the years of the Fonteyn-Nureyev partnership, and the creativity of British companies combined with that of defectors such as Makarova and Baryshnikov.

However, as the major, and especially the Royal companies became huge financial concerns, as well as edifices of 'heritage', the criticism that accompanied them hardened into an inflexible means of dictating the reading experiences of audiences. Although David Dougill in the *Sunday Times* and Judith Mackrell in the *Guardian* represent a newer criticism that embraces current theoretical stances, the tendency is still to look to non-ballet forms of dance for radical statements, rather than to find them by reading ballet differently. Because ballet audiences are well informed they effectively limit their performance reading options by reading newspaper criticism. Audiences do not expect to look disruptively, or deconstructively. Thus ballet currently tends to exist in the order of the studium. Academics who happily affirm the textuality of, say, cartoons or TV programmes, and the intellectual legitimacy of their study, may still raise an eyebrow to see ballet included in the textual canon. We are simply not used to finding anything to read in ballet. The notion that ballet is at once too simple to read at any level of complexity and richness combines with and reinforces the idea that ballet is too arcane and exclusive to be understood by any but a few. Thus, it seems the conservative project of ballet has worked very well.

Barthes's theory allows us to oppose this (relatively recently constructed) tradition, and to look at the things we really want to look at - the things we love - whilst maintaining academic rigour.

Barthes allows desire into the university, and he legitimizes the study of the texts we love: he dispels the notion that it is somehow dubious or too easy to study those texts we love. By giving up ourselves when we read and write, we counter the 'game in which it hardly mattered that nobody could win, since nothing was at stake'. Barthes's punctum is the space, the gap, the 'love' that has been missing from not only ballet, but from the academy. It is also a quality which close analysis indicates is woven through the fabric of *Giselle*.

4. Pornography

This thesis has already referred to the links between pornography and ballet, both actual and imagined. These links have been altered and elided until, in the late twentieth century they exist mainly in the realm of popular perceptions and jokes about ballet. Occasionally a 'heart throb' or a 'pin-up girl' emerges from the ranks, but the material connection between the production of ballet and pornography has ended. However, by tracing the relationship between pornography and ballet we can situate *SEX* and *Giselle* in the same cultural milieu. Although we find that the two texts have much in common, they have not enjoyed similar levels of attention from the academy.

SEX and *Giselle*, culturally, stem from a moment in the early nineteenth century when the same discourses were being played out upon the female body in ballet and pornography. As has already been discussed, the female body in ballet, as in pornography, was at this time a site upon which fears about female desire and agency were both enacted and assuaged. The rest of this section locates the moment at which dancing and pornography were connected, gives a brief history of pornography in Britain, and notes the similarities shared by ballet and pornography today. Each discussion includes references to those tropes and qualities which are evinced in ballet as well as in pornography.

In 1769 pornography was defined as 'A description of prostitutes, or of prostitution', by Restif de la Brettone, in his book *The Pornographer* . It is from this definition that the *Oxford English Dictionary* derives its notion of pornography: 'Description of the life, manners etc of prostitutes and their patrons; hence, the expression or suggestion of obsene or unchaste subjects in literature and art'. [50] From the mid-1700s until the middle of the nineteenth century, women who danced professionally were popularly considered to be a species of prostitute. As has been noted, there were actual links between the production of dance, and the production of pornography. The very act of dancing was considered by some pornographic:

> A contributor to the London *Times* in 1816, reporting that the Prince Regent had brought the waltz to court, was beside himself with indignation about the 'voluptuous intertwining of the limbs, the close compressure of the bodies in their dance, so far removed from the modest reserve which has hitherto been considered distinctive of English females. So long as this obscene display has been confined to prostitutes and adultresses, we did not think it deserving of notice; but now it is attempted to be forced on the respectable classes of society by the evil example of their superiors, we feel it a

> duty to warn every parent against exposing his daughter to so fatal a contagion.' 51

Ballet in particular, with its display and open positioning of the limbs, was considered by many improper and provocative

> Most respectable middle class people regarded all ballet girls as little more than street walkers. There is a revealing little scene is *The Ballet Girl*, a short story which appeared in *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal* in 1853:
>
> 'The three old ladies gave each a little scream.
> "A ballet dancer!" cried the eldest.
> "With such short petticoats, Mabel!" said Miss Silas reproachfully.
> "Dancing in public on one toe!" exclaimed Miss Priscilla, holding up her hands ...
> "We are sorry, Mabel Preston," began Miss Wentworth, "We are sorry for you, but you must get work elsewhere. We cannot have our nephew, Captain John Wentworth's shirts made by a ballet dancer. It would be setting a young man far too bad an example"' 52

This extract demonstrates not only the link between ballet, its capacity to corrupt, and immorality in the Victorian middle class mind, but also between the social and economic status of ballet dancers and prostitutes. In some cases there was an actual link between dancing on the stage and the production of pornography.

> Everything went well at first, they made money, then some of the troupe got discontented with their share, quarrels arose, and two left, which spoilt the tableaux [...] The troupe got right again, but foreign gentlemen wanted Sarah. He [the

> manager of the troup, Mr. Mavis] would have allowed, but she would not permit it [...] A great swell paid a heavy sum to see her nearly naked, with boots and stockings on, and in a recumbent bawdy posture. That she allowed, for the sum he paid was great; but her husband was in the room with her at the time. She insisted on that. 53

The ballet and brothel paintings of Edgar Degas record this time when ballet and prostitution were last overtly connected. Painting in the 1870s and 80s, Degas showed ballet dancers as strong, sturdy, hard-working women: often the grim concentration on their faces (as in *Two Dancers at the Barre*, 1882-4) belies the beauty, grace and availability of their bodies and revealing cut of their costumes. The same can be said of his prostitutes. His paintings set backstage are very similar to his bordellos: the women, in the gas-light of the evening, sit and wait in rows, adorned but aimless, legs turned out from the body and spread towards the viewer. The little ballet masters and black-dressed mothers could easily be brothel keepers, madams or maids. (*Frieze of Dancers*, 1883, *Dancers on a Bench*, 1898, *L'Attente*, 1882) Degas' images identify a direct correlation between the economic, physical and social lives of dancers and prostitutes. Yet this similarity was, by the mid-twentieth century, effaced, and ideologically re-presented as difference.

Brettone's 1769 definition categorizes pornography as 'the expression or suggestion of obscene or unchaste subjects in literature or art.' Initially there was no sense that pornography was specifically produced to create sexual arousal, but rather that it either intended to corrupt, or that it was a branch of high art.

The Feminists Against Censorship group points out that a definition which started from this point in the eighteenth century was transformed by the patriarchal cultural practices of the nineteenth century into the perception that any depiction or description of sex was both forbidden and obscene. [54] This early definition also contains the explicit premise that women's bodies in pornography were commodified, a site of exchange.

During the nineteenth century, the middle and upper classes in Europe became interested in the practices and artifacts of indigenous, aboriginal - and therefore 'natural' and 'savage' - peoples. Objects and accounts were shipped back to Europe, where they were immediately censored precisely so that those parts of society deemed to be closest to nature could be protected from them. Women, children and the working classes were prevented from viewing tribal art, stone phalluses, fertility figures and so on, for fear that their own natural and savage natures would be inflamed by such objects. In 1857, the Obscene Publications Act used the phrase 'A tendency [...] to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences, and into whose hands such publications of this sort may fall' as a definition of pornography. Thus pornography became in the main the pursuit of middle class men. So, until the end of the nineteenth century, was ballet-going.

By the early twentieth century the legal definition of pornography had been added to, allowing that the whole of a text, rather than specific parts of it, must 'deprave and corrupt', and that serious literature, science and so on be exempt. The law did not initially recognize shock or disgust caused by a text as proof that it was pornographic, because this response 'might actually discourage depravity'. The premise that the representation of natural and therefore sexually unconstrained activities could serve as a cautionary tale had been operating in ballet for some time. *Giselle* is an example of one such ballet. It is worth looking at recent developments in the law as it affects pornography, for it mirrors those developments in the production of ballet which have tended to elide the subversive and parodic aspects of *Giselle.*

The law has changed little in its definition of pornography during the second half of the twentieth century, although on the surface the range of legally available pornographic texts and public tolerance of obscene subjects has increased. The idea that a text with a higher educational purpose, although capable of inducing sexual arousal, is permissable, has been maintained, thus differentiating pornography and erotica/art on a class basis. What has been added to the law is the provision for the prohibition and seizure of materials considered to be pornographic, along with the notions that 'offence' should be legislated for, and that pornography could be defined through a so-called 'laundry list' of activities and images. Censorship has become codified and institutionalized. Thus:

> The obscene becomes identified with a particular genre - pornography - usually meaning writing or pictures (and later films or videos) produced with the purpose of sexual arousal and having no 'redeeming' value. The assumption is that to set out intentionally to produce sexual arousal is despicable, but if the main objective of the work is artistic

> or scientific [...] then these 'higher' purposes may justify publication. The courts thus undertook to make aesthetic judgements, apparently unaware that class prejudice and aesthetics go hand in hand. [55]

Thus according to this definition aesthetics and the value of the 'cautionary tale' combine to make *Giselle* permissible - the bodies in *Giselle* and those in *SEX* are very similar in many ways, but we have been conditioned to allow the redemptive theme of *Giselle* to classify it away from pornography. Much of the outrage concerning *SEX* focused on Madonna's apparently unrepentant attitude.

The Obscene Publications Acts of 1959 and 1964 made previous law more detailed, gave the police further powers to seize material, and extended the definitions of illegal materials to include photographic negatives, thus acknowledging that pornography was not simply materials, but also a production industry. The Williams Committee of 1979 concentrated on prosecuting 'identifiable harms' done by pornography and, after conflicting evidence from crime figures and psychologists had been considered, 'rejected the argument that pornography acts as a stimulus to sexual violence'. [56] The 'public good' was seen to be the central governing notion, thus the uneducated had still to be protected, but the educated could view and read material with a 'higher purpose'. Although the words 'deprave and corrupt' were dropped as vague within the law, they are still represented in the spirit rather than the letter of the law in modern definitions of pornography.

The Committee recommended that pornography be legalized but controlled nationally in the same way that betting had been in 1960, through adults-only shops with opaque windows. This was rejected by the newly-elected Thatcher government later in 1979, and acts in 1981 and 1982 allowed local legislatures to choose how they dealt with the issue: the Tory party line has been that all pornography is undesirable, and that there is little to distinguish between different genres of pornography. John Major, whilst Prime Minister, spoke against all pornography, giving the impression that child pornography and 'girlie' magazines were to be viewed as equally wrong. Claire Short, an MP on the left wing of the Labour party, took a similar stance with her highly personal campaign against Page Three nudes in tabloid papers. That the parliamentary discussion of pornography has, across the party divide, been characterized by so little subtlety of response tells us more about the problems inherent in taxonomizing and regulating pornography than it does about British parliamentary politics.

The 1980s in Great Britain have been characterized as a materialistic decade, centered on consumption and exchange. This mood was set by a government focused on private enterprise, profit and conspicuous consumption. That this government sought to restrict the trade in sexual images whilst promoting other forms of commerce was not surprising. In a highly developed capitalist society the enforcement of a certain set of sexual codes and behaviours is vital to the perpetuation of that society's system of values. Significantly, it was also in this period of increased censorship, and a perceived 'backlash' against the values of the 1960s, that ballet's 'Golden Age' came to an end.

The 'Golden Age' lasted from Margot Fonteyn's triumphant appearance as *The Sleeping Beauty* on February 20th, 1946, in a Royal Opera House newly reopened after World War Two, [57] through the Fonteyn/Nureyev partnership of the 1960s, and the defections of Makarova and Baryshnikov to the West, to the 'dance explosion' and the sexually explicit choreography of Kenneth Macmillan for Lynn Seymour in the 1970s. It ended in the 1980s, as smaller companies folded under financial pressure, and larger companies limited their repertoire to the repetition of traditional productions of the classics, finding that costs could not be met, nor theatres filled, by new, controversial productions or experimental triple bills.

Thus, throughout the 1980s both ballet and pornography became increasingly codified as a result of censorship stemming from legislation and the profit imperative. By the end of the 1980s, British ballet was in a state of crisis, financially stricken and artistically exhausted, with the once large and broad ballet audience turning to other forms of dance for stimulation, and unable to afford the seat prices at any rate. At the same time, the production of ballet criticism waned, as academics and journalists also shifted their activities to modern dance forms, feeling that ballet was archaic and ideologically bankrupt. Ballet books, once a significant minority in publishing, became a tiny trade in coffee table glossies.

Laundry Listing started in order to clarify film censorship: thus the following depictions were prohibited: 'material intended to stimulate sexual activity' ... 'acts of force or restraint which are associated with sexual activity' ...'genital organs or urinary or excretory functions'. The 1984 Video Recordings Act took a similar approach, and video classifiction was taken out of local jurisdiction. The practice also led to a highly codified, socially and legally prescribed style of soft-porn - the 'top-shelf' magazines.

At the same time, public perceptions of ballet and its audiences narrowed and hardened: the notion that ballet is an exclusively middle class pursuit, beloved of Tory matrons and little girls, and which merely repeats the same five or six traditional ballets became accepted and in the main accurate.

By 1992, pornography had become the site for a bitter battle between opposing factions of feminists whose beliefs were crystallized in their vociferous response to *SEX*. The anti-pornography and anti-censorship ideologies have polarized feminism as no other issue has. Although it would be innapropriate to explore the entire censorship debate here, it is useful to note the main issues, as they are equally relevant to *SEX* and *Giselle*.

Both sides in the debate have been similarly misrepresented. Although anti-porn campaigner Andrea Dworkin has been represented as the bandit queen of the 'Dworkinista', her writing in *Pornography* and *Intercourse* is deeply moving and extremely elegant. She and like-minded feminists have argued that pornography is a civil rights issue, not one of representation, and that as long as patriarchal society oppresses and brutalizes women, then representations of these acts are actual infringements of the rights of women.

> Pornography itself is objective and real and central to the male system [...] Pornography does not, as some claim, refute the idea that female sexuality is dirty: instead, pornography embodies and exploits this idea; pornography sells and promotes it. [58]

Very few feminists would, on the other hand, call themselves 'pro-pornography' (Paglia being a notable exception [59]), but rather, 'anti-censorship'. They often share a revulsion for, say, child pornography and snuff movies (pointing out that sex with children and murder are already illegal), but feel that censoring pornographic material colludes with the notion that the female body is dirty and obscene, and also makes pornographic material a more desirable, fetishized object. There is also a feeling that anti-pornography writing is in itself obscene because it holds expressions of certain sexualities to be perverted.

One critical strategy which engages with the issues inherent in pornography, but which avoids the schizm between groups with similar basic values, is that of Linda Williams, writing in Lynne Segal's collection *Sex Exposed: Sexuality and the Porn Debate.* She renames obscenity as on/scenity, meaning a discourse which is no longer marginal but on scene at all times, in the same way Pamela Robertson has argued camp now saturates all straight cultural activity. Through the identification of pornography as a pervasive discourse Williams argues that, rather than condemning pornography as an Other practice which should be shunned (as has been the case historically with women's cultural practices), or tolerating it as a necessary evil, we should recognize it and its desires within ourselves:

> We do better to rethink the very meaning of the terms 'obsecenity ' and 'perversion'. I have already suggested the term on/scenity as an appropriate replacement for ob/scenity. Such a term at least suggests that these representations can no longer be conveniently placed beyond all understanding. Obscenity is already onscene; we are all perverts in our desires. [60]

Ballet has experienced little of the volume, passion or critical heterogeneity of response elicited by pornography. One would not expect ballet to garner the same volume of response as pornography. Pornography is ubiquitous in Western society and is an issue which draws debate in the same way that gun control and the break-up of the family do: these issues are perceived to be central to social stability. Ballet is a minority art form which presents itself as rareified and even élitist. However, neither does one see very much of the passion or the critical variety of the censorship debate being played out on ballet. Even when dance writers have chosen ballet as their subject, the majority of the response has been negative. English, for example, has made the connection between pornographic content and ballet movement, but finds nothing positive in the *pas de deux*.

> He handles [the ballerina] as he would his own penis. Fondly he holds the phallus in his arms [...] his hands around her long, stiff tube of a body [...] she is his own. [61]

This negative connection has also been dealt with through modern dance, for example in *Grace and Glitter* (1986), choreographed by Claid and Semple: at one point a woman in a tutu takes the stage, ready to perform her *pas*, but the music played indicates that she must strip:

> As her fear turns to anger the objectification of women, whether stripper or ballet dancer, is emphasised. The performance makes clear that the issue is power rather than sexuality. [62]

Whilst the arguments of English and Claid and Semple have validity and force, they stem from the conviction that neither ballet nor pornography produced for straight men have anything to offer women: unwittingly they collude with the patriarchal notion that women's bodies in art exist for the pleasure of men and the satisfaction of the male gaze. If we recognize that power lies in the beauty, the discipline and the ability to arouse of the dancing female body, we can still read the bodily narratives of those dancers differently, without side-stepping issues of affect and beauty. Ballet and pornography are alike, but this does not mean that either should be marginalized in an act of textual segregation.

Hence, this thesis argues that the theory normally reserved for pornography has great resonance when ballet becomes the subject, highlighting similarities which are not at once obvious, and finding complex meanings in both texts, including female power and male vulnerability.

Thus although today ballet and pornography have diverged in the public imagination, they share many structures. Both draw on a tradition of codification which has, in the late twentieth century, become absolute and rigid, immediately identifiable to those who are familiar with its prescriptions. These familiar codes are then very easy to read: they facilitate 'right-reading', taking the spectator from start to finish in such a way as to guarantee the 'proper' outcome. In pornography the proper outcome is sexual arousal (although not necessarily satiation). In ballet it is the imaginative displacement and replacement of the reading subject in the social order. Not only this, but we find that the codes themselves are similarly constructed in ballet and pornography. *SEX* and *Giselle* are examples of pornography and ballet, and they conform to the codes of those discourses. They also refer to ballet and pornography: in the same way that *Blade Runner* is a picture about pictures, they too are self-referential. These texts in concert permit us to read self-consciously, to disrupt those authorized readings that their individual codes demand.

In addition, there are two 'set pieces' shared by ballet and pornography which are particularly relevant to *Giselle* and *SEX*. Firstly, every combination of featured artists is depicted; secondly the main protagonists carry out a series of required moods.

In Romantic ballet, especially in first acts, convention requires that there will be solos, *pas de deux*, small group dances and ensemble pieces. This is very noticeable in *Giselle*, where we see solos and *pas de deux* for Giselle and Albrecht, then, with the villagers, *pas de trois* and *quatre*, groups of various sizes, and then the lovers are incorporated into the chorus, finishing in a symmetrical tableau. Something similar happens during Act Two, when Giselle, then Giselle and Myrtha, then Myrtha and her two attendants perform, followed by Myrtha with all the Wilis, until finally Giselle is incorporated into the whole. In addition, we see Giselle with competing partners - Myrtha then Albrecht. This is reinforced by the moods exhibited by the performers: Giselle moves from carefree joy, through love and madness, to melancholy and self-sacrifice.

Similarly, in mainstream pornography (which is here defined as 'top-shelf' glossy soft porn magazines aimed at heterosexual men), the 'solo' forms the mainstay of the magazine, featuring one woman per layout. Then duos and trios (usually featuring only women) will occasionally be shown, and less frequently larger groups. Magazines with the best turnover and thus the greatest capital are more likely to feature larger groups. Often the all-female groupings appear to feature women being aroused by each other - 'lipstick lesbians', as the press in the 1990s would have it. This is also noticeable in *SEX*: In addition, several sequences conform to the standard mood sequence seen in pornographic magazines: coyness, curiosity, arousal and orgasm. This movement from innocence to knowledge to death (perhaps a socially acceptable version of *petit mort*) also operates in *Giselle* . 63

In both pornography and ballet the male presence is secondary to that of the female, although it could be argued that the overseeing male presence is still required to validate the female. Men in *SEX* and *Giselle* tend to figure as stereotypes: a handsome prince and a forest gamekeeper, or skinheads and bikers. Men also appear as an implied presence, watching Giselle or Madonna in both texts. In most mainstream pornography there is there is often an implied male viewer in the layouts featuring one woman: the sequence of photographs shows a woman performing arousal far more frequently than it utilizes a 'peeping Tom' style. The women's gaze is usually very direct towards the camera. In addition, there is the narcissistic style of picture, also common, in which a model admires her body in a mirror. Something similar can be seen in the self-framing arm movements of *Giselle* , in which the ballerina positions her arms around her face in order that it may better be admired. This both complicates the assumption that a nude woman is passive under the male gaze, and queries the idea that the gaze of the male reader being constructed through these images is active, whilst still reflecting traditional ideas about passive feminine beauty and display. Because *Giselle* and *SEX* self-consciously quote from Romantic ballet and pornography they use but also question these conventions, particularly where the male body is concerned.

Most (though by no means all) soft-porn photographers are men, and certainly the large pornographic publishing companies are owned by men - Paul Raymond in Britain and Hugh Hefner in America being the most well known. Most ballet companies are directed by men; there are more male choreographers in ballet than female. Thus the women featured are not part of the power base of production: a ballerina or 'Playmate', 'Penthouse Pet' or a

'Page Three Girl', may well be handsomely rewarded for her work. Certainly Madonna and Marion Tate are amongst the best paid women in their respective art forms: far less so a member of the *corps de ballet*, or a student or young mother who poses once for *Club* magazine. However, in the object-subject relationship of reading, the economic realities of production do not necessarily construct the dynamics of fantasy and interpretation. This is analogous to the complex object-subject translations we watch when Giselle first takes to the stage, having heard knocking on her door: she claims in mime that she is dancing for her own pleasure, yet by her mime she is performing that claim for us, aware of an implied viewer. This mime, twirling her hands in a gesture that demonstrates her joy, is the balletic equivalent of a soliloquy.

We can also correlate the exposure of the female body in the two texts. Ballet and 'top-shelf' pornography are both made of exposed female bodies, but they both conceal a great deal too. Soft-core porn follows absolutely rigorous rules about the extent to which female bodies are exposed. The models in *Playboy* are often completely naked, but the genitals are never fully exposed. If seated in a position where they would be, then shadows or air-brushing are used to prevent total exposure. Indeed, the heavy use of airbrushing gives a sense that the models are clothed in a body stocking of sorts anyway. This is often actually the case in revealing ballet costumes - all the 'bare' legs and low necklines are covered in fine, skintone stretch fabric. Less expensive magazines reveal more of the models' genitals, but again, strict codes apply. Outer but not inner labia are shown: there is some airbrushing, but body make-up and partial genital shaving again give the sense that the exposed body has been 'tidied up', made *less* nude. Once more, this complicates our reading: exposure is simultaneously a trick, concealing what it purports to reveal, and a means of colluding with the image of the 'perfect' female (resembling nothing so much as a Barbie doll), by limiting the signifiers of female sexual maturity. Ballet does this too, clearly presenting prodigious feats of strength and endurance, yet at the same time using them to produce an idealized femininity of pre-pubescent frailty .

The majority of soft-porn photographs provide material to arouse men by simulating female arousal and masturbation. Although sexual arousal is not the stated intent of ballet, there is no doubt that one of its attractions is the parade of beautiful bodies that appear on stage. However, if we look backwards to the beginnings of Romantic ballet, we see that sexual interest was an important aspect of ballet watching. Théophile Gautier, the librettist for *Giselle*, and the most well known commentator on ballet in the Romantic period, remarked of ballet criticism: 'Let us begin with her physique, and then speak of her talent'. [64] The following comments referred to Fanny Cerrito, Lucile Grahn, and Fanny Elssler, respectively. All these women danced *Giselle*:

> she is short of stature and round in frame [with] a delicate ankle and well-rounded leg. Her shoulders, her bosom do not have that scrawniness characteristic of female dancers whose whole weight seems to have descended into her legs.
>
> [she is] tall, slender, small-jointed and well-made, and would be prettier still if she did not wear such an obstinate smile.

> She is tall, supple and well formed [...] satiny shoulders [...] slim wrists, delicate ankle [...] her skin and placid brow were German but her hair [...] and the bold curve of her back were Spanish [...] this same indecision is to be seen in her sexual characteristics; her hips are rather undeveloped, her breasts no fuller than a hermaphrodite of antiquity [...] her arms suggest the form of a marvellously beautiful young man with a touch of effeminacy [...] this quality makes her pleasing to those ladies who cannot stand the sight of a ballerina. 65

These last comments link *Giselle* not only with the voyeuristic/exhibitionistic aspects of mainstream pornography, but also with the more specialist forms of pornography upon which *SEX* draws. Gautier's comments fetishize certain aspects of the ballerina's bodies. In mainstream pornography, the models may wear fetishistic clothing, but representations of oppression and sado-masochism are rare. This is not the case in more specialist hard-core pornography. However, the images in *SEX* are obviously informed by more than hetorosexual soft-core pornography. *SEX* draws on hard-core publications with specialist themes: S/M, sub/dom and fetish clothing, obese women, 'teenage' girls and boys, and images produced with gay male or lesbian readers in mind. Again, these are codified into recognizeable tropes that could be called 'pornographemes'. 66

Many of the most frequently used pornographemes in *SEX* are taken from pornography produced for gay men. In Mandy Merck's essay, 'More of a Man', Merck links this form of pornography with the Broadway-type musical, and also with still photography. 67 Merck notes the connections theorists have made between the structure of the musical and gay male motion picture pornography, and notes that the two are combined in the aesthetic of 'camp'. Both narrative forms - and, it can be argued, ballet also - suspend their narratives in order to present their high points, either the show-stopping routine or the graphic sex act. We can put the solo and pas de deux of ballet in the same light, noting that human prowess, be it the diva's torch song, the 'come shot' or the *promenade adage*, becomes the narrative.

Each of these climactic moments functions as a still photograph: a narrative in motion always constitutes a slipping away of the present; each frame blurs into the next and the moment cannot be captured. Narrative suspension in pornography, the musical and ballet attempts to stop that passing away, to present the human body at its most powerful and its most magical: like a photograph, it captures what is already lost. In doing this, as has already been noted, every photograph also reminds us of that loss: the picture is not then of life, captured, but of something that is already dead. This is the quality which is shared by *SEX* and *Giselle*: it is neither a lewd nor an oppressive quality, but a poignant (rather than nostalgic) one. Below, this poignancy in pornographemes in *SEX* is used to locate punctums which are then transferred across to *Giselle* in order to open up the subversive and unusual qualities in the ballet's movement.

5. Reading the Movement in *Giselle*

a. The Pointed Foot

The pointed foot is one of the most prevalent and potent signs in ballet. It also appears in *SEX*. The viewer sees pointed feet in a submission/domination fetish image in *SEX* , and in the use of *pointe* work in Act Two of *Giselle.* In the photograph in *SEX* we see a foot (which is probably Madonna's) encased in a black leather platform heeled shoe so high that only the tips of the wearer's toes are touching the floor. Here is the punctum, in the *fascination* with the shoe itself, holding the foot so high that none of the ball is flat on the floor. It is not a fashion shoe, but obviously a specialist piece of equipment used to engender desire and gratification through an exaggerated and even painful position. Essentially the wedged heel is holding the foot in the same position as a ballerina *en pointe* (that is, standing on the very tip of her toes, using a reinforced shoe).

Pointe work itself is thought to have developed from the practice of wearing high heeled slippers in the court ballets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The shoe in *SEX* is held to the ankle by black ribbon cross-lacing which also resembles a *pointe* shoe. The wearer's leg, in black fishnet tights or stockings, is visible to the mid-thigh. A man is lying on his front, licking the shoe wearer's ankle. He has a shaven head, several pierced earrings, leather wrist strapping and a skull tattoo. Around his neck is a heavy leather studded collar, the lead to which is being held by the wearer of the shoe. She is holding a horse whip in her other hand, and seems to be using it to keep the man prone. The floor and backdrop are plain and pale, and the two figures are heavily shadowed: they are clearly in a photographic studio.

Because there are so many female dancers, often all on stage simultaneously, in the second act of *Giselle*, there are many dancers *en pointe* at once. *Pointe* work was an integral aspect of Romantic ballet, although the first practitioners used shoes stuffed with animal wool, rather than the modern *pointe* shoe which is stiffened with glue around the toes and sometimes with a metal rod in the insole. Fanny Elssler, Marie Taglioni and their Romantic sisters were often depicted *en pointe* in the engraved iconography of the period, wearing the distinctive bell-shaped dress and balanced on a raised toe-hold.[68] *Pointe* work was the practice which created the ethereal lightness that now characterizes the ballerina, but also the one which required a transition from dilettante to professional. *Pointe* work could not be sustained for any period of time, and especially not as it is in Act II of *Giselle*, without trained strength and stamina behind it. This is one of the most important contradictions of ballet technique: it has created a situation whereby an audience is fascinated by the labour and pain that go into *pointe* work, but also suspends its knowledge of that effort in order to get pleasure from the grace of *pointe* work. In other words, *pointe* work generates the same fascination as the fetishized shoe in *SEX*.

Pointe work is the part of ballet technique that is most distinctive of this form of dance as ballet; it is the first aspect of ballet to be discarded by modern choreographers who want to make use of the discipline of ballet, but do not wish to be hindered by its ideological baggage. *Pointe* work is the activity that most mystifies the reading of ballet - it is often said to give ballet its 'mystique'. *Pointe* work is also the most painful and damaging part of a dancer's physical existence. When a woman is *en pointe*, the whole alignment of her body is changed: when standing flat, the muscles of the front and back of the legs do equal work, as the weight is borne between the heel and the toe. Once upon *pointe* , with all the weight borne on the tip of the arched foot, the front of the lower leg and the arch of the foot are stretched, the calf muscle is contracted, and the achilles tendon shortened. Many female dancers walk permanently on tiptoe, simply because the tendon no longer extends comfortably. This may also account for the seemingly odd habit many dancers have of wearing high heels when 'off duty'. The stretch on the tendon and thus the calf muscle that flat shoes would create can be painful. To complete the 'line' *en pointe* , the knee cap is raised by tightening the quadruceps at the front of the thigh. The dancer would need to do a great deal of stretching to compensate for these stresses, especially upon the achilles tendon, but any form of exercise that is not ballet class tends to be regarded with great suspicion by English dancers. Islay Blair, the Birmingham Royal Ballet physiotherapist, has commented:

> I offer Pilates and the Alexander Technique, but very few of the dancers trained in this country will use them: they think it'll spoil their technique. The one person who will do that sort of thing is Joe (Cippola, an American dancer). The others get injured all the time, but I've only ever had to treat Joe once, and that was for a minor foot injury. [69]

Thus the body is transformed: no longer human, suited to human activities, but specifically a ballet dancer's body. The only other Western dance discipline that includes a similar movement is traditional Irish folk dancing, but this involves briefly balancing on the tip of the heavy metal soled clogs worn by men and women. The difference between the two techniques is comparable to the difference between occasionally balancing on the tip of a pair of Doctor Marten's boots, or habitually wearing four inch stiletto heeled shoes.

One of the best known 'true myths' of ballet is that of the tortured feet of the dancer. Ballet dancers are certainly well known to have very ugly feet. In a 1995 Channel 4 documentary focusing on Jasper Conran's designs for the Scottish National Ballet's *Sleeping Beauty*, the camera lingered several times over lines of exhausted female dancers' feet, blistered and bleeding, their tights worn through. The bunions, corns, callouses and blisters that are part of *pointe* work, the pouring of blood from shoes at the end of class: these things have become legend. Yet many see this damage not only as a reasonable price to pay for the graceful movements the ballerina can then perform, but as part of the mystery of ballet. These are not the dull, mundane cuts and bruises of normal mortals: these wounds exist somewhere in the same order of sign as the stigmata of the saints. The external evidence of suffering is a sign to the mortal world that the dancer can produce wonders, miracles; that they share a higher communion with a greater power or understanding. In other words, they have access to the divine, and, like the saints, they are able to channel something of the divine to their audiences. Suffering marks the powerful and the privileged.

Much that happens in the rituals of Judeo-Christian worship is highly theatrical, and involves the mediation of God to man via a priest, vicar or rabbi. In Christian churches of many denominations, it is usual for there to be a large Christ figure, crucified and on the point of commending his spirit into the hands of God. This figure is often emaciated, arms outstretched, feet crossed and pointed, face pained but beatific, marks of suffering attesting that he enjoys a divine favour that other humans can hardly imagine. It is unsurprising that much sexual fetishism is based upon the images of the Christian, and specifically Catholic, Church. It was noted earlier in this chapter that Madonna has traded very heavily in these images. The ballet dancer *en pointe* resembles one of those figures of Christ.

Adding to this effect is the fact that many female ballet dancers are afflicted by bunions:

> It was said that Balanchine cherished the abberation of line induced by bunions, that they contributed to the impression of winged feet. [70]

Thus are ballerinas linked to the winged creatures of myth: angels of Judeo-Christian myth, God's messengers, made of light, and the wing-footed Mercury of Greco-Roman myth, also a messenger of the Gods, travelling with super-human speed. A female classical dancer will wear many winged costumes in her career, so strong is the association. The female ballet dancer is thus connected with the mediation of the divine to the mortal, with the great gifts and powers that are signified by great suffering. In exchange for their gifts, the dancer must give up the normal, simple pleasures and capabilities of ordinary mortals - the peasantry. The symbolic order that contains Romantic and Classical ballet represents the position the ballerina occupies in the public imagination. This is well illustrated in one of the review quotations on the back of Gelsey Kirkland's first book:

> She moves with miraculous gossamer lightness. Her body is eloquent, profound, enchanting [...] this is no ordinary life. She has been dancing professionally for almost twenty years and in that time she has scaled heights and dredged depths outside common experience. [71]

Representation has come to occlude or mystify actual practice. To write that a ballerina cannot walk with her feet upon the ground sounds like Romantic rhetoric, when in fact it is a description of physical malformation. The relationship between the two statements is analogous to the relationship between the production of pornography and the representations of pornography. The images produced may be radical or empowering, but the conditions of production are in some way oppressive. Madonna's statement that everything in *SEX* is a fantasy is therefore problematic, because by realizing and representing a fantasy, one imposes it upon others. Pornography and ballet occupy different positions in terms of respectability, however. As a result the low pay, poor conditions and possible humiliations that the pornographic model endures in order to produce a morally reprehensible representation, are condemned. The low pay, poor conditions and physical suffering of the female ballet dancer, is contrast, are considered small price for her extraordinary beauties, of which the foot *en pointe* is the epitome.

To the repercussions of *pointe* work listed above, we must add the social significations of a foot in an arched, pointed shape. Why are very high heels considered sexually attractive? Why is the foot *en pointe* the single most important signifier of femininity in classical ballet? After all, no male dancers - even when they are representing supernatural beings - use pointe work, and although at times they use half-point, there is no focus on the over-stretched, arched-to-exaggeration instep found in female dancers. The action of a ballet is never halted for a man to be shown off *en promenade* (the movement in which a ballerina assumes a pose on one *pointe* , and is then pivoted around by a male dancer in order to demonstrate her balance, and all aspects of the pose, to the audience.)

When a woman reaches orgasm, her feet involuntarily arch into a pointed position. It is this position that very high heels and *pointe* shoes imitate. In addition, feet held permanently in this position by shoes appear very small, and the movement of the wearer is impeded. With high heels, the body assumes an altered position, making the breasts and buttocks more prominent. Ballet technique tends to train the body to compensate for this look, maintaining the arched foot, but keeping the torso in a normal standing position, spine straight and slightly inclined forwards. The impression of length of leg, however, alters the proportions of the body, which is still super-sexualized, but as virgin rather than whore. Thus in addition to associations of divine connection and privilege and supernatural power and ability, the pointed foot has connotations of sexual ecstasy and desirability, constraint and impossible daintiness. Hence the foot *en pointe* in the ballet *Giselle* , where all these qualities are also the subjects of the narrative, is a very rich site of signification. This is enhanced by Marion Tait's *pointe* work in the 1992 *Giselle*. One of the most marked characteristics of her dancing is that her feet move from flat to *demi-pointe* to full *pointe* with tremendous fluidity. It is this flexibility, joyously displayed, to which Banes refers when she writes of 'the articulate leg' in Romantic ballet. [72] Tait also has highly arched insteps, reinforcing the impression of winged feet. Her *bourrées* in particular, those very tiny, rapid steps *en pointe* that dancers use to 'hover' across the floor, give the impression that motion has blurred into ecstatic levitation. Even by ballerina standards, Tait is a very small woman so she appears to be carrying little or no weight on her feet when she is *en pointe*.

When the foot in question is Madonna's, this contradiction between extreme ability and constraint is even clearer and, because it is in a popular idiom, is more accessible than in *Giselle* . In *SEX*, it is also the bound, the constricted subject that holds the power. She is powerful *because* she is constricted. In return for her bondage, she is able to do more than is normal in human life: she can exercise absolute physical control over another human being's imagination and body. In the same way, the ballerina, bound by her shoes and the sufferings of technique, is able to achieve what other humans cannot. She has incredible mastery of her body, and command of the audience. She can fly, she can hover, or she can balance on the tiniest area.

The contradictions inherent in the perceptions of a ballerina *en pointe* are far clearer when viewed through the discussion that already surrounds pornography. *SEX* catalysed and clarified this discussion. The photograph of Madonna's pointed foot facilitates more detailed reading of certain moments in the Birmingham Royal Ballet *Giselle.* Act One contains one moment that focuses the issues discussed above. During the celebrations as the grape harvest is brought into the village, a variety of character and folk-based dances are performed. Marion Tait as Giselle performs a solo which involves a great deal of show piece *pointe* work. Tait's 'magical' *pointe* work is the focus of all her movement because her overall style, in contrast, is sure and precise but not dazzling, very much in the traditional English style epitomised by Margot Fonteyn and Antoinette Sibley. Her movement does not include the high leg extensions, more gymnastic style and extreme turn-out that is now being taught by Derek Deane at the English National Ballet. [73] Tait's Act One variation includes arabesques, where she balances on one *pointe* with her free leg extended, double *pirouettes en pointe,* and *piqués,* where the feet are alternately snatched from the ground. Whilst this solo is being performed, the villagers gather around to watch, forming an audience and a performing space.

At one point Tait moves from the right upstage to the left downstage corner using a hopping movement. She performs thirty-two hops on the *pointe* of her left foot without placing the right foot on the floor. As this happens she *frappés* her right foot against her left leg, making a series of beating movements. Great strength is required, or the left foot would buckle. She then returns upstage and travels the diagonal with a series of fast *piqué pirouettes*, again supporting her weight on her left foot, finishing downstage with a gesture requiring appreciation from both her stage and her auditorium audiences. This is a well known ballet connoiseur's moment: an expert audience will anticipate it and applaud energetically if they feel it has been performed well. It is similar to the famous thirty-two *fouettés* in *Swan Lake*, or the Rose Adagio in *Sleeping Beauty*. All these virtuoso moments interrupt the narrative to showcase *pointe* work - or rather, *pointe* work becomes the narrative. It is an indication of the heroine's specialness: she is by dint of these interruptions a being apart, indicated by her ability to achieve the superhuman through suffering. She is acknowledged within the narrative as a performer, one for whom ordinary mortals form an audience. It is also a moment where the hierarchy of the ballet company is demonstrated: the *corps de ballet* also forms an audience for the principal dancer, watching an artist of the status to which they aspire, a dancer who, through real suffering, has become special, recognized, rewarded - and apart.

This mood of separateness also permeates the whole of *SEX* : Madonna is apart from the other individuals pictured in the book. This is due as much to the fact that she is very blonde, and the majority of other subjects is dark, as it is to the relations between subjects depicted in the images. Madonna is apart, bright amidst darkness, the centre of a depicted audience's attention, as well as that of the implied reading audience. At her most isolated she is naked amongst clothed watchers, wearing only high heels. Giselle is often signalled as different, both because sometimes she alone is *en pointe*, and also through costume. In the Russian tradition, sometimes observed in the West, Giselle wears a pale blue dress. In the 1992 production, Tait wears a dress that tones with the autumnal shades of the village girls' dresses, but is much paler. In the second act of most productions of Giselle wears a white dress to contrast with the grimy dresses of the wilis: Lili Sobieralska, the Birmingham Royal Ballet wardrobe mistress, has stated that this convention is not observed in the Peter Farmer designs. However Tait as Giselle still appears whiter than the corps de ballet because she is in a follow spotlight for most of the time, and because Giselle's second act costume has been remade more often than those tutus used for the corps in order to ensure better fit for the principal dancers: thus the satin and tulle used are newer and brighter.

In *SEX* and Peter Wright's *Giselle*, the constriction and the richness of signification of the pointed foot place Madonna and Marion Tait apart: their separateness is dramatized as power, although it is founded on suffering.

b. Lifts, Leaps and Reaching

It is part of the project of this thesis to show that there is a discussion of issues concerned with the production and reception of ballet lodged in the textual material of *Giselle* . By focusing on those small sections of the text which generate blind fields our vision is doubled. We see not only the superficial story of *Giselle* , but the subversive story also. The subversive story tells us about womens' and dancers' bodies, and about production and reception of these bodies. This doubling can only occur if we start from an individual point of view. For example, this thesis is able to make a subversive reading of Giselle as a result of 'wounds' or punctums in *SEX* which set up a personal blind field: in this field was recalled those less obvious wounds which are performed in *Giselle*. The wounds in *SEX* double the view of both texts. Although highly subjective, once recalled this connection can lead to legitimate academic discussion. The wounds in *SEX* are analogous to those marks of suffering in ballet dancers noted above In this section lifts leaps and reaches, although common place movements in ballet, stand out as strange and wounding in *Giselle* - each is a punctum.

Act Two of the 1992 *Giselle* , far from being an extended kaleidoscope of symmetrical stage patterns with little meaning, is actually rich in disruptive detail, requiring us to give ourselves up, to love an aspect of the text. Like the staples and the tattoos in *SEX* there are little frames and wounds which draw us in. Throughout the second act we are drawn to such a moment, or rather a series of incidents, which attempt to achieve a certain stillness within the ballet. There is a tension, a disturbance, when Marion Tait, as the etherialized Giselle, is lifted. Ordinarily we realise that to achieve certain technical effects - leaps, balances, pirouettes and so on - the ballet dancer must present a picture of calmness and ease, whilst accomplishing feats that require prodigious strength and ability. There is a certain dichotomy in the wonder an audience experiences: the wonder at the 'magic' of ballet exists in tension with the knowledge of the blood, sweat and tears backstage. This effect is magnified in Act Two because we are aware that Giselle should not *need* to be lifted - she is supposed to have become nothing, visible only, immaterial. She has wings of her own. And yet in order to fly, to hang suspended in the air, she requires great physical strength and the help of the dancer playing Albrecht, in this case David Yow. This dichotomy gives us our punctum.

Yow as Albrecht is complementary to, rather than contrasting with Tait: his movement epitomizes the English *danseur noble* style, being neither the heavy, athletic 'masculine' style shown by Irek Mukhamedov, nor the highly refined aesthetic style of Anthony Dowell. Yow is British born of a Japanese family and trained at the Royal Ballet School. He is slightly built, of average height: his Albrecht appears sincere and gentle, allows Tait's frail Giselle space, and performs his variations with precision, if not dynamic virtuosity. In *pas de deux* that contain lifts, the role of the male dancer has always presented a problem. For some years British dancers have tended to appear stiff and mechanical whilst partnering ballerinas in an attempt to prevent grace or ability appearing either effeminate or overpowering. Men became lifting platforms and little else. A large proportion of the Birmingham male dancers, the vast majority of whom trained at the Royal Ballet School, nonetheless dance a middle way between the two extremes of style. Their style is most nearly comparable with that of the motion picture performer Fred Astaire in terms of partnering; supportive, subtle and, most importantly, interacting, rather than merely co-existing with, their ballerina.

This style, in David Yow, makes the partnered lifts in Act Two particularly interesting in terms of the punctum they provide. The most celebrated Act Two lift occurs when the lovers first make physical contact. Yow lifts Tait over his head with his arms at full stretch. His hands support her underneath her rib-cage, and she takes on the traditional Romantic shape of the sylph in flight - back arched, arms stretched before her, wrists and ankles crossed, feet and hands continuing the line of her bow shaped body. Her head is held in a line just below her arms, profile showing - a conventional Romantic pose, a little coy, a little sad. However, this lift does not constitute the punctum for me, rather, this occurs when Yow carries Tait across the stage in a series of low drifting lifts. Much of the movement quality of the second act centres upon drifting motions, one foot contacting the ground, providing support and balance, the other stretched behind the body in arabesque. This movement characterizes the doubled vision of Act Two, and the tension between the stable and the spectral that is (dis)embodied by Giselle and the Wilis.

This drifting motion can be seen several times in the act. The first time comes after Mark Welford as Hilarion has been dispatched, and Tait has performed her solo *adage*. This then becomes a *promenade adage* when Yow joins her; he supports Tait, both hands on her waist, in a series of small rhythmic hops, moving forward and backward. From an *arabesque en pointe* she is lifted into a backward arch, travelling a short distance. Her pushing off motion impells the couple across the floor. Her arms describe the kind of low, fluid, almost tentative movements that are characteristically Romantic, and which suggest a slight off-balance forwards. This placing of the body's weight in front of the supporting foot gives the contemporaneous engravings and lithographs of Romantic ballerinas the air that they are on the point of overbalancing. This tendency altered in the classical period as technical improvements and shorter dresses led to bodies that could create more exaggerated and extreme angles of placement. The earlier style well befits the wavering, half-supernatural creatures that peopled Romantic ballet.

Here we should also note that, in order to achieve lifts in ballet, the male dancer's hands have to be placed close to the female dancer's breasts and crotch, at the top of her thighs and under her armpits. These are not 'proper' places to hold a woman: in any other theatrical context, these holds would signify an intimate and explicitly sexual situation. Although some lifts in Romantic and Classical ballet are intended to signify a sublimated sexual experience, they do not signal sexual activity in the same way that lifts in twentieth century ballets often do. The ballet audience has learned to look in a desexualizing way at this form of physical contact.

Later, when Yow is on the point of collapse, the lovers perform a similar movement, this time with four consecutive hops across the stage, Tait's arms outstretched before her, followed by a higher lift, again with the back arched, but with the arms raised and rounded (in fifth position), framing the face - another common Romantic conceit. These and similar movements are also performed by the Wilis, but obviously without support. In one of the best known sequences from Act Two, the Wilis form lines on the left and right, across the stage, parallel with the front of the stage. Facing each other, the Wilis move across the stage, the two sets of lines crossing over as they do so. They move using small hops, the hopping foot remaining on the floor, the other stretched behind, one arm in front, head dipped, in a long *arabesque*. This requires great control, as all the angles formed by the corps have to be identical to each other, and the hops are actually very demanding. Hard blocked *pointe* shoes could be very noisy indeed at this moment if control were lacking: it is held to be notoriously difficult amongst members of the *corps de ballet*. This sequence is one of the oddest, most incongruous movement motifs in ballet - Beaumont has noted that it always teeters on the brink of looking ridiculous. [74] In Barthes's terminology, these movements set up a blind field.

Sally Banes has also, for slightly different reasons, commented on the strangeness of this movement: her description well communicates the mood engendered by the *corps de ballet*.

> That the slow, beautiful movements in this ballet belong to evil spirits makes them entrancing in the same way vampires are, for they evince a combination of attraction, especially sexual magnetism, and repulsion. At the end of their dance, moving across the stage in arabesque penchée, they look like animals crawling or insects skimming the lake's surface. One is reminded that God condemned the serpent in the Garden of Eden to crawl forever on the earth. 75

The oddness of the movement, although strikingly effective as a piece of moving geometry on stage, comes from the fact that it resembles a lift without support. Thus when we see Tait drifting across the stage in Yow's arms, we recognize the same movement, but completed. Yet something still grates: Tait performs the movement to the satisfaction of modern aesthetics, but for her, once lifted, it becomes an attempt to escape as much as an expression of rapture. This reading of the lifts is supported by Gautier's reports at the time, as the quotation from Beaumont, below, illustrates. The incompleteness of both the assisted lifts and the solo jumps is underlined by the music. To a modern audience, it is easy to feel that the choreography in *Giselle* fails to 'use the music' (that is, to seem fully to express the music with the stretch and depth of one's movement). However, there are other Romantic ballets which closely match the amplitude of their movement to that of the music. It is not just our modern expectations that causes us to identify a gap between music and movement when we see this 'drifting' in the second act of *Giselle*.

Thus when Adolphe Adam's music seems to demand huge ensemble leaps at the climax of a crescendo, we see only fey hops, all properly placed, but rather passionless. Perhaps that is the point of *Giselle* : the lack of the movement one expects or desires creates the punctum of the piece. These lifts without support have something of the disruptive quality of the turned in and turned up feet of twentieth century modern dance; they create a lack, a shortfall, between the audience's culturally constructed desire, and what is seen on stage. Thus, as a result of the comparison between Giselle's complete but actually constrained leaps, and the incomplete flights of the Wilis, we are able to locate the lack of 'escape' strategies available to those forms of femininity represented in *Giselle*. This is a punctum of the ballet.

As a result, when the assisted lifts do occur, they are evidently acts of great and noticeable physicality, and not simply 'natural' within the technical scheme of the ballet. The unsupported lifts demystify the supported lifts danced by Tait and Yow, whilst the oddness of them in movement terms constitutes a punctum. This is the real 'magic' of this ballet, that it has the potential to demystify its own traditional prescriptions whilst retaining an uncanny strangeness.

Although couched in the dance rhetoric of the time, one can perceive an awareness of this tension between Giselle's ethereality and the power required to execute the lifts in this 1962 article written by Cyril W. Beaumont, a diagnosis of the errors and alterations in twentieth century productions of *Giselle*:

> The main choreographic theme of this act should surely be Albrecht's pursuit of the intangible Giselle. Anything which departs from this principle destroys the theatrical illusion and breaks the melodic line of the choreography. Certainly Gautier seems strangely divided in his conception of the phantom Giselle: at first she is 'a faint wisp of mist, 'intangible as a cloud'; then later he allows Giselle and Albrecht 'to fall into each other's arms', and later still the latter is permitted to 'bear Giselle away from the tomb [...] then he kneels beside her and kisses her as if to infuse her with his spirit and restore her to life'. It seems as though Gautier conceives Giselle first as a dissolving wraith and then - influenced perhaps by the Sylphide, a *living* winged

> creature - introduced love scenes more appropriate to two human beings. At any rate Perrot seems to have arranged a flow of constant pursuit and evasion, with 'lifts' which suggest a vain attempt to withold a phantom from flight; and the illusion fails when the ballerina is held too long in the air, or when Giselle physically supports Albrecht, raising him to his feet after his dance of exhaustion. [76]

Beaumont has apprehended the conflict between technique and plot prescriptions. Obviously, adult audience members realize that the players are playing: the ballerina has not been transformed, and has a material body. However, even consensual theatrical illusion, as Beaumont calls it, rarely produces a punctum of the order of that created in Act Two. When one is drawn to those lifts that create the impression of flight, but also to the fact that the dancer portraying Albrecht is trying to prevent her from flying, one gives oneself up to a very complex ideological moment. More recent writers have found the tension between flight and physicality difficult to incorporate in broadly 'modern' analysis. Roger Copeland, in his essay 'Dance, Feminism and the Critique of the Visual' refers to Luce Irigaray's writing, wherein she asserts that the Western culture of the visible (as an aspect of the organization of the patriarchal world in art around the male gaze) has led to the hierarchical impoverishment of the other senses. Thus Copeland writes:

> This [...] notion seems particularly relevant to Romantic ballet, where the sylphide is woman dematerialized, existing quite literally (and exclusively) as a sight, an apparition. Our relationship to her is purely 'specular'. As James [the poet] learns so painfully in *La Sylphide*, she is unattainable; she resists all tactile contact. [77]

Except that Giselle's dematerialization rests absolutely on the tactile, upon very physical contact with her partner - and not only that, but, as Beaumont points out, the aim of this lift is not simply to present her flying, but to present Albrecht as attempting to prevent her flying. This lift is technically and theatrically tactile.

Usually a lift in ballet requires a man to support a woman in the impression of flight, weightlessness or ecstasy. This is ideologically interesting, because at the moment when the ballerina is visibly the most free, she is actually the most constrained, the least independent, as is the case with *pointe* work. Her freedom is actually display: the male dancer is displaying her to the audience, with her body positioned using turn-out in order to show as much of herself to that audience as is possible. Not only this, but she also has to collude with the male dancer in order to produce the effect: it is not a passive display, but it is one that co-operates with the controlling strength of her partner. A lift cannot be achieved by male power alone: the ballerina must make her frame rigid and control her breathing so that she is taking some of her own weight. Even the thinnest dancer will be as a dead weight without such technical co-operations.

We could note at this point that the name Giselle means 'hostage' - one who is held in return for payment. Giselle is held both physically and metaphorically. Physically, she colludes with and becomes sympathetic towards her captor, be it Albrecht or

Myrtha. In present day hostage situations psychiatrists often explain that captives frequently become attached to their captors, joining the political movement they represent, or feeling great loss upon release. In the first main sequence in *SEX* Madonna plays on this relationship when she is depicted bound and gagged at knife point by two lesbians: her body language, however, indicates arousal. As in Chapter Two, there is a resonance with the works of Emily Dickinson, another woman whose constraint was dramatized as the very centre of her identity and her pleasure: 'A prison gets to be a friend'. [78]

The women in *Giselle* at once conform to and confound Laura Mulvey's famous theory of the male gaze, which, although written in 1975 is still considered relevant by many theorists. [79] Roger Copeland identifies the ability of ballet to subvert the male gaze when he comments on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'. After noting the existence of a homosexual gaze in ballet, he states:

> [...] in dance the cinematic notion of the male 'gaze' is less relevant and less useful to the theoretician than a more generalized consideration of the gaze itself, whether male or female, whether homosexual or heterosexual in orientation [...] dance scholarship can draw upon the recent work of those psychoanalytic feminists who focus on the relative virtues of the gaze as opposed to a tactile orientation in the world (the gaze v. the touch, in other words). The writings of feminists such as Luce Irigaray can be very helpful when it comes to illuminating the differences between the detatched, visual bias of nineteenth century ballet and the early modern dancer's emphasis on tactility and kinesthetic experience. [80]

Copeland is right to state that dance deviates from narrative cinema in the way the gaze functions. Hence we must remember that a passive verb does not necessarily signal a passive activity; 'being looked at' does not denote absolute passivity. As a result of this, some feminists now point out that for a woman to be looked at requires work on her part. Certainly that is the case in ballet. That does not mean we must approve of everything about this 'passive' activity, but rather that we should be willing to acknowledge the labour and the skill of it. However, one can disagree with the idea that nineteenth century ballet itself had a visual bias - or rather that it was significantly more visual than modern dance is now. Instead, it could be argued that the general tendency of Western art to assert the dominance of the visual has led to a ballet reading strategy which falsely privileges the visual, although many examples of tactile experience are offered to us. The lifts discussed above are an example of this.

The physicality of lifts, and of *pas de deux* work generally can act as a punctum in ballet: the lifts in *Giselle* especially have a demystificatory function. That is not to say that only male/female 'love' groupings are tactile: in Romantic ballet in particular, if we look at mid-nineteenth century representations of, say *Pas de Quatre* we see hands held, arms around waists. [81] Although rarer, there is contact between men - in *Giselle* Albrecht often touches or leans upon his squire. David Yow often makes use of this movement in the 1992 *Giselle*. Indeed, in some interpretations Albrecht cries upon his squire's shoulder when Giselle dies. The tactile organization of *Giselle* can also give the pleasure and individual focus that Roland Barthes identifies in the punctum.

Although the lifts and leaps we see in Act Two of *Giselle* demystify 'flight' in ballet, they still retain a strangeness that stems from their incomplete nature. These movements reach out, but never arrive: they crystallize the quality which sets *Giselle* apart from Romantic ballet as a whole, and which makes it such a rewarding text critically. *Giselle*, historically, is caught between the idealistic early Romantic ballets like *La Sylphide* and *Robert le Diable* (both 1831) which are in many ways reflective of the ideas of the Revolution, but in which women are stereotyped, and the later, comic, carnivalesque ballets such as *La Maschera* (1864) and *Coppélia* (1870), in which women are seen to have agency, but wherein the Revolutionary premises of Romanticism are all but parodied.[82]

Giselle reaches from one age to another: it dramatizes negotiation between two extremes, and dances complicated ideas lying between two poles. Giselle, alone among her sisters in ballet and opera, neither destroys nor tames and feminizes her lover. Saving, yet not keeping, the man she loves satisfies neither the early Romantic marriage plot nor modern feminist tastes: we are left aware of a gap, an absence. In that structuring absence is a space or shape for us to think about all the difficult ideas concerning agency, aesthetics and love which have so influenced this thesis. The ideas in *Giselle* are contained in that strange, almost overbalanced, half-free, half-restrained pose which characterizes the lifts and leaps in the ballet. A single shape in a ballet can communicate the breadth of its meanings, both subversive and conservative, intended and reclaimed. As Kirkland has noted:

> The shape in every ballet - wasn't that still another form of love? [83]

c. Resistance

At the climax of her book *Possessing the Secret of Joy* , Alice Walker writes that 'RESISTANCE IS THE SECRET OF JOY'. [84] At this point the main protagonist, a female first person narrator, is executed, yet continues to write. Walker generates an ending that refuses closure, imagines further action, and locates that action in the act of writing. What actually happens is that control of the book is handed over to the implied reader: indicating that resistance lies in the act of reading. Continuing to generate a narrative after the moment of death is explicitly signposted as an act of resistance. Obviously, this is a narrative strategy and not a model for direct action, but this does not prevent the strategy from being empowering. The resistance of closure in *Giselle* has been discussed elsewhere in this thesis. This resistance is also present in *SEX*, because the text encourages the reader to read beyond the limit of the images alone. As Camille Paglia's quotation earlier in this chapter points out, Madonna is a dancer. The reader of *SEX* animates still photographs as a result of the presence of a dancing body, and of implied musical accompaniment. (The compact disc, which is part of the fabric of the book, does not have to be played as the book is read in order for the reader to project a score onto the images.)

Imaginatively, the images in *SEX* are choreographed and orchstrated - they are read, rather than merely consumed, as is assumed to be the case with mainstrean pornography. Thus, in making the still move, reading resists closure. As a text *SEX* is able to subvert and go beyond its own stillness, to offer its viewers a model of resistance. If we acknowledge the invitation of this text - to imagine a 'moving still' (to use the phrase coined by Elissa Marder in description of *Blade Runner* [85]) - we also realize that *SEX* is not about sex. It does not depict sex. *SEX* is about images and representation, about reading those images, and about resisting the usual prescriptions of the genre from which those images are taken.

In many ways *SEX* is the opposite of what it appears to be about: the still moves, and *SEX* is not about sex. The punctum which communicates this to the reader is the use of negative film. Soft core pornoraphy does not use prints of images in negative. In Madonna's book this is done with both colour and black and white prints. For every image, its absolute opposite is not only implied but in some cases literally presented. In ballet too, the dancer's body presents the opposite of every action they make as they present the action itself.

This thesis has already identified ballet as a form of 'moving still'. As such, it carries the same potential for subversion as does *SEX*. This potential is inscribed upon the technique of all ballet, but is especially powerful in the first *Giselle:* we can also glimpse this power in the 1992 production. All ballet movement is resistance. Resistance is the name given to the physical technique whereby line, motion and elevation are achieved in ballet. To resist is a part of every step and every body. Resistance is the muscular counter-tension whereby a ballet dancer produces a force opposite to their direction of movement. In order to extend a bent leg behind her body, for example, a dancer will at once continue to pull that leg towards her, whilst pushing it away. From a child's earliest ballet classes, when she practises rising upon her tiptoes and then setting her heels back upon the ground, she will be told to do this motion 'with resistance'. Usually a teacher will tell a child to imagine squashing an orange or rubber ball beneath her heels as she descends. This technique is then applied through all ballet movement as the dancer progresses. Thus all ballet, as it presents its direction, also presents the exact opposite of that direction. Ballet opposes itself, gives an image of itself in reverse. At all times, ballet offers a radical double of itself, a photographic negative of its moving still. Resistance offers ballet audiences a subversive vision that constantly shadows the overt action of the dance.

The original choreography for Giselle's variations makes particular use of the resistance technique, thus offering an audience an especially strong doubled reading of each of these episodes. Possibly because moments which contain the greatest resistance also best embody the received notion of balletic grace, Peter Wright has focused on the resistance aspects of these variations in his reworking of the choreography. This allows us as readers to identify grace as being a powerful agent of subversion within *Giselle* , and not a means of supporting the status quo. One such moment occurs when Marion Tait performs her farewell *adage* to David Yow. The extreme controlled grace of her slowly extended and refolded limbs (the movement called *developpé*), the abjection of her posture, her absolute harmony of line: all these things suggest self-sacrifice and self-abnegation. Tait's grace beautifies her submission both to Yow (within the plot) and to Wright (within the company power structure). Yet because this grace is achieved through resistance, it is as if Tait's variation were being projected in reverse over itself, played backwards in order to reveal its secret message. In order to achieve such heights of grace, and such depths of submission, the ballerina must perform her power for us. Thus at her most diminished, we can read Tait/Giselle as being at her most powerful. This is seen and acknowledged by the audience - and particularly by a ballet-literate audience.

In the Preface Yeats' poem 'Leda and the Swan' was referred to. It is returned to now, for it describes the doubled reading of submission and power that is made available to us by the resistance movement in *Giselle* .

> Being so caught up,
> So mastered by the brute blood of the air,
> Did she put on his knowledge with his power
> Before the indifferent beak could let her drop? [86]

The mastered Giselle puts on Albrecht's knowledge and power. The cape, signifying superiority, which Albrecht throws down at the start of Act Two, is picked up and worn by Giselle in the form of her physical power and grace: whatever the narrative may be saying, the ballet of resistance in which it is told overwhelms and negates patriarchal power. That this can be done by the most frail and feminine seeming of English ballerinas is reinterated by Banes in her reading, not of one of ballet's many swans, but of a Firebird:

> Prince Ivan, out hunting in the forest, captures the Firebird. To regain her freedom, she gives him a magical feather. Yet in the Royal Ballet film of the ballet, Margot Fonteyn, who was coached in the role by the original Firebird (Tamara Karsavina), behaves in such a way that we see her to be manipulating the Prince, in an erotic game of domination. 87

The resistance we find in *Giselle* is different from the postmodern resistance Bordo discusses in *Unbearable Weight*. Although she does not condemn all postmodern thought, she states that cultural resistance (as with her idea of the 'textualized body', noted earlier) tends to be characterized as ubiquitous and characteristic of all texts, rather than being a response to a specific material condition or moment.[88] Whilst bodily resistance is present in all ballet, in *Giselle* resistance to discrete inequalities is the subject of the text, and therefore becomes a critical framework which sets itself up as being different from the ubiquitous resistance (similar to Bordo's postmodern resistance) which permeates all of Romantic ballet.

d. Men

This thesis has focused upon the treatment of the female body in *Giselle* , and in those texts used to read *Giselle* more fully. However, in order to generate different readings of the female body, one must also look at how sexual difference is negotiated through movement and specifically through the movement of men on stage. If we seek to read new meanings into the movements of ballerinas we fail if we allow ourselves to continue using the old readings of male dancers. Judith Lynne Hanna, in her book *Dance Sex and Gender*, gives an historical background to the gendered movement of men in dance, focusing particularly upon modern attempts to deal with homosexual experience in stage dance. While she rightly points to the pioneers who have choreographed male experience of Otherness, the gender translations in *SEX* and *Giselle* are different from those Hanna identifies. [89] Men move differently in *Giselle* than they do in other Romantic ballets: that this is hardly noticed in modern reproductions is another example of reception that has been trained away from the difficult, displacing qualities of *Giselle*. The aspect of *SEX* which draws our attention to this in *Giselle* is not so much a single image which operates as a punctum, but a theme running throughout the book. That theme is the vulnerability of the male body.

In *SEX* Madonna is unassailable, bright, strong: even those pictures of her which depict a vulnerability of pose belie a strength of artistic control. Nowhere is there an unflattering, ungroomed, unintended image. This strength is extended to images of women other than Madonna. There is an almost tidy quality to pictures of the female body in *SEX* which is at odds with the way standard 'top shelf' pornography presents women. In the latter, although given the veil of airbrushing and lighting, there is always some slippage, some accidental giving away, some sense of compromise. These qualities, which have often been said to describe female writing or the female mind, are signally absent from *SEX*.

It is the men in *SEX* who appear vulnerable, surprised, unaware of the extent to which they are exposed. While much of the depiction of men in *SEX* is borrowed from gay male and S/M pornography, *SEX* takes this imagery further and gives a queer reading of queer pictures. The male body in *SEX* also fails to conform to the tropes exhibited in mainstream pornography produced for straight women: nowhere do we see the cheerful, eyes-to-camera, well-muscled young man who grinningly presents his penis to the viewer. The presence of a broadly heterosexual (or, perhaps, ludically bisexual) controlling female body changes all the relationships in the book, making it differ from any other standard form of pornography. *SEX* explores moments at which the male body deviates from the expectation that it be strong and self-aware and self-controlled. Hence one is struck, time and again as one looks through the pages, by tired old age, shockingly flawless youth, a frightened face on a body which ought to be in control, an unflattering camera angle, an exposure of which the subject was unaware.

Merck has argued that pornography made for gay men is simply not like that aimed at straight men, that it does not respond to or fit the straight taxonomies and critical strategies. [90] *SEX* appropriates this male body in gay pornography, perhaps as drag appropriates the female body. There are theorists who have argued that drag is tantamount to rape, taking a female body and using it for male pleasure. It seems more productive and more accurate to see drag as an attempt, however flawed, to dramatize and embody the vulnerability and impoverishment of male bodily and emotional experience as a result of those same gender codes that oppress women. Both readings of drag, however, collude with the notion that women's bodies are powerless and subordinate in patriarchal society. [91] The 'drag' in *SEX* is more effective, because it retains the signifiers of masculinity upon its male bodies, but suceeds in enacting femininity upon them, whilst at the same time presenting a woman who rejects patriarchal oppression.

Are these pictures simply an attempt to degrade men as a revenge for the historical treatment of women? Are they the untended to detritus of a 'control-freak' whose only real focus is her own image? Perhaps, but the the punctum of all these pictures, their cumulative effect, is to query the agency of the male body, not in order to make it weak, but rather to look questioningly at those qualities which are signposted as being weak and, by association, feminine. *SEX* explores what it is like for a male body to experience feminine cultural positioning. Act Two of *Giselle* does the same thing with the characters of Hilarion and Albrecht, and the bodies of the men who dance them. In both texts it is an extraordinarily touching spectacle. Thus, instead of positioning culturally constructed femininity on a female character, where it will always be subsumed into the 'natural', it is dramatized for us by the male body, thus making strange and cultural what is usually presented as natural.

The fourth section of Chapter Two noted that Albrecht, in Act Two of *Giselle*, mirrors Giselle's breakdown and inarticulacy as he, driven by Myrtha and the Wilis, becomes a bad dancer, stumbling, making public his exhaustion, sustained only by the ghost of a mere peasant girl. This effect has already been witnessed by the audience as Hilarion, played in the 1992 production by Mark Welford, is dispatched by Myrtha. These unusual passages bear detailed reading.

At the start of Act Two of the 1992 *Giselle*, Hilarion is seen briefly making his way through the haunted forest, after which Albrecht appears and discovers the etherealized Giselle, whom he follows off the stage. Hilarion then reappears, his face twisted with fear, pursued by the Wilis. Whilst his movements are exaggerated in their amplitude, indicating both terror and exhaustion, those of the Wilis are precise and hard, their faces frozen, pitiless masks. They fail to exhibit the usual flowing arm movements of Romantic ballet: their arms are especially stiff and straight, their heads lacking the usual acquiescent and sympathetic incline. Hilarion is jacknifed from one side of the stage to the other, made to dance in the Wilis' ranks. In fact, he dances their dance, joining in exactly with their steps, placed incongruously in a line of otherwise disciplined and identical dancers: to modern eyes he looks like a tragic version of the standard revue joke in which large brawny men dance the *corps de ballet* from *Swan Lake*.

Hilarion is thrown to the floor, but his begging is ignored and he is hauled to his feet: here Mark Welford performed the usual *tour de force* leaps and turns of the male solo, but made them strange by disrupting the line of his head, which lolled and lurched from exhaustion, communicating that his body was being coerced into display. When thrown to his death, limbs flailing, the Wilis are arranged in a single perfect line without variation or flaw. As with the lifts and leaps described earlier, the punctum is constituted by a strange, disjointed detail - Welford's lolling head.

Exiting briefly, the Wilis return with Albrecht, whose possession follows a similar pattern to that of Hilarion, but which is extended to give further opportunity for the display of the male dancing body. Yow's interpretation showed the head less at odds with the movement of the body than Welford's: this is partly as an indicator of Albrecht's higher social status: his face was weary and beseeching rather than actually terrified. What was noticeable was that, as Yow became more and more debilitated, Tait as Giselle was positioned not so much as a distraction from his weakness, but as an embodiment of his strength. She literally takes up his power as he lies drained and dying, becoming the forceful dancing body that Myrtha demands as the centre of the action. As Albrecht rallies a little, we see Yow rising to dance again, repeating a series of beaten jumps, body held stiffly, eyes staring ahead. These jumps are not picturesque or dazzling and, failing to give the usual signifiers of the self-possesed solo - the proudly lifted chin and the wide arms, opened to include the audience in his prowess - Yow appeared to be in class, repeating practice movements over and over, unable to satisfy his teacher. Albrecht, like Hilarion, is made to dance a women's dance, as he performs a series of *fouettés* in line with Giselle and the Wilis - again this has a strange, incongrous effect. After a series of fish leaps he falls once more, only to be saved by the dawn, eventually left walking alone towards the audience.

These two sequences effectively dramatize femininity upon the bodies of men: one could even suggest that the male characters dance the bodily experiences of the ballerina for the audience. What is especially forceful and poignant is that, by reading male bodies differently in *Giselle*, we see that the ballet is not Giselle's tragedy at all, but Hilarion's. It is Hilarion who suffers the fate of the unmarried woman in nineteenth century society: he receives no second chance of life, like Albrecht, or even of redemption, like Giselle. Rather, he is killed and condemned because he is unloved - literally because he has no-one to dance with. His fate is not even assuaged by the mythic consolation of the Wilis' eternal life and sisterhood. Whilst narratively one could argue that the male character triumphs as usual because he draws the audience's sympathy, this reading is negated by the bodily narrative that Welford danced. Hilarion's movement in Act Two - overtly feminized and subsumed into the ranks of women without ever becoming effeminate - dances the story of women's constraint and commodification in bourgeois society.

6. Conclusion

Why, if *Giselle* has so much to offer that opposes and challenges orthodox readings of ballet and sexuality, does it persist in being identified and presented as transhistorical and immutable? Is it simply that ballet stems from a similar moment of production to Western pictoral pornography? Do we fail to study ballet because, functionally, it is pornography, and to study it would mean having to deal with all the difficult, distressing ideas that pornography forces us to confront? Those choreographers who have dealt with the actual exposure and consumption of dancers in their choreography have inevitably been misrepresented. Thus when Glen Tetley staged an all-nude modern ballet, *Mutations*, in 1970, it predictably caused titillation and outrage, but very little comment on how similar it was to ballet in its treatment of the human body. [92] The Romantic ballet audience clothes and separates the dancers it sees by using a viewing strategy imposed by ballet criticism. The dancers are exposed, they touch, but we are not expected to see these things in ballet. Yet because ballet is also able to provide a doubled vision, to reanimate the prejudices and expectations of its audience, it is effective in its subtlety where more overtly radical productions fail.

Through comparison with *SEX*, a text whose genre stems from a similar moment of production to *Giselle*, and which is in many ways a parody of the current codes exhibited in that genre, *Giselle* also becomes available to us as a radical parody. This is one aspect of *Giselle* which has tended to be lost in modern productions. The first true Romantic ballet was the first version of *La Sylphide*, which premiered in Paris in 1832. It was choreographed by Filipo Taglioni, and the leading role was danced by Marie Taglioni. The version we now watch is a contemporary restaging by August Bournonville. By 1841, when *Giselle* was made, the cult of the Romantic ballerina had become the central force in ballet: *Giselle* was already an exaggeration, a parody, of that first sylph. It was not influenced by the artistic certainties that constructed La Sylphide, but by an ambient social mood of compromise and even scepticism. The images of lesbian S/M in SEX are both a form of parody of that branch of pornography, and a commentary on the conventions of the genre. In the same way, *Giselle* offers a critique of Romantic ballet. However, the fact that a late twentieth century audience is separated from *Giselle* by a hundred and fifty years means that we do not have immediate access to the smaller details of difference that distinguish between style and parody: *Giselle* has thus become accepted as identical to the rest of Romantic ballet, rather than self-reflexive within it. However, through a process of re-reading we can re-locate the parodic inscriptions of the first *Giselle* upon the 1992 production. It is at this point that *Giselle* becomes such a rich site of signification.

Hence we can say that *Giselle* deviates from the conventions of its moment of production in the way its movement treats love and salvation, the commodified female body, gender power relations, and Romantic ballet itself. It offers a wealth of alternative gender and narrative reading positions through movement: it is permissive, not prescriptive. It is parodic of its own genre, although this has been suppressed by the ballet orthodoxy and by subsequent productions. *Giselle* is also radical because it has punctums, it makes us give up ourselves, so it offers what is lacking from the majority of ballet performed in Great Britain, and also those qualities which have become marginalized within the liberal arts academy. These qualities can be called love: they include desire and pleasure and a giving up of self. We find that we can locate our desire and our pleasure in *Giselle* , and that by doing this we give up part of ourselves. We also find that, contrary to modern myth, we are not diminished or placated or sedated by this action, but given more reading positions.

Finally, *Giselle* offers resistance and consolation: it opposes transcendence as a panacea, but offers beauty and grace as a will to power and a source of pleasure and therefore strength. By accepting all the ballet offers we can locate the 'consolation' of ballet and pornography not within a tradition of compensation for social inequalities, but of resistance to them. By using these texts, space can be found within resistant reading for love without the 'holy terror' that has for so long dogged it whenever it appears in the academy.

> It is in this holy terror of love that we find, in both men and women themselves, the source of all opposition to the emancipation of women.[93]

Notes to Chapter Three

1. *Desperately Seeking Susan*, dir. by Susan Seidelman (US: Orion, 1985).
2. Madonna's performance in *Evita* (1996) was generally very well received, but perpetuated her public identification as a talentless but ambitious woman who had gained success through sex with influential men: this was the image of Eva Péron presented by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's musical.
3. Pamela Robertson, *Guilty Pleasures: feminist camp from Mae West to Madonna* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996).
   Deconstructing Madonna, ed. by F. Lloyd (London: Batsford, 1993).
   Madonnarama, ed. by Lisa Frank and Paul Smith (Pittsburgh: Cleis Press, 1993).
   The I Hate Madonna Handbook, ed. by Ilene Rosenzweig (London: Virgin, 1994).
   I Dream of Madonna: Women's Dreams of the Goddess of Pop, ed. by Kay Turner (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993).
   The Madonna Connection: representational politics, subcultural identities and cultural theory, ed. by Cathy Schwichtenberg (San Fransisco: Westview Press, 1993).
4. Paglia, pp. 6-7.
5. Paglia, pp. 4-5.
6. Ted C. Fishman, 'Hatefest', *Playboy*, August 1993, 41-45 (p. 45).
7. Robertson, p. 125.
8. Kate Muir, 'The face that launched a thousand theses', *The Times, Life and Times*, 4 August 1992, p. 1.
9. Linda Leung, 'The Making of A Matriarchy: a comparison of Madonna and Margaret Thatcher', *Journal of Gender Studies*, 6 (March 1997), 33-42.
10. Steve Anderson, 'Forgive Me Father, *Village Voice*, 4 April 1989, pp. 67-68.
11. Lynne Layton, 'Like a Virgin: Madonna's Version of the Feminine', *Desperately Seeking Madonna: In Search of the*

Meaning of the World's Most Famous Woman, ed. by Adam Sexton (New York: Dell, 1993), p. 171.

12. Kate Tentler, 'Like a Feminist', *Village Voice*, 24 November 1992, p. 22.
13. Sheryl Garratt, 'Je ne regrette rien', *The Face*, October 1994, 44-57 (p. 53).
14. *Reservoir Dogs*, dir. by Quentin Tarentino (US: Rank, 1991)
15. *Truth or Dare: In Bed with Madonna*, dir. by Alek Keshishian (Propaganda Films, 1991).
16. Christopher Andersen, *Madonna Unauthorized* (New York: Simon & Schuster , 1991), p. 324.
17. Andersen, p. 232.
18. Andersen, p. 324.
19. Banes, p. 35.
20. Andersen, pp. 281-300.
21. Paula Yates, *Blondes: a history from their earliest roots*, (London: Michael Joseph, 1983), p. 90.
22. Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and The Body* (California: University of California Press, 1993), p. 22.
23. Andersen, p. 300.
24. One example of this strategy is a 1992 Birmingham Royal Ballet touring poster of Monica Zamora applying her make-up: she was of 'artist' (corps de ballet) status when the picture was used.
25. Alderson, p. 300.
26. Carrie Fisher,'Madonna Reveals All', *Elle*, October 1991, 58-69 (p. 58).

    Carrie Fisher: We have a lot of things in common. We go to the same shrink.

    Madonna: Yeah, everything I do is measured by what I think her reaction will be.
27. Richard Asquith, 'Madonna Exposed', *Sunday Times Magazine*, 20 October 1992, 24-34 (p. 33).
28. Fishman, p. 45.
29. Madonna, *SEX* (London: Martin Secker and Warburg, 1992), p. 2.
30. Garratt, p. 73.

31. Arts Council of Great Britain, *The Performing Arts in Great Britain: Dance* (London: Arts Council, 1992), p. 7.
32. Madonna, p. 58.
33. Andersen, pp. 54-55.
34. Merck, p. 230.
35. Leung, pp. 33-42.
36. Leung, p. 42.
37. Leung, p. 41.
38. Ramona Curry, 'Madonna from Marilyn to Marlene - Pastiche and/or Parody', *Journal of Film and Video*, 42 (Summer 1990), 25-28 (p. 25).
39. Waldemar Januszczak, 'Art With Knobs On', *Guardian, G2*, 1 December 1992, p. 8.
40. Bordo, p. 273.
41. Bordo, p. 275.
42. Bordo, p. 38.
43. Bordo, p. 275.
44. Kirkland, *The Shape of Love* , p. 15.
45. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, pp. 40-57.
46. Robertson, p. 135.
47. Angela Carter,*The Sadeian Woman* (London: Virago, 1979), p. 150.
48. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 59.
49. Arnold Haskell, *Balletomania* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1934).
50. Feminists Against Censorship, *Pornography and Feminism*, ed. by Gillian Rodgerson and Elizabeth Wilson (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1991), p. 17.
51. Margot Fonteyn, *The Magic of Dance* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1980), p. 57.
52. Derek and Julia Parker, *The Natural History of the Chorus Girl* (London: David & Parker, 1975), p. 14.
53. Parker, p. 15.
54. Feminists Against Censorship, p. 17.
55. Feminists Against Censorship, p. 20.
56. Feminists Against Censorship, pp. 17 - 22
57. A reproduction of this first post-war programme in the 1996 Gala programme shows that Robert Helpmann played

both the successful suitor, Prince Florimund, and the bitter fairy Carabosse. This casting would be analogous to giving the roles of Albrecht and Myrtha to the same male dancer in *Giselle*. The ideological repercussions of such a choice would be fascinating.

58. Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (London: Women's Press, 1981), pp. 200-201.
59. Paglia, p. 252.
60. Linda Williams, 'Pornographies On/scene, or, Diff'rent Strokes for Diff'rent Folks', *Sex Exposed: Sexuality and the Porn Debate*, ed. by Lynne Segal and Mary McIntosh (London: Virago, 1992), p. 264.
61. R. English, 'Alas, Alack the Representation of the Ballerina', *New Dance*, 15 (Summer 1980), 17-22 (p. 18).
62. Adair, p. 54.
63. Adair, p. 79.
64. Fonteyn, p. 223.
65. Fonteyn, pp. 225-26.
66. The notion of the 'pornographeme' was first suggested to me in conversation with Duncan Webster, in 1993.
67. Merck, 'More of a Man: gay porn cruises gay politics', in *Perversions*, p. 224.
69. Islay Blair, company physiotherapist at the Birmingham Royal Ballet, speaking in an interview given to me for this thesis, 21 October 1993.
70. Kirkland, *Dancing On My Grave*, p. 35.
71. Humphrey Burton, quoted in *The Sunday Times* , from the back jacket of Kirkland, *Dancing On My Grave* .
72. Banes, p. 37.
73. David Dougill, 'The Turning Point?', *The Sunday Times*, 18 August 1993, pp. 9:20-9:21.
74. Beaumont, pp. 122 and 124.
75. Banes, p. 27.
76. Beaumont, p. 65.
77. Roger Copeland, 'Dance, Feminism and the Critique of the Visual', *Dance, Gender and Culture*, ed. by Helen Thomas (London: Macmillan, 1993), p. 140.
78. Dickinson, 92, p. 59.

79. Copeland, p. 145.
80. Copeland, p. 147.
81. Ian Woodward, *Ballet* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1977), p. 331.
82. Banes, p. 40.
83. Kirkland, *The Shape of Love*, p. 187.
84. Alice Walker, *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 270.
85. Elissa Marder, 'Blade Runner's Moving Still', *Camera Obscura*, 27 (1991), 89-107.
86. Yeats, p. 322.
87. Banes, p.10.
88. Bordo, p. 38.
89. Hanna, pp. 217-240.
90. Merck, pp. 217-235.
91. Robertson, pp. 3-13.
92. Allen Robertson, and Donald Hutera, *The Dance Handbook* (London: Longman,1988), p. 211.
93. Angela Carter, *The Sadeian Woman*, p. 150.

Chapter Four
Conclusions

1. Introduction

Returning to the stated intentions of the Preface, this thesis has attempted primarily to demonstrate through close reading that *Giselle* was once, and is potentially still, a subversive text. The 1841 *Giselle* reflected but also queried and problematized its surrounding cultural mood. This thesis has shown *Giselle* to be an unusual and generous text, capable of supporting many powerful readings, both conservative and radical. Demonstrating that *Giselle* is able to generate a diverse and even contradictory range of significances, whilst at once holding them in a productive tension, was an essential element of this project. Putting grace under pressure yielded, not schizm and collapse, but meaning.

This approach lead to a range of texts and critical traditions which repositioned *Giselle* in the textual canon, without losing either its potential to give pleasure or its original choreography. Hence it became a text with much to say to current understandings of sexualization and socialization, their relationship to feminism, and to women's lives today. Ballet, it would seem, far from being the oppressive man-made art many socialist dance historians have argued it to be, [1] can articulate much about women's bodies in Western Society. [2]

This study of *Giselle* has also looked beyond the text itself in the conclusions it has drawn. The concerns that have motivated this project are necessarily germane to the wider academy and the ballet establishment. Few would deny that changes are needed in the production and the reception of ballet. This thesis has only dealt in any detail with reception: brief reference has been made to those conditions of production which are currently responsible for limiting ballet's possible meanings. It is clear that the cultural practices surrounding ballet production need to be informed by a more general range of intellectual, academic, educational and social attitudes and practices.

2. Conclusions on the 1992 *Giselle*

These closing thoughts on the *Giselle* of 1992 were crystallized by Peter Wright's retirement as director of the Birmingham Royal Ballet, in 1995. He has been succeeded by David Bintley: in his late thirties, Bintley has been with Royal Ballet companies since 1975, but locates a modern approach to subject matter and technique, and an enjoyment of humour, sexuality and issue-led politics in ballet. Peter Wright chose to complete a career in which *Giselle* had been his trademark not with a final *Giselle*, but with a new *Coppélia*.

Coppélia was first produced in 1870: almost thirty years after the first *Giselle* , social attitudes had changed in France.

> Divorce was still illegal in France, but the licentious Second Empire attitude towards extra-marital sex was a far cry from the bourgeois view of virtue and marriage in *Giselle*. [3]

Coppélia has been mentioned previously in this thesis for it carries many of the themes and ideas for which *Giselle* was 'reaching', to their logical and comical conclusion. Not only this but, as Banes points out, it departs from those Romantic ballets in which the Other is supernatural by culminating in a euphoric, successful marriage plot. [4] Where *Giselle* is tentative, *Coppélia* is self-assured. Beaumont has designated *Giselle* the 'full flower', 'the supreme achievement of Romantic ballet' [5], but in many ways these bouquets should go to *Coppélia*.

Chapter Three identified *Coppélia* as the ballet which picked up the tragic themes of *Giselle* and repeated them in a comic and celebratory tour-de-force. Although it has attracted some critical attention as a reactionary ballet, and has often been performed in such a way as to reinforce the idea of woman as doll, *Coppélia* was in the nineteenth century the zenith of the tradition that previous chapters identified as latent in *Giselle*. Swanilda takes male-constructed ideologies, plays with them, and then uses them to get what she wants. What she wants is still marriage and thus a sanctioned place within her community, but her desire for union can be seen as being on her terms. We must make the imaginative leap to a time when desiring marriage was not a form of false consciousness, to be criticized or enlightened, but an economic necessity with very little alternative: we cannot frame this desire with our own late twentieth century values. Like Giselle, Swanilda exposes the workings of male ideology, but she does not have to die for so doing. Giselle taught Albrecht the error of his ways through her own death: Swanilda teaches Franz to live with her. It is also interesting to remember that Franz was originally danced by a woman *en travestie*, because women were in 1870 considered to be the stronger, more professional dancers, better able to carry off the tasks of support and solo virtuosity. [6]

Coppélia presents a different social and sexual world map from *Giselle*. Hence, where Giselle's protest is inarticulate, Swanilda, in those leg movements discussed previously, celebrates articulacy. Giselle, like the replicants with whom she was twinned, railed against her maker only to be destroyed herself. In Swanilda, whom Sally Banes compares to a ballet girl who infamously persisted in interpolating can-can steps into her nun's *pas* in a Paris Opéra production of *Robert le Diable*, we see woman choreographing herself - 'a sign of female mobility, outside of hearth and home, in the modern arena of public life.' [7]

It is significant that Wright chose this ballet as his farewell. One cannot presume to know his intentions in the production decisions he made, but when viewed in the light of the re-reading of *Giselle* above, they give an ideologically hopeful complexion to the end of an era in British ballet. The new *Coppélia* designs were made by Peter Farmer, who also designed Wright's *Giselle*. No major directorial alterations were made, apart from some dramatically logical recutting of the score, but:

> basically I've aimed at simplicity, clarity - the steps and paths have definition where the old version was fussy - and made it cleaner. And there's a new ending, at least it will have a new ending up until the dress rehearsal, and then if it doesn't work it will be scrapped. [8]

Wright decided that the ending did work, and kept it. After the festive finalé, the wedding celebration for Franz and Swanhilda, the doll, Coppélia, is left on the stage. Usually Coppelius is left without solace, merely his broken dreams of power and success. In Wright's new version, the doll comes to life just as the drama ends. This could imply that Coppelius' ideology of female construction is being validated. However, Wright adds one more touch. The doll winks. Not at Coppelius: at the audience.

This wink can be read as a radical closure: it refuses single, unary reading, and explicitly opens the text up to the readings of the audience. The wink also licenses a new reading of women in ballet. Giselle, the female body taken apart and etherialized, has come back having reconstructed herself, and has taken and put on previously male-held power. It still may not be the case that company organisation follows representation: women are not yet taking an equal place in company life. However, this ending marks a sea change in the way willis, sylphides, puppets and dolls have traditionally been used as representative of women's bodies and lives. Of this ending, Cormac Rigby has written:

> Why not ... when it is done with such understanding and love? [9]

However, for all its articulacy, humour and overtly disruptive ending, the assured *Coppélia* may be a less useful text, academically, than the tentative *Giselle*.

3. Conclusions on the Academy and Ballet

As has been indicated elswhere in this thesis, whilst the main thrust of the discussion has focused on *Giselle*, gestures towards the wider concerns of the academy and the ballet have been kept beside these discussions, because a project such as this requires awareness of its own political context.

One result of this awareness has been to note that the ballet audience is not only a reading audience - not merely 'the reader', an academic construct with no corporeal existance, but is a quantifiable social grouping for whom ballet going and watching are sensual, social and sexual activities. If the accepted signs of ballet can be semiotically repositioned for the audience, then that audience's experience can be taken into an area of signification where expectations are disrupted or reversed without denying the pleasure and 'magic' of ballet. The fact of ballet's kinetic corporeality leads any study of it into a political arena wherein the academic hopes to produce work that will impact upon the world beyond the university because one cannot write about the body without writing about society, as Christy Adair has pointed out.[10]

If audiences are to experience the signs of ballet differently, certain conditions must satisfied. These would include: more heterodox education of dance makers and watchers; lower ticket prices and increased community accessibility of ballet; a more broad academic education of dancers; and an awareness of shared information and aims within the art form. There are some signs that ballet is becoming more accessible, and its makers and watchers less homogeneous, better informed and more critical. These tendencies, however, will always be limited by the conservative nature of the money markets which must, realistically, be relied upon to support them. Indeed, market values were built into ballet during the 1980s, and will prove hard to shed. The huge amount of money granted to the Opera House by the National Lottery in 1995 provoked a national outcry: the Royal Ballet has lost much public sympathy as a result, and the company's homelessness while renovations are carried out will do little for the repertoire.

However lofty the ideals that inform creativity in the theatre, no theatre can continue to open if it does not make a profit. As companies such as the Royal Opera House are held to be more accountable for their finances, and are less able to rely on unquestioning state support, then what is often referred to colloquially as the 'bums on seats' mentality will matter a great deal. In the same way, what matters in the university is statistics for published research and graduates in employment. [11] Whilst, then, these attitudes may be long overdue in the arts, it would seem that, when over-zealously pursued, they are antipathetical to the very things that give the arts their value. The opening up and out of the arts seems less likely than ever, when it is at least as important as ever. It is needed because it does not simply improve the art or the department, but because it helps to foster the conviction that art can intervene in the social process. Exacerbating this situation, it seems unlikely that the current financial situation facing students will encourage any but the most wealthy school-leavers to take up the study of more esoteric, non-vocational subjects either.

One way of moving away from the problems besetting ballet is to focus on good practice where it is found. One route that ballet in Britain could take away from its current ghetto is via the efforts and initiatives of the larger provincial companies like The Birmingham Royal Ballet. [12]

The approach taken by this thesis also has repercussions for the academy, and in particular, for those areas of arts scholarship which, for good historical reasons, have tended to shy away from certain aspects of the performing arts. Those disciplines aligned with feminism are psrticularly relevant. A set of values subtly different from those which currently exist in the university could take their lead from the reclamation of metaphorical, or 'storytelling' discourse which is currently happening in popular culture. Identifying and exploring metaphorical discourse has been particularly productive in this thesis. The semiotic impoverishment of *Giselle* in its recent history has resulted from its ideological separation from the metaphorical tradition, partly as a result of undoubtedly sincere attempts to foster 'proper' concerns in the academy.

Texts belonging to the metaphorical tradition are particularly effective in encouraging audiences to 'give themselves up' to the texts they love. By insisting on our involvement and emotional investment in the texts we study, *Giselle* (and similar texts) counters Simon Barker's fear that academic activity will 'hardly matter'.[13]

4. Overall Conclusion

My conclusions on the *Giselle* of 1992, and upon the cultural context in which my studies have been situated, have both culminated in the figure of 'love'. This thesis has shown love to be a radical force within the nineteenth century convention of the marriage plot, and in the present moment, to be an example of the type of vocabulary and critical approach that might be included in a revised dance academy.

The academic value of including *Giselle* in the textual canon lies in its ability to accomodate a multitude of positions, even to the point of contradiction. *Giselle* is what was earlier referred to as a 'reaching' text, one that, unlike *Coppélia* , is transitional, enacting social and artistic change and confusion, being caught between genre absolutes.

At a time when the academy, feminism and the ballet have become divided, highly competitive within their own ranks and, many would argue, less enjoyable, a text like *Giselle* offers to span the extreme poles currently ranged against each other in these institutions.

This conclusion may seem to present itself as an avoidance of conclusion, but, as Roger Copeland has written:

> In conclusion, I fear it may sound as if I'm trying to have it both ways - or any which way. That's because I'm arguing on behalf of the centre or middle ground between two equally undesirable extremes. [14]

Copeland was arguing agaist the extremes of description and deconstruction in dance writing. This thesis argues against the academy, feminism or the ballet allowing such polarization to ghettoize their concerns. Texts like *Giselle* provide a 'middle ground' where discussion and communication between extremes can exist.

Thus, in the final conclusion, this thesis argues that the ballet *Giselle* is of academic value for three reasons.

Firstly, *Giselle* as a text can sustain academic activity and need not generate simply the conservative meanings which have historically been assigned to ballet.

Secondly, *Giselle* requires that its students reassess not only the canon, but the place of their studies in the academy, and the vocabularies, texts and critical traditions handed down to them by that academy.

Finally, both the original and the 1992 *Giselles* facilitate political and physical movement between extreme positions. What the dancing body of Giselle enacts on stage is what is lacking in the academy and ballet today. If Giselle the character, by dancing a space for her own loves and desires, problematizes issues of class, gender and the body, then *Giselle* the ballet generates a similar moving space wherein academic activity can be pursued, questioned and loved.

Notes to Chapter Four

1. Discussions of this position can be found in Adair (1992), p. 78, and Alexandra Carter (1998), p. 2.
2. It is partly this concern with women's lives that has lead me to utilise unorthodox reference material. I was struck throughout this project by the relevance of many of the negative connotations of the 'ballerina's art' to those anxieties dogging teenage girls in Western Society. A song by rock band Hole is currently popular in America:

   'Courtney Love's song "Doll Parts" has become the latest teen anthem for pubescent girls, terrorised by their own tender, morphing bodies' [i]. Singer-songwriter Love has become an icon for the nineties, described as 'Madonna out of control': she is also the widow of Kurt Cobain, who fronted 'grunge' band Nirvana. She has accurately identified that certain themes (which can be read in *Giselle*) are relevant to women now, and that there is tension and conflict in those themes:

   > I have this real obsession with grace. That's the number one thing I look for in a person in the psychological realm. But part of grace is not speaking - like the silent ballerina. I've wondered, after everything that's happened: 'You can change your persona. You can be the silent widow.' But I cannot kill the thing inside of me. That has to be kept alive. Or I will die. [ii]

   The silent widow is a good image for *Giselle*, as is 'Doll Parts': they can both be seen to represent a transitional, even anxious stage in feminist thinking and representation which can be found in that ballet.

   i. Kevin Sessums, 'Love Child', *Vanity Fair*, June 1995, 82-91 (p. 85).
   ii. David Fricker, 'We're in the pantheon', *Life (The Observer Magazine)*, 15 January 1995, 14-17 (p. 17).

3. Banes, p. 36.
4. Banes, p. 35.
5. Beaumont, p. 14 and p. 134.
6. Ann Nugent, 'Calling in Coppélia', *Dance Now*, 4 (Spring 1995), 58-63 (p. 62).
7. Banes, p. 41.
8. Nugent, pp. 62-3.
9. Cormac Rigby, 'A Wright Royal Farewell', *Dance Now*, 4 (Summer 1995), 69-74 (p. 74).
10. Adair, p. 24 and p. 40.
11. The Research Assessment Exercise in British universities and colleges has made these institutions responsible for the outcome of all research carried out under their auspices, with funding being attendant on those outcomes.
12. At the time of writing, as the Royal Ballet becomes ever more mired in seasons of extracts whilst in exile from the beleagered Opera House, cutting costs even to the point of using five-year-old publicity material (a 1993 Crickmay photograph of Deborah Bull has headed the 1998 Summer season literature), the Birmingham Royal Ballet becomes more settled, more active in its community, produces a more varied repertoire, and sees its ballerinas taking their second and third maternity leaves and dancing well into their thirties and forties. In addition, the Birmingham Royal Ballet now offers a B.A. degree focusing solely on ballet, in conjunction with Birmingham University, and even has its own website on the Internet.
13. Barker, p. 173.
14. Copeland, in Carter, p. 107.

Appendix

Glossary of French Ballet Terms

All terms listed below appear, italicized, in the main text of this thesis .

Adage/Adagio	Slow part of a ballet in which dancers demonstrate balance and suppleness by performing stretching movements balanced on one foot
Arabesque	Position in which dancer balances on one foot and stretches non-weight-bearing leg behind them
Ballerina	Leading female soloist
Ballon	Technique whereby landing from one jump is followed immediately by another explosive jump
Bourrée	Tiny steps blurring into one another giving the impression of hovering
Corps de Ballet	Large group of younger, less experienced dancers participating in crowd and ensemble scenes
Danseur noble	Leading male dancer in the classical, elegant, well proportioned manner. 'Character' roles would usually be performed by a stockier, more acrobatic dancer
Demi-pointe	Standing on tip-toe, without raising to full *pointe*: highest stretch of foot used by male dancers

Developpé	To unfold a bent leg, slowly and with great control, until the leg is extended straight in front of or behind the body
Echappé	Literally 'escaped': a jump or step in which the feet move rapidly away from each other, then close again
Ensemble	Literally 'together': a group dance in which all dancers perform the same movements at the same time
Fouetté	Pivotting movement, as when dancer turns 180° *en arabesque*, but holds extended leg in same position by allowing it to pivot in hip socket
Frappé	Beaten movements, as when foot is beaten rapidly against supporting leg
Jeté	Leap from one foot to the other
Pas	Literally, 'step', used to mean dance or 'routine'
Pas de deux	Dance for two - usually one male, one female
Piqué	Movement in which foot is snatched from floor and placed against the weight bearing leg
Pirouette	Spins around on one foot, remaining on same spot
Pointe work	Female dancer balances on very tips of toes wearing specially stiffened shoes
Promenade	Female dancer performs *adage* supported by male who 'shows off' her balance and ability to turn, balanced, to the audience
Relevé	A snatched movement as the dancer moves from a flat foot to *demi-pointe* : used in *pirouettes*

Répétiteur	Assistant to ballet master or mistress, takes rehearsals, records choreography using longhand or notation
Tour de force	A section in a ballet in which one or more dancers show off their talents: usually the narrative is interrupted, or gives the pretext of a competition or performance within the narrative to allow the display
Positions	The five positions of the arms and feet are the basic starting points upon which all ballet movement is based: derived from fencing, hence 'turn out' of limbs in ballet, originally to give fencer the ability to turn in any direction at speed.

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