

# Thesis

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in partial fulfillment of the degree of  
Master of Health Science

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## **DANCE and STILLNESS**

A phenomenological hermeneutic inquiry into the experience of  
stillness.

Presented through the medium of dance performance and  
written exegesis.

**2005**

## **Attestation of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or material written by another person, nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgment is made in the acknowledgments.

Jennifer De Leon

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## Abstract

This thesis explores the subject of stillness: specifically the stillness that occurs in the midst of movement, turbulence or chaos. It is found in the midst of movement and can also be conceived as that which frames, or holds all movement. A principal focus of the thesis is to distinguish the therapeutic value of this stillness.

The research methodology is hermeneutic phenomenology. Within this framework a choreographed dance work and written exegesis comprise and are equal parts of the whole. The choreography for the dance work employs a neo-classical-contemporary technique particular to the choreographer. A story and a journey are presented - providing a vehicle for the central theme of the thesis - stillness within movement, to be best elucidated. A Christo-centric philosophy and worldview are ground of the work.

The dance work is choreographed on and presented by four dancers. These four dancers and four 'watchers' are the research participants. As the dance work evolved it was presented 'in process' and the participants interviewed subsequent to the showings. These interviews were not psychotherapy sessions, so data about interventions, process and outcome does not appear. Rather information was sought about the essence of the danced / watched experience, with particular attention being given to the felt experience of stillness. Data gained from these interviews constitutes the findings of the research.

The findings show that the particular stillness exemplified in this dance work is therapeutic, and therapeutic experience for the individual participants was realised. The data suggests the stillness was experienced in a number of different ways.

These include: a personal relationship with *chaos*, the significance of *relationship* with each other, the particular relevance of *design and time* in the individual's life, the meaning of *authenticity*, the relevance and meaningfulness of *symbolism*, and the personal understanding of *awareness, focus and release*.

This research shows that we who are psychotherapy clients, practitioners, and people of all walks would greatly benefit through including into daily life this 'stillness immanent within movement.'

# Chapter One

## Introduction

This thesis investigates the experience of stillness - the singular stillness that is present in the midst of movement, turbulence or chaos. My research question is - what is the lived experience of this stillness? A motif present throughout this work and epitomising it perfectly are these words: “At the still point of the turning world” (T.S. Eliot, 1972).

In addressing my research question I use two mediums - dance and the written word. The dance is a work of 63-minutes, which I choreographed through the year leading up to final presentation. The choreography expresses and epitomises the essence of my research question. The exegesis explains the dance, and the dance reveals the exegesis; these together are equal parts of the whole.

The research question was asked of the research participants: the dancers and the ‘watchers’. The dancers are movement practitioners of professional standard; people available and willing to commit to such a project. The watchers are representative of people who either may be drawn to the artistic experience of dance as a therapeutic encounter, or those who simply witness the dance and recognise that something has occurred which has been for them a profound inner experience they identify as healing. The selection process for dancers and watchers is described in detail in Chapter Four, Methodology and Methods (pp. 46 - 67).

Over a series of occasions the work in part or in its entirety was performed and watched. The dancers and the watchers were subsequently interviewed. From these interviews I drew data that explicates the experience of this stillness. From relevant literature I read widely and gained further insight into this experience. The material gathered was analysed, and joined with my personal and particular understanding of this subject. A particular process of imagination, thought and selection that is requisite and integral to the whole has been employed and is demonstrated in living form.

The thesis is thus made of distinct yet connected aspects:

1. A written exegesis: exploring and discussing the concept of the 'still point'.
2. A dance: embodying and illuminating the themes presented in the paper.
3. The relationship between these is the transitional 'other.' This is a dimension in which the writing informs the dance and the dance informs the writing and it is not possible to say which is the impulse for which and whether the two can be regarded as separate at all. This is to say that this work is made and to be perceived within the framework of radical interdependence of subject and world, and that the experience cannot be described in isolation from its object and the object cannot be described in isolation from we who are experiencing it (Crotty, 1998, p.45; Zukav, 1979). Further I hold Maturana's tenet of the inseparability of the observer and the observed and so, whatever is seen here is not separate from s/he who sees (Efran, 1990, p.21, Zukav, 1979).

The written part of this thesis comprises an explication of my thinking on this subject, a literature review, declaration and description of the methodology used, explanation of the methods employed, interviews with the participants and analysis of the interviews, and a conclusion stating the realisations which I perceive emerge from the research. I have chosen a phenomenological-hermeneutic perspective for the written work, with an interpretive analysis of the interview data, these being most appropriate for my chosen task - elucidating the lived experience of the subject stillness. My objective is to present something:

Neither eternal, without roots in the present, nor a mere event destined to be replaced by another event tomorrow and therefore deprived of any intrinsic value (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p.92).

The dance work employs a contemporary dance vocabulary, comprising the elements of the dance language: effort, shape, flow, space, time, rhythm, dynamic and ecstasy. Through the form and expression of the dancer dancing - through the visual, kinetic, physical actuality, moving in archetypal, perhaps even eternal forms, I seek to show something at one level quite 'new' - and at another, remembered, recognised - known. I seek, importantly, to ward against the explanatory schemes and themes to which we are so used and which, therefore, "lull us into overlooking or trivialising vast mysteries" (Efran, Lukens & Lukens, 1990, p. xiv). It is possible my work may even speak to a broad but largely unvoiced need for a re-evaluation of fundamentals about the distinctions we make and how we value them.

I use dance in a three-fold process. One is to inform my understanding and two, to communicate

what I discover. The third is of a spiritual nature and may be best described as tapping into a dimension where I perceive that my body and mind are not separate in function and understanding, but one. This other dimension is more attuned. It is less directive. Here mind, body, the dance and the quest of the work flow without one or other aspect dominating or leading. In my understanding this is a state in which my body and mind are vessels of the greater Power that in my life and throughout this work I identify as God.

I use dance in this work for three reasons. Firstly it is a 'language' that I believe communicates effectively the message of my thesis. Secondly it is a language in which I 'speak' most fluently. Thirdly, in that I am as well as a choreographer and dancer also a practising psychotherapist, I wish now to offer an example of an alternative way of communicating that could be profoundly effective in the psychotherapeutic arena. I hold that the experience of the union of dance and the particular stillness researched in this thesis can be - for dancer and watcher, whether danced or watched - an experience of profound psychotherapeutic worth.

My intention is to explore the effect this particular stillness may have in the journey towards emotional healing and its possible application to the practice of psychotherapy. My research work investigates the experience of this particular stillness, whether it be therapeutic, transformative, or neither of these, or both.

'Transformation' is a word that stands for a vast area of experience and inquiry. For the purposes of this work I am talking specifically about transformation from the psychotherapeutic perspective. This means inner personal / and or spiritual resources being discovered that enable life to become richer and more joyful. It means the realisation of greater self-acceptance and peace, and life lived with greater equilibrium. Transformation, here, is not synonymous with cure, or 'fixing' because the degrees of inner acceptance, peace, equilibrium and joy are not quantitative measurements. One may know transformation without being cured or fixed, and the journey of transformation will take a lifetime. Transformation is a changed quality and attitude of mind and soul. It is the intrapsychic journey towards "healing of the soul" (J. Dalloway, personal and class communication, March 1989).

Just as dance is ephemeral and exists in this moment, so too is stillness.  
There is - in the strictest sense, no such thing as stillness (Zukav, 1979).

Yet I, dancer and psychotherapist, hold that the living act we distinguish as stillness is one of the most critical and essential tools that can be employed in the art of dance, in the practice of healing of the soul, and in the life journey to transformation. I contend that in both art and psychotherapy there is a *particular* stillness that potentially can hold much of the healing and creativity needed to take client, choreographer, dancer, patient, person - on to their next step of growth.

I begin with an initial question - What does it mean to be still? When we are born, one of the first things we do, (provided we live), is breathe. Our tiny body gasps and shudders, twitches, reaches, stretches, curls and unfolds, gulping great in-breaths of life-giving air. Breath is thus the first dance, and this 'dance' continues as the fundamental kinetic impulse for the rest of our lives.

The breath sustains our bodies, which, (to use the psychosynthesis tenet), we are - and are more than. The equation then, is breath + body = movement. There is no client, dancer, watcher - indeed any person, who comes to therapy independently of breath, body or movement. Preceding and containing whatever the issue about which a client has come to therapy, are breath, body and movement. Every person presents with distinct characteristics of breathing, body and movement. So what then does it mean to be 'still in the midst of movement'?

There is stillness and there is stillness, and that chosen from the whirl and turbulence of the dance is different from that which is simply sitting down. The still point of which Eliot speaks, the 'equipoise' - is a method of holding thoughts, feelings and sensations in the balance wherein "inborn, instinctual cravings and impulses are sublimated... transformed into wisdom" (Epstein, 1996, p. 79). Epstein, a psychotherapist working from a Buddhist perspective, tells us this is the Buddhist "Sunyata" (p. 101); from my Christian perspective I think of "the nothing at all" (Lewis, 1955, pp.93-106); the "suspended moment at the well" (Fox, 1988, p. 60), the "still small voice" (Bible, I Kings, 19:12). This state is also referred to as "being centred" or "centring." (Laban, 1966, Dowd, 1977, Moore and Yamamoto, 1988, etc etc). To discover what all this means in the experience and context of my thesis, and of living, I proceed to more explicit questions -

- When stillness occurs, as described above - whether it be for a moment or as an entire underlying quality, what is the experience of it? When the stillness is witnessed or seen, by the watcher, what is the experience? When the stillness is felt, or danced, by the dancer, what is the experience? When the stillness occurs within choreography that is specifically designed to express stillness, and the dancers' bodies capture and express that quality - *what happens?*
- Is the experience in any way transformative?
- Is it transformative for the dancer, the watcher and the choreographer?

Through my observations and perceptions as a practising psychotherapist and dance therapist, I have come to believe that engagement with this 'stillness within the turbulence' is vital to our survival. I have come to see it as a source of healing, creativity, emotional rest and spiritual growth - a source of human enhancement.

Thus with words and movement as my 'tools' of discussion I endeavour to explicate what relevance, possibility, potency, value, and meaning the experience of stillness within the dance has for transformation, (as defined above). I wish to show something both particular and universal - meaningful to being here, now, and also suggestive of the difference that makes a difference. I present findings to suggest that this is an experience that holds possibilities for psychological healing, creativity, emotional rest, spiritual growth. My desire is that the study will be of value to the psychotherapeutic community, and to all people engaged in healing, creating, resting, and growing.

Except for the still point... there would be no dance -  
and there is only the dance (Eliot, 1972).

This is one way of saying it all. In the whimsical profundity wherein the universe abhors a vacuum, where absence denotes presence, and emptiness suggests the filling that lies in wait, so - in the stillness - is the dance. We cannot see movement separate from non-movement; or solidity separate from the space that surrounds and holds it, or fluidity apart from held-ness, or anything at all separate from its opposite. Then, opposites converge, and there is the great shifting of planets and particles, and oceans and atmospheres, and the alpha and omega. This is the cosmic dance. Call it creation, love, God.

Be still - and know (Holy Bible, Psalm 46, verse 10).

Consequently within the range of research undertaken, I am not presenting a new psychotherapy, nor am I presenting case stories of psychotherapeutic intervention. What I demonstrate here does not, nor is intended to look like familiar or traditional psychotherapeutic practice. Nor is this an example of classical dance therapy. No traditional interventions and applications are described - such work has been eminently dealt with by numerous psychotherapy writers before me, (for example, S. Freud, C. Jung, H. Spiegelberg, M. Buber, P. Tillich, A. Mindell, J. Masson, J. Hillman, M. Epstein, H. Kohut - to name but a few).

Neither is it my purpose to describe the 'doing' of psychotherapy, a psychotherapy session or a case study. The performance of the dance work I have choreographed and the written exegesis is not psychotherapy as would be typically defined as psychotherapy:

Psychotherapy is a formal mode of interaction...for the purpose of amelioration ... relative to any of the following areas of disability or malfunction, or any combination thereof: cognitive functions... affective functions... behavioural functions... with the treatment party's having some theory of personality's origins, development, maintenance and change and some modality of treatment logically related to the theory, with the treatment party having some professional and legal approval to act as a therapist... and some modes of therapy will not fit this definition (Corsini, 1984, p.1).

Rather I hold that certain occasions are deeply and profoundly therapeutic: "pertaining to the healing art, curative" (Chambers Dictionary). The objective of this thesis then is to create that which is therapeutic and to explicate its therapeutic worth. (Perhaps then after all it would not be altogether inconceivable to reframe this occasion as a unique psychotherapy session)!?

The subject of my research is something that I propose has therapeutic potential *even whilst* it does not have many words. It does not take place in a clinic and it may occur without the client and therapist meeting in the one-to-one relationship prescribed in psychotherapy training manuals as being requisite. My research looks at what happens psychotherapeutically in "a moment of time (for)... that moment of time gives the meaning" (Eliot, 1972).

Additional goals I have in doing this work are to offer: a bridge between worlds, those of the arts, psychological and emotional health and the spiritual journey (and maybe more), and a substantial artistic declaration.

In summation:

My thesis seeks to find answer to the questions - What is the experience of a lived, embodied stillness, that which may be called ‘the still point of the turning world,’ or ‘equipoise’? What application does this have for psychotherapy?

My thesis uses the methods of the written word and dance to express this stillness and explore these questions. As is constituent with doing interpretive analysis, I take into account that it is not only a moment in itself, but what leads up to it and what follows after it that is brought to the light of inquiry.

For the thesis entire then, I present a written exegesis and a choreographed dance work entitled *Stillpoint*.

At the end of the investigation I will have -

- revealed a little more about the condition and experience of stillness
- gained some insight into how a method of research and presentation other than words has shaped our understanding
- shown that the danced expression can enhance our understanding of stillness
- considered whether this particular stillness has potential for psychological-emotional health
- and observed some dimensions of creativity to which the human soul may aspire.

The following chapters are

## **Chapter Two**

### Background to the Study

Topic headings for this chapter include, autobiographical detail, introduction to the subject, pre-understandings around the notion of stillness within turbulence, introduction to the movement component of this thesis including suggestion on how to look at and how to ‘see’ dance.

## **Chapter Three**

### Engaging with the Literature

In this chapter I investigate literature of the mystics and psychotherapists, from the world of dance and other sources. Connections with extant literature are made about the experience of solitude for other dancers and other watchers. I close with a summary of points arising from the literature search.

## **Chapter Four**

### Methodology and Methods

This chapter fleshes out the question I am pursuing. Using the headings ‘what I did’ ‘how I did it’ and ‘why I did it’ I endeavour to bring my reader ever closer to the phenomenon of the lived experience of stillness.

## **Chapter Five**

### Results and Findings of the Interviews

This chapter contains the information I gained from the interviews I conducted with the participants. These include the interviews with the dancers, the watchers and the interview with the choreographer (myself).

## **Chapter Six**

### Discussion

Using the information gained in the previous chapter I elicit themes and ideas, meanings and essences to do with the human experience of stillness, enabling me to describe the reflective, co-created meaning of stillness. I suggest there are distinct and obvious themes that emerge as being universal and archetypal.

## **Chapter Seven**

### Conclusion

Drawing threads together... the research is summarised and implications are discussed regarding psychotherapy education, practice, research and theory development. Recommendations are made for future studies on stillness.

# Chapter Two

## Background to the Study

In this chapter I begin by introducing the reader to myself: with autobiographical detail and an insight into why I am drawn to doing this research. I describe the roots, life experiences and perspective that are my heritage and which ergo shape my writing and choreography. I declare my multi-faceted position as a researcher - psychotherapist - choreographer - and dancer as I reveal my pre-understandings around the notion of stillness within turbulence, and talk about dance, its relationship to psychotherapy and how dance may be perceived in the psychotherapeutic arena. The psychotherapeutic application of this study is discussed. The purpose of the Study is stated and a question is posed - How *do* we see? A concluding statement closes the chapter.

### Autobiographical detail.

Ever since I asked the questions “who am I”? “what will I do”? and “what will I be”?, I wanted to be a dancer. This, despite the rather less-than-promising beginning: as a child born with a serious heart defect, I was not allowed to run. Then at age 8 I was struck down for 12 months with rheumatic fever, plus the inevitable complications, and thus could barely, during or after that time, move at all. At the age of nearly 10, after I had learned to walk again - as I vividly recall, by leaning on a parent’s shoulder and compelling my limbs to: “MOVE”! - I went, on doctor’s recommendation, and to correct an apparent severe lack of coordination, to ballet classes. Thus began - writing from the vantage-point of now, which is nearly 40 years later - the rest of a life: my life, that could, not unaptly, be signatred with these words: movement and stillness; stillness and movement.

My mother told me that I kicked my way through my *in utero* months and kicked my way out into life. From this moment began, I suspect, not only my love of but also my investigation into movement. My investigation leads me to certain observations... that from the moment of conception I - and all humans alive, are creatures of movement (Juhan, 1987, p.186). As stated in Chapter One, breathing is from birth the observable manifestation of the inward activity maintaining and sustaining life. Breathing may be called the ‘core movement’ with all aliveness flowing there-from; as living beings we *never* cease to move. Throughout these last 40 years, my

moving - my dancing, characterised by a self-imposed intensity of training that astonished parents, teachers and the medical fraternity alike, and developing into a career similarly, through its extreme level of commitment, intense - has been distinguished by one aspect singularly in contrast. This aspect is the subject of my thesis. Stillness.

Why this subject?

What is it about this subject - stillness - that captures my interest and calls me to seek its essence: its richer deeper meaning, its import in my art, to my practice of psychotherapy?

There is the stillness that seems imposed. It seems inescapable; the *only possible* response to its (apparent) external causes of (in my case) illness and accident. There is the stillness that is chosen, like meditation practises, or like that seen in my choreography. This stillness is the choreographed, intentional moment that exists to give the movement punctuation. It provides the 'frame' within which the movement exists.

There is also a stillness that happens without thought, without mindfulness.

It is not a simple, clearly demarcated positivist/Cartesian division though. Stillness may be chosen, occurring within and from within, stemming from an attitude of mindfulness and acceptance, consciously and deliberately distinct from the whirl and turbulence of the dance/life - or stillness may be simply sitting down. Yet... stillness speaks. It has a power.

But what does it speak? What is its power? What does it mean: to be still? And - specific to the point of this work: what does it mean to be in the midst of movement, turbulence, chaos - yet still?

During, and perhaps because of the long periods of enforced stillness of my own life, I experienced a peculiar stillness that seemed incorporeal; it was as if my soul danced. (Thomas Moore describes this; 1992, pp. 300-305). Despite bodily immobility, with acute awareness I experienced what seemed like infinitesimal variations all around me: a dancing of the air. In regaining facility to physically walk, and then dance, I began working with stillness: seeking its essence. I realised stillness is integral to dance - without it the movement is awash, without definition. As enigmatic as it sounds, stillness is that which frames the dance and ultimately, is that which makes the dance visible and existent at all (Foster, 1986).

## The Researcher's Perspective

Foundational to all aspects of this study is the researcher's perspective. Assumptions inform and shape a person's knowledge and influence how the world is perceived. Throughout any investigation, assumptions direct, influence, and permeate the process of inquiry. Assumptions likewise inform research processes and outcomes. (Sandelowski, Davis, & Harris, 1989).

Clarity and understanding are needed to make known the researcher's suppositions. I the researcher accept the common definition that psychotherapy is a professional discipline that describes a unique body of knowledge based on the phenomenon of concern. Within a human science framework, psychotherapy is defined as both art and science, focused on a structured relationship between therapist and client which facilitates a desired change in the client's life (NZAP Handbook, 2004). Psychotherapy is further defined as a practice in which the emphasis of the relationship is attending to the human emotional and psychological experience through caring (Newman, Sime, & Corcoran-Perry, 1991), unconditional empathic regard (Rogers 1984) and (a provocative definition): "it means what you want it to mean" (Corsini, 1984, p.2).

Healing, a construct with many definitions (Newman, 1991), is recognized as being within the domain of psychotherapy (Raimy 1975, Corsini 1973, Gillet 2003). For Chinn (1988) healing is wholeness. For Watson (1985) it is a harmony dependent on self-awareness and self-acceptance. Stillness, as a component of healing (Epstein 1996, Roseman 2001, Wilbur 1986, Holy Bible) can be conceptualised as that which promotes a lifestyle open to possibilities based on the choice to be still, to handle daily stresses, to value life; to touch the core of one's being.

Other assumptions I bring regarding the phenomenon of interest and the methodology for this study include:

- Creative use of stillness is an essential element in holistic living
- Stillness influences the discovery and creation of meaning in life.
- Stillness can have a positive and/or negative influence on the psychotherapeutic relationship, and journey, of both client and therapist
- Stillness as embodied, expressed and symbolised in this dance work often suggests a linking with nature, and primitive/original energies. Through scenes depicted in movement: danced imagery, memories of nature experiences are triggered or recalled. Nature, a neutral object,

can elicit insight into the deeper meanings of life.

- Conjunct with this is acknowledgment that no doctor, no therapist, ever heals. The healing is not in the medicine/therapy but in the patient's body, in the *vis medicatrix naturae*, the recuperative or self-corrective energy of Nature (Lewis, p. 227).
- Stillness expressed in artwork, for example this choreography, enhances the possibility for audience to have a rich experience of stillness.
- Humans get caught in the rush of everyday life and can benefit from time spent in beholding and sympathetically experiencing stillness.
- Stillness is a complex event integral to human experience.

Finally: the stillness-movement continuum expressed by the body is not separate from the mental and cognitive processes.

We do not deal with bodies, nor with minds, or even mind/body units, but with persons, unitary persons who's mental and physical is utterly intertwined (Broom, 2003, pp. 63-66).

#### Pre-understandings around the notion of stillness within turbulence

The focus of this inquiry is to gain insight into a specific stillness: the phenomenon of stillness *within* movement. For a poetic expression sublime in its accuracy to this subject is T.S. Eliot's line "the still point of the turning world" (1972):

At the still-point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;  
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,  
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,  
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,  
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,  
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance....  
The inner freedom from the practical desire,  
The release from action and suffering, release from the inner  
And the outer compulsion, yet surrounded  
By a grace of sense, a white light lifted and moving  
- Burnt Norton (1935)

A theme expressed here is the moment of 'neither this nor that': the moment that is neither a coming towards, nor a departing from. It seems to me that Eliot is giving words to the experience of the peculiar stillness at the peak of the up-breath; the stillness that, variously

- Epstein (1996, p. 101) names 'equipoise'
- Donaldson (1977) tells us exists at 'the eye of the paradox'
- I identify to myself as 'hysteresis'

### *Equipoise*

Epstein links his 'equipoise' with Freud's notion of sublimation, where "inborn, instinctual cravings and impulses are sublimated... transformed into wisdom..." (1996, p. 79). He informs us that 'meditative equipoise' is achieved when the attention is turned towards conscious stillness:

Firmly grounded in awareness of breath and body...learning to surrender to the ebb and flow of breath, a stilling into one's body... stilling the mind... then approaching some sense of open space... surrendering to the flow (1996, pp. 145 & 146).

A fundamental principle of both my choreography and my psychotherapeutic practice is its construction around this idea. I am intentionally directing the attention towards the stillness within the choreography; the whirl of living; the inner tumult of soul - my goal to enable dancers and watchers alike to 'surrender to the flow'.

### *At the eye of the paradox*

In a world of deconstruction, where there exists:

No standard method for measuring and comparing within different games and paradigms, where thought is focused on heterogeneous language games, on the non-commensurable, the instabilities, the breaks and the conflicts (characterised by) the collapse of universal systems of meaning and meta-narratives (Kvale, S. 1996, p.21) -

there is for me, one constant that lies at the eye of this turbulent and paradoxical state of affairs. This 'constant,' to which stillness is an intrinsic factor, is the heart of my choreography, my psychotherapy practice and my life. It is my spirituality - which is also to say, my love and joy.

### *Hysteresis*

The moment of 'neither this nor that': the moment which is neither a coming towards nor a departing from - is the moment of hysteresis. The stillness of this 'moment between' fascinates me. It is the moment of interchange between the movement that goes up - then down, in - then out, widens - then narrows, tightens - then releases, curves - then straightens... (the variations are limitless); in this moment is the time/or no-time when consciousness is occupied with neither coming nor going, haste, urgency or imposition, but simply: being. Is. This moment, this hysteresis within the turbulence - does not come about by virtue of disconnection with the 'before' or the 'after'. Epitomising this, the choreography makes no announcement of and scarcely any preparation for stillness - it happens; it simply is, is not extra to, but is part of the dance. It echoes Heraclitus' notion that all things change, yet nothing ever becomes disconnected (Koch, 1994). The stillness is not closed and constant, for change occurs even in the time of stillness, and this same stillness, this still point, exists within a cosmic holding together of constant change. Strangely, as soon as we observe; recognise; become aware of this moment - it is passed, and yet, in the same moment of consciousness, in the same moment as we feel and embody, we are also wholly present - wholly attending - wholly here. (I wonder if such a conscious stillness may, after a time, become so embodied that it can then be, in the autonomic sense, unconscious)?

This is not to be confused with a stillness which is unconscious and which people rename as 'boredom', 'nothing to do.' I contend that much of the psychological symptomatology named 'loss of self-respect', 'depression' or even 'suicidal' is nothing other than a stillness perceived as a reality antagonistic and / or meaningless.

### *Stillness, looking, and phenomenology*

What after all *do* we see when we look, and when we look at this dance? I suggest that the act of looking is *not* seeing what shows up as many and diverse appearances but is rather, a selecting of an interpretation from a mind full of previously learned names and labels. What is 'out there' appearing on the stage is in a different phenomenal domain of existence from the categories of thinking or perceiving by which we seek to distinguish it. These two domains can be distinguished but not exchanged one for the other.

In the moment of seeing, as with a mirage, the category of the interpretation is provisional only -

it is provisional in that moment and in that situation. Each moment is an entirely new existence and there is no substance or duration to things. Thus the provisional interpretation of one moment of the dance - *'the movement looked crazy'* or *'like crazy people'* - is overtaken by the altered perspective in the next moment and becomes mirage, and the previous momentary existence of craziness takes on the next provisional label, mirage or illusion - and so the process continues on.

For the watcher - who is also the potential psychotherapy client - could this experience, so fluid and constantly changing, be destabilising? Or does it open the way for the gamut of interpretations and meanings brought by the client; giving space, opportunity, permission, invitation! - for creative imagination to occur?

Hannah Arendt states "appearance has the double function of concealing some interior and revealing some surface" (Arendt, 1978, p. 37). In movement, or in the more complex dance, it is the interior configurations and arrangements (of bones and muscles and fibres and fluids) that determine the exterior, and if we were solely sensate beings then indeed 'appearances' would seem to be all that there was. But since we also have thinking and evaluating and interpreting; the "eternal habit of examining whatever happens to come to pass or to attract attention" (Arendt, 1978, p. 37) - then we also have post-mortem-ing and the endless process of dissecting in language that which happened or showed itself (Graveson, 2003, p.1). Further, the research of this thesis shows that the bodily and embodied experience is also a 'knowing': albeit not in the language of words it is yet, to those who experience this, no less real / felt / tangible. The phenomenon of watching then, is not a matter of simply seeing.

I note that there are different kinds of stillness, which differentiation I make on the basis of my thinking, perceiving and experiencing. Then, as stated above, my perceptions and experiences are interpreted - built on the interpretations I have been making since I first discovered language, and evaluated - based upon the realisation that by naming something I gave it ontological dimension and axiological qualification. Things I qualified as 'good' I pursued; those I classified as 'bad' I mostly didn't. This would be the case until some shift in my experience caused me to change my perception, then the entire qualification or axiological estimation would be examined, post-mortemed, and (probably) altered. It seems clear then that what I see; what the watcher/client sees - matters.

In her paper, *Visual Essentialism*, Mieke Bal, proclaims that looking and interpreting are “joined at the hip” (1996). Her contention is that ‘the act of looking is impure’ - and with this I agree. All of the watchers see the choreography, but I can never assume that what they see will be the same for them all. Claims for the purity of vision and the common assumption that if you *can actually see it you can rely on it* are superficial and misleading, for, as became manifestly apparent in the work of this thesis:

Seeing owes as much to the mind, and to all the organs of sense of the viewer, as it does to the eyes (Bal, 1996).

Then, there is the *communicating* of the interpretations of the distinctions of the appearances that were seen. Quite apart from the difficulty of putting into words what is portrayed in dimensions of body and artistry and movement and imagination, is the question of how can what these participants see and what they feel about it be reduced to words? I suggest there is a mighty danger that the living acts of moving, and being still, could be, in this analysed, disinfected, categorised world - lost, for “man lies buried in the many sub-compartments of research” (Neumann, 1981, p. 12). My cry is this - could there not be a way in which we can let go of the need for a verbal definition so that ‘knowing with my bones’, knowing with my blood and sinews honed through hours and years of discipline and devotion, would be accepted as a legitimate way of knowing?

I suggest that ways of knowing and the healing potential *can* be known in an alternative, non-verbal way of wordless recognition:

It is as if awareness would light up in her. The large invisible translucent space opens up in front of her, shapeless, billowy - and the lifting of an arm, changing and shaping it...a leap into the centre: a fast turn: the walls seem to give way. She drops her arms. She stands still again and gazes at the empty space, the dancer’s kingdom (Wigman, 1973).

Here, in language of metaphor, are all the elements of psychotherapeutic healing... awareness, a large space opening up, changing, and shaping, walls giving way, stillness, gazing out, being in ‘your kingdom.’

## Placing dance in the psychotherapeutic arena

The purpose of this study is to explore the phenomenon of stillness and its ontological significance; in particular the stillness that occurs within movement - the equipoise - the still point of the turning world. My goal thereafter is to explicate this state and to ponder the application and efficacy of this method for psychotherapy.

In order to talk about such things as effect and efficacy I must first say something about dance psychotherapy. Where, in the gamut of psychotherapies on offer, does dance psychotherapy lie? Traditional psychotherapy evolved through the psychoanalytic work of Freud (Brenman-Gibson, 1983). Despite that Freud said that the first ego was the body ego (Freud, 1964) increasingly the practice of psychotherapy has instead focused on the relationship between cognitive processes and emotions; employing the notion of a hierarchy with the head (cognitive processes) most important, then emotions, and finally the body. The body deserved little attention since:

From classical antiquity, the body has been conceptualised as either antithetical to the objectives of the soul, the primary obstacle in man's pursuit of self-realisation, or merely 'inferior' to the soul (Geller, 1978,p.350).

Dance therapy is not traditional psychotherapy, yet dance has been a traditional method of psychological and spiritual expression, healing and therapy since the beginning of time. In my imagining it is when "the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Holy Bible, Genesis 1:2) that creativity, healing and dance entered the world.

The leap from Genesis to psychotherapy as we know it today, seems great, but when we remember that the root-word of psychotherapy, *therapeuo*, (Greek) means 'to attend', and that God the Creator (unconstrained by religious definitions and classifications) was, without doubt, attending to his work, and that creation - the configuring of space and particles and moons and molluscs - is the most incredibly choreographed dance of all, then it seems to me a connection not impossible. To dance is, afterall, to attend - with exquisite and keenest mindfulness - to the vision one is endeavouring to fulfil; to the 'instrument' that does the fulfilling, that is oneself; to the other, be that fellow-dancer or audience; and to that which is *not* the dance but frames it, impinges upon it, and, ultimately, is the essence from within which the dance is born - I refer to the still point.

In the psychotherapy world, psychotherapeutic lip service is paid when it comes to this methodology and its methods: 'Oh yes! Movement is good. Oh for sure, stillness is important.' However, by virtue of its dis-similarity with recognised and known modes of treatment, this form is more often dismissed for being too 'different', 'too unusual', 'too alternative', 'too radical'. The dissimilarity arises in that while using dance in therapy does not mean any of the traditional fundamental therapeutic tenets: autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice, and methodologies: attending, listening, matching, pacing, reflecting, are not just as fully present, yet using dance *is* something different. Talking and listening do take place; they are vitally important - yet the customary sitting-and-talking-and-listening format does not occur. Different rituals apply... entering the *studio* (as opposed to a clinic); warming-up the *body*; sequences that demand *moving the body*... Ritual is inherent in the *strangeness* of this; this environment; this activity; this *dis-comfort*. It all becomes a kind-of Rite of Passage, pitching the client *out* of the comfort zone. The client, willingly, participates in:

The function of the ritual: pitching you out, not wrapping you back where you have been all the time (Campbell, 1988, p.84).

In my therapy practise I seek what could be called a 'holistic engagement' with my client. As well as listening and talking I am noticing the body: noticing all its vagaries and symptoms, gestures and tremors, softenesses and tensions. In a session, as well as calling upon the intellectual, cognitive faculties I allow time and space for engagement with the primacy of the body and the immediacy of its movement. I ask my clients - (as I have asked the participants in this thesis) - their experience with lived time, lived body, lived space - the thing itself - so that in therapy, as with this thesis, I may "study phenomena as they are consciously experienced" (Beck, 1994, p.510). I look for the meaning of, and the meaning behind the clients,' the dancers' and watchers' experiences so that I may glimpse that which "for the most part does not show itself at all" (Heidegger 1927/1962, p.59).

Meaning is so elusive! My experience with clients is that time and again the cry erupts, "yes, but what does it *mean*"?

Heidegger states that meaning will be found "within the horizon of average everydayness" (1995, p.94). My choreography is filled with metaphor and symbol but it tells the story of

everyday. My challenge, therapeutic and artistic, is to show through the medium of this dance performance the human situation in which meaning - and healing - may be found. My great challenge is that for each dancer; watcher; every person who dances or watches - meaning and healing may be found.

James Hillman said:

The aim of therapy is the development of a sense of soul, the middle ground of psychic realities, and the method of therapy is the cultivation of imagination (1983, p.12).

If the aim of therapy is...

the development of a sense of soul,

the middle ground of psychic realities

and the cultivation of imagination -

then dance psychotherapy, I suggest, may meet the criteria. Perhaps because the physical and physiological mechanics of executing movement are wordless, the language of metaphor and imagination arises as supremely vital to dance psychotherapy. I suggest the body and its dance are vehicles of the soul's expression, and the metaphorical, imaginative, symbolic imagery that arises in movement is expression of the soul. And if 'the spiritual experience' is the nexus of related feelings and insights then dance is one way in which the relationship between these feelings and the body can be embodied - *felt* - and demonstrated. What I endeavour to capture in this choreography is some distillation of the greatness suggested by the phrases '*the Great Dance*', and '*the Dance of Life*'.

Symbolically suggested by these phrases is, what is for me the heart of my dance and psychotherapy work: spirituality, love and joy. 'Spirituality' is a word pregnant with definitions and interpretations as diverse as each person alive. We each have a spirituality unique to ourselves, whether we be Christian or atheist, Buddhist or channeler - we each have a unique relationship with the God of our understanding, a unique *raison d'être* for living. This we hold in the intimacy of our own souls, 'knowing' it in a language beyond words.

Dance is a language beyond words, expressing that for which we have no words, or, by being expressed in this other 'language,' renders it (I suggest) somehow more poignant, more

meaningful, perhaps deeper and more satisfying. I believe it possible to have insights without words. Awareness of them is not known to my brain through words but known only to my soul in a wordless sense - in darkness, it may be. In dance, in this 'language beyond words', I have always done much of my talking, wondering, celebrating, grieving, yearning, praying, experiencing God. And since the psychotherapy we each do is a reflection of the psychotherapist, sooner or later expressing 'God' becomes part of the journey I and my clients do - or dance - together.

(And perhaps this is all that we do. Perhaps this is all of what we all do) ~

### Psychotherapeutic application

#### *Relationship*

Psychotherapy is, essentially, the relationship: see Buber (1923), Perls (1944), Fairburn (1950), Rogers (1951), Sullivan (1953), Fromm (1957), Kelly (1960), Berne (1961), Winnicott (1965), Guntrip (1971), Kohut (1971), Surrey (1985), Miller (1986), Bergman (1991), Stern (1995), Redfield (1995) and Erskine (1998)...

Within the still point is the single most consistent concept identified: that of relationship (Erskine, 1998).

This statement is hugely relevant to the work of this thesis. In any inquiry about stillness within movement and in any choreography exploring this theme, the domain of relationship is central. Stillness is an inherent quality or dimension of relationship - and relationship is profoundly shaped by stillness.

Within the notion of the still point is found the idea of relief and release; cessation of the obsessive drive of modern society to develop, upgrade, achieve, get going, get ahead, be ever moving onwards. Such charged and active steps certainly require relationship – and relationship of highest calibre if the protagonist is to reach his or her goal. The notion of stillness discussed in this thesis does not *require* relationship, for this stillness can be experienced in a condition of utter aloneness. I believe, in the alone condition, this stillness can have enormous healing and transformational power. In the realm of stillness and psychotherapy however, relationship is integral. Here, the stillness is not about achieving - getting ahead - moving on, it is about a deep

empathic attunement of relationship-with-oneself-in-relationship-with-the-other. I believe this is one manifestation of the “sense of soul” which is, as Hillman says, (1983, p. 12) “the aim of psychotherapy”. I suggest one understanding of this ‘sense of soul’ is to do with relationship with the ‘I’ that has found, in the midst of all commotion, the sense of inner stillness that enables one to simply *be* - without doing anything. I believe psychotherapy can facilitate the journey to inner stillness. (Whilst I also ask myself is it not simply and ultimately a gift of grace, and therefore a gift of God)?

In the work of this thesis, the participants and I are in relationship. Typically in a therapeutic relationship trust, empathy, unconditional empathic regard and a mutually-agreed contract are the principal relationship components (Rogers, 1951). While in the instance of this thesis the participants - dancers and watchers - have not entered the process for the purposes of receiving psychotherapy - they have not come with outstanding issues and they recognise this was not traditional psychotherapy practice, yet the fundamental relationship components are the same. The relationship between the participants and myself was collaboratively creative: it was also a semblance of the therapist-client relationship. It was a relationship declared and agreed upon (Methods, Chapter 4, p.46); dancers and watchers alike at first curious then increasingly invested in the creation and development of a project so singular, and so dependant on relationship. While what we do is quite other to the traditional and known practice of sitting, talking and listening, we are yet engaging in an experience that I claim is a psychotherapeutic experience. At the centre of this experience, as we undertake the pilgrimage of mutual witnessing into states of movement and stillness, what occurs and grows between us - choreographer and the performers, performers with each other, performers and their audience, choreographer and the audience - is truly dynamic relationship. The choreographer, dancers and audience are drawn together as each is called to:

Identify with this abstracted version their own intimate experience,  
that...by following the emotional development of the dance viewers gain  
new insights into the organisation of their own emotional life, renewing an  
awareness of their feelings and affirming their connection with the human  
community (Foster, 1986, p.54).

In psychotherapeutic terminology this is called ‘likeness’ or ‘identification’ and is a process recognised as being central to the greater processes of realisation, catharsis, self-knowing, self-acceptance, self-realisation, and, ultimately - forgiveness and love (Kohut 1971, Merton 1958).

### *Identification*

In my experience as a psychotherapist, along with the big existential questions ‘why’? and ‘what does it all mean’? - a principal reason clients seek psychotherapy is because they feel driven: caught in a world of chaos; caught in the waste and void; caught in the imperative to satisfy “the inner and outer compulsion” (Eliot, 1935); searching for a way in which they can be – as they understand it - still. Through the story and journey of this dance, my intention is that a life-rhythm in harmony with the ebb and flow, with the great flux of energies is shown and modelled. The therapeutic intention is that the participants / and the wider, greater audience travel ‘with’ or identify with the dancers through the progression of the stages of the dance. It is both intention and invitation. The goal is that as they travel through the tumult, the struggle, the intimacy, the exaltation, to the stillness undergirding the whole - they catch a glimpse of this life-rhythm in harmony. More: that they not only catch a glimpse but will be refreshed, encouraged, informed and inspired to know that as this story is - along with the performers - theirs, so too is, or can be - the stillness. Then I will learn whether I have created an experience of dancing and watching that is therapeutic, and whether I (choreographer, dancer, psychotherapist) may have truly and humbly had a hand in facilitating for my ‘clients’ a way towards equilibrium and wholeness.

### *Surrender*

Through witnessing my own and others’ experiences I discover certain conditions that facilitate the passage of “release from the inner and outer compulsion” (Eliot, 1935); of becoming conscious of and then being *in* “the grace of sense, the white light lifted and moving” (Eliot, 1935); of heightened awareness of the stillness experience. What are those conditions? Are they conditions that can be addressed in the practice of psychotherapy?

Epstein’s prescription for psychotherapeutic practice, to “still the mind and surrender...leading to a stilling of one’s body” (1996, pp. 145 & 146) is extraordinary in its accuracy and alignment with what occurs for the dancer as she prepares to dance, and as she dances. (Without this preparation and succession the dance becomes nothing more than a parade of essentially meaningless steps and articulations). The idea described by Epstein is echoed in the work of Winnicott (1958), Milner (1957) and Bion (1965, 1970, 1991), who speak of the ‘void and formless infinite’ which leads to openness, and of attitude without memory, expectation, desire or understanding.

These writers also explore madness - such as I express in the first movement of the dance - noting that its aspects are both deadening *and* enlivening, and that in the end - as modelled in the passage of the dance - the 'cure', in fact, the *only* possible response, is surrender and a stilling of one's body.

All my life I have been imprisoned, frustrated, dogged by  
common sense, reason, memories, desires and - greatest bugbear of all -  
understanding and being understood. This is my attempt to express my  
rebellion, to say 'Good-bye' to all that...I cannot claim to have succeeded.  
All these will, I fear, be seen to have left their traces...hidden within these  
words; even sanity, like 'cheerfulness', will creep in. Wishing you all a  
Happy Lunacy and a Relativistic Fission (Bion, 1991, p. 578).

The resolution of partial horror, the enchainment of past and future  
Woven in the weakness of the changing body... which flesh cannot  
endure... and answering light to light, and is silent,  
the light is still  
At the still point of the turning world (Eliot, Burnt Norton, 1935).

The choreography I have made is my interpretation of the sequences described by Epstein, Bion and Eliot. I am reminded of Heidegger's words, that "our existence is fundamentally poetic" (1949, p. 283) - and that poetry can lead us to the place where Being reveals itself (Crotty, 1998, p.99). Guiding principles then, as I create and work are - 'where is the poetry revealed'? 'What must I do, and what must I be, and what shall I present to you the audience/clients, to ensure that poetry and vision never leave'?

My intention is to show in *visible* form this that can be appropriated for one's own. My psychotherapy experience affirms that something that has become 'true' and 'real' in a personal, intimate way supports the movement of release, and entering grace.

I believe neither dance nor stillness - albeit they may have been rarely experienced - are conditions to be feared or shunned. Dance and stillness are rather when we join with the universe in a kind of cosmic dance and a cosmic hysteresis. To allow oneself the life-space to be still; to simply *be* in this stillness - is to rest in the knowing that our personal dance is not disconnected from the dance of the spheres and that the universe holds the tension for us. I suggest that this can be a moment of utter, complete be-ing - and it holds the potential for great healing.

## Concluding statement

The thrust of our western life is to fill every moment with doing and producing, characterised by frenetic rootlessness and drivenness to get motivated, get moving, get noticed, get accepted, get ahead, get. It is not only psychotherapy clients who are beset with imperatives to 'get on'! 'Take action'! From people everywhere, the plea is heard: "I have too much to do"! "I don't have time"! It is a world of impatient pressure to move ahead - a world wherein we feel driven to do what must! should! and can't wait! to be done, and wherein the outcome of such pressure seems to be people tormented with an inner commotion matching their outer life (Hoffart, 2001; [http://www.abc.net.au/dimensions/dimensions\\_health/Transcripts/s798059.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/dimensions/dimensions_health/Transcripts/s798059.htm)).

But leave me alone, leave me alone, to myself!  
And then, in the room, whose is the presence  
That makes the air so still and lovely to me?  
(D.H. Lawrence, *There are no Gods*, 1972).

The actuality of 'air still and lovely' seems impossible as we turn on radios and televisions, install speakers next to the computer, sheathe our urban lives in muzak and advertising. We use soundwaves to fill the stillness of the air and as we rush to fulfil the imperatives urged upon us by the advertisements, occasions for the air to be 'still and lovely' grow ever less. Likewise in the present-day art of dance-making, there is a similar compulsion towards continuous movement. The insistent beat is reflected in arms and legs that spiral, twist and ricochet up and down, over and through - but do not pause, and the moment of stillness never occurs.

So here in this choreography I present stillness: inherent in and emerging out of the choreography - demonstrated in embodied, physicalised form - shared through the vessel of the performance - given.

# Chapter Three

## Engaging with the literature

In this chapter I introduce the thoughts and musings of other seekers of the quintessence of stillness. I link these writings with my core themes of how stillness amidst turbulence is embodied and demonstrated in the dance, and how this promotes psychotherapeutic healing.

### Literature from the mystics

The writings of the Christian mystics are not strange to me since that is essentially where I am located in terms of my personal history, culture, belief and preference. Christocentric spiritual and mystical literature is a principal source of information on the subject of stillness within the dance. In this literature the dance refers to the passage and rhythm of life itself as well as to specific movements constituting a dance form.

### *Stillness as source*

In the Holy Bible we are enjoined to “rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:4). In the original Aramaic language of the Bible the words for ‘rejoice’ and ‘dance’ are the same, so it could as well be said ‘dance in the Lord always’. We are similarly enjoined to “pray without ceasing” (I Thessalonians 5:17). It would seem the Godly brief then, is rejoice/dance/pray. It is my personal experience that my prayer and my dance are one and the same and that these two arise in and from some profound stillness that seems to undergird all. Could this be also the, or a source of the choreography? John of the Cross (1542 to 1591) said “My house being all still - I went forth.” (Ascent of Mount Carmel, Stanza 67). For this mystic his movement, going forth, arose from stillness. World-renowned dancer-choreographers (Balanchine, Hay, Graham, Cunningham, Evans, to name a few), have declared similarly, affirming the place of prayer and stillness in the creation of their work. (Foster, 1986, p.42; Evans, 2003). I am not alone in this creative endeavour.

As a choreographer I attest to this experience and in discussion with other choreographers I learn this is their experience as well. Before and as we create, we must be still. It is as if for the creative impulse to stir, for the essence of the something new to birth, we are required to be still.

Attentive, poised for action - yet still. For C.S. Lewis, the song that gave birth to the greatest 'dance' of all - Creation - arose from the deepest stillness, "the nothing at all" (1955, pp. 93-106). It is as if I (and other choreographers) choreograph from the stillness of the nothing.

### *Perseverance*

In the process of the creation of my own work there seems to be a core element without which the creative magic, from the prayer and stillness, could not emerge. Long years of association with creative artistes assure me that we share our observance of this core element. It is a quality linked to prayer and stillness - it is perseverance. This is a characteristic innate to the life of the dancer-choreographer, the athlete, the mystic, and surely if not employed by most of the human race at one time or another, certainly the practice of it would not go amiss. The perseverance to continue the observance of certain rituals the mystic has adopted as being most concordant with his or her faith, and which the artist has learned will sustain his or her vision, is neither quickly nor easily achieved (Lawrence, 1981, Wilkinson, 1986, Moore, 1992). For the dancer, the situation is no different: perseverance is the heart of the journey towards excellence. This is my personal truth, as well as that of every dancer without exception, with whom I have been associated over the past 40 years.

How does this perseverance arise? From whence? What sustains it?

We are urged to rejoice/dance and pray "always" and "without ceasing". But from where in the "feeble frame" (Psalm 103, v. 14) are we to find the resources of perseverance and courage needed for this observance? What is the link between all these: rejoicing, dancing, praying, and the perseverance and courage to do them unceasingly? My personal experience is that the link between them is *stillness* - that my prayer, my dance, and the courage and perseverance to do them arise together from the still point within me.

I am not alone. It would seem that this same experience of deep inner stillness giving rise to prayerfulness, dance and, in her case, music, and perseverance and courage to observe the practices in 'an unceasing manner' was also true for the 12thC mystic and abbess, Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179). She speaks of:

The wheel which is the dance of the spheres, which is the whole, not consumed... everlasting, without either beginning or end, undivided and timeless and within it, the stillness within the wheel. (1987, p. 26).

In the dance, as our bodies wheel around a central axis, whether we move as a group around the group axis, or as individuals around our own, we join with the dance of the spheres in a timeless turning around the centre. As we turn we are, at that central point, and at the same time, quite still. Dancers speak of ‘holding at the centre’ and ‘being still at the centre.’ This then enables the rest of the body to go free. I do not mean ‘free’ in the sense of physically undisciplined abandonment - although that has its place on occasions; I refer rather to a unique freedom that emerges when certain boundaries and stillnesses are chosen, then maintained through choice and consciousness. The dancers involved in this thesis work experienced this sense of stillness within the wheel. I discovered this through working so intensely with myself and them through the process of creating the work. It is the intention here that in terms of psychotherapeutic application, the watchers see and ‘know’ it, empathically, too.

### *Stillness as symbol*

It would seem then that *from* the stillness comes a process of thought + action = the choreography. The dance presented here is choreographed: it is shaped and crafted, positions and sequences pre-meditated, dwelt upon, tried out, retained, tossed, composed, conjectured, viewed, discussed, chosen - until the traditional distinctions between thought and action, subject and object, artist and watcher are blurred. Where does one stop and the other begin? With my writing I aim to give neither reductive explanation, nor an inevitably doomed attempt to recreate the transient meaning of the dance. Instead I suggest the dance and the writing, together, are a duet of symbols: the written and the kinetic. This thesis then gestures towards an interdisciplinary domain where writing and dancing sign in the direction of one another.

The danced thought - the embodied writing - writing and dancing signifying one another: we are now in the domain of the symbol.

Robin Grove, dance researcher and writer based in Melbourne asks, “Let us look at what dancing really is like”:

When the dancer enters a space he reaches outwards, projecting, transmitting, radiating the aura of his limbs. The way the arm rests on air, the tension between hand and neck, all the three-dimensionality of his movement sets up its interrelationship with the viewers (Grove, 2003).

The great challenge is to make the viewers *see*. That challenge is met, in my opinion, not by hypothesising about one's audience and trying to estimate - weeks, months, before they've even arrived in the theatre - what 'they' might like, but rather by concentrating on the material that actually is within one's grasp: namely, the dance-quality and the symbolism with which the movement is invested. Dance is one of the very few art forms made from our own bodies. Most art works *indirectly*, through paint, clay, stringed instruments, rather than our immediate physical selves. (Singing is an exception, so is sex). The essential thing for the dancer is to fill that moment of dance, that symbolic statement with as much bodily presence as possible. We *embody* the symbolism - we make the symbolic extant.

In this thesis work, the symbolic - whether that be our bodies or the shapes and sequences made by them, does not have to be spectacular, it need not be beautiful; what has to be done and seen is the dance that carries the symbol. A goal of this dance work is that it embody the words of British psychoanalyst Marion Milner: that the symbolic expression is a kind of "ebullient overflow, expressive of the orgasmic joy of creative experiencing" (1957, 1987). Milner holds that in mystical and creative states one finds elements of joy, union, ecstasy, absorption, loss of self-consciousness, and loss of sense of time, and that both states undo the "over-fixed separation between self and other caused by the tyranny of the conscious mind" (Raab, 2004). I recognise this place where the over-fixed separation is undone - it is the timeless suspension, the equipoise that occurs between movements. Milner holds that creative and symbolic experiencing has many phases: agonising, depressive, dead, empty, thrilling, high, emptied - and still (1987). It allows a person to attain the stillness wherein the state of paradox, affirming I and not-I, self and no-self may be contained, and this says Raab (2004), is psychologically beneficial.

Thomas Merton (1915 - 1968) speaks of our world known through symbols and the meaning we give to them - reminiscent of the interpretivist symbolic interactionism of social psychologist George Mead (Crotty, 1998, p. 72). Merton says that in dealing with symbolism one enters an area where "reflection, synthesis, and contemplation are more important than investigation, analysis, and science" (Merton, 1958) for:

One cannot comprehend a symbol unless one is able to awaken, out of the stillness within one's own being, the spiritual resonances which respond to the symbol not only as sign, but as 'sacrament' and 'presence' (p. 48).

Merton goes on to say that the symbol contains in itself that which makes us aware of the inner meaning of life; of reality itself - he says a true symbol points to “the stillness at the heart of all being” (1958, p. 48).

I do not think that all created works are authentic emanations from the stillness at the heart of all being. I do suggest that in conditions of humility, receptivity, of resonance with the tenet “the essence of our existence is the passion to create” (Moreno, 1959), that the symbolic language of dance can arise from nowhere *other* than the stillness deep in the dancer’s being. I believe it is possible that the dance - being also symbol, may contain in its own way, the stillness at the heart of all being.

### Stillness and neurophysiology

It is my wish that dancers, watchers, and the greater audience will comprehend the symbolism of this work - not solely by virtue of what is written as explanation, and not solely by the resonance that echoes at a spiritual level, but by somatic experience as well. Neurophysiology suggests a real basis for this sympathetic kinaesthesia. It seems that, as neurons fire to make possible this or that movement in the performer, they are mirrored by similar neurones in the observer, activated so as to produce in the spectator a representation of the dance-actions being seen.

Studies suggest that the hippocampus and the amygdala serve to modulate emotions, and also connect to the higher cortical areas. This makes it probable that the amygdala and the hippocampus serve to coordinate the vast number of neural connections between the limbic system and the cerebral cortex and simultaneously act as mediating structures between these two. In this way, suggest the researchers, thoughts and experiences are transmitted from the cortex to the limbic system where they are given their emotional value, in turn allowing us to interpret our experiences and generate appropriate and sympathetic behavioural responses. (d’Aquili & Newburg, 1999, pp. 57, 58).

According to neuro-physiological research it seems possible then that the link between dancer, watcher, the symbolism that contains the deeper meaning, and the ultimate stillness within which they exist, may be a *wholly holistic* link: spiritual, emotional, mental, kinetic, physical, biological.

Consensus on this is found in the very thorough neuro-physiological research of Corodimas, Schulkin and Le Doux. They have found that a certain chemical; corticotropin-releasing factor (CRF) in the part of the hypothalamus that controls the release of the stress hormone ACTH from the pituitary gland is hugely stimulated at times of stress. This occurs to such increased levels that not only does it suggest that stress enhances certain learned responses, but also has the result of moving us into a mode of operation in which we act or 'do' with basic instinct and emotional purity rather than cognitive construction and predetermination. To coin a phrase: we go with the flow (Le Doux, 1996, p.247).

Choreographing a dance work is, without question, a highly-charged (stressful without negative connotation implied) activity. It is my experience that all throughout the choreographic process I feel a peculiar even terrible combination of concept, emptiness, choked, directionless, fear, hope, desperation and excitement altogether. What holds these together in me has nothing to do with mental cogitation or manipulation; it is a greater thing, a stillness. Then, as the movement erupts from the stillness, I am choreographing with basic instinct and emotional purity. I am 'going with the flow'. Then, inevitably and necessarily, comes the honing and refining process, and here again it appears inspiration, emotionality: the creativity of my soul - has a biologic nexus.

The direct thalamo-amygdala pathway in the brain allows us to respond to a stimulus... to act without thinking, without processing, without conscious evaluation and therefore from a place of no choice. This is powerful and immediate and when we save the child from the fire, jump to catch the ball before we even know its trajectory, create a perfect move - it can be heroic, even sublime. But when actions are dangerously impulsive, or repetitive and compulsive, then the stimulus that triggers these actions must re-routed to the slower path of the thalamus through the cortex to the amygdala, where it can be held, and considered. Then the information is available to be stored anew: in the hippocampal system - in the location of consciousness. (Le Doux, 1996).

So it would seem that while my creativity is in one apprehension a mystical emergence from the stillness, it is also a profoundly physical and biological act. Here is embodied creativity! Inspiration found in flesh.

Interestingly, Josef Breuer, friend and colleague of Sigmund Freud, who, with Freud, launched the psychoanalytic revolution in 1892 with their jointly written book, *Studies on Hysteria*, believed that:

Trauma and *any associated cortical excitation* exist in alternate, some might say aberrant consciousness to the ordinary everyday mode of consciousness; thus the memories of that time cannot be handled or integrated during the usual path of everyday experience (Yalom, 1992, p. 160 - italics mine).

My response to this quote is ‘Aha! Here is another voice endorsing the notion that the ‘cortical excitation’ of creative fire; artistic passion - call it what you will - *cannot* be contained in any everyday mode of expression. Rather it *must* be released into the work of art: the symphony or concerto, poem or haiku, painting or sculpture, drum circle, the dance...

### Stillness as the Unknown

The question enthralls me and sometimes torments me. Given that there appears to be some evidence for biological neurological linking between physical and mental/emotional; given that my own and my dancers’ experience unequivocally attests to it; given that mystical writings assert the same - is it, even so, possible to express, in the physicality of dance the ‘stillness at the heart of all being’? Certainly this is a concept outside of the realms of linguistic definition. In my opinion it defies definition altogether and can be truly approached only in a mystical or artistic sense.

For Meister Eckhart (1260 - 1326) God could not be known but release from desire, preceding relationship with the unknown God, was to found in the stillness. He said that movement forwards brings knowledge - but not God:

Nothing that knowledge can grasp or desire can want, is God – [here I interpret ‘grasping’ and ‘desire’ as movement] - but that where the pursuit is subsumed and knowledge and desire are still, there is darkness, and there, God shines (1994, p.185).

Eight centuries later, Mark Epstein, Buddhist psychotherapist, echoes Eckhart's words as he describes the journey to healing:

(It is) through sublimation - the fading away and extinction of craving;  
liberation and detachment from it (1996, p. 77);

Epstein talks about "the balance of meditative equipoise" (1996, p. 79): a state where inborn, instinctual cravings and impulses are sublimated, transformed into wisdom... and it is achieved when the attention is turned inward:

Firmly grounded in awareness of breath and body...learning to surrender to the ebb and flow of breath, a stilling into one's body... first still the mind... then approach some sense of open space and surrender to the flow (1996, pp. 145 & 146).

When I first read these words the uncanny connection and coherence between them and what actually happens as the dancer does his or her ritual of preparing to dance awed me. To dance, we require the same seamless flow between inspiration<sup>1</sup>, stillness<sup>2</sup> and surrender<sup>3</sup>. And then perhaps 'surrendering to the flow' *is* the stillness and 'approaching some sense of open space' is the dance - ?

My personal experience with the question that torments and enthralls me is this: that for healing and wholeness, to glimpse the 'stillness at the heart of all being' I do indeed - dance. I dance everything: the grasping *and* desire *and* darkness *and* stillness. All these can be expressed in the dance. I reflect upon the moments when I (feel I) 'touch God' - these are the moments of stillness. And the stillness is also throughout, and in the spaces between. The dance and the stillness become indivisible.

What happens when in the midst of the turbulence, in the ebb and flow of the dance, the dancer becomes still; when she is conscious, self, other, and context-aware - still, in a way which truly is "neither arrest nor movement, neither fixity, neither from nor towards, neither ascent nor decline, but still, at the still point" -? (Eliot, 1935). What if, we, therapists (teachers, parents, friends) could guide our clients into, or towards this experience? Teilhard de Chardin says we would

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<sup>1</sup> Centering ourselves in awareness of breath and body

<sup>2</sup> approaching the sense of open space

<sup>3</sup> - to the flow

perceive the divine:

Awakening from the dream; the world, this palpable world... we stand still,  
for this is in truth a holy place, and we did not know it. Venite, adoremus  
(1968, p. 112).

Matthew Fox similarly uses Biblical reference (John 4: 6-29) to speak about stillness that awakes  
in us the energy of creativity:

The suspended moment at the well, at the source of being, of images, of  
creativity...That power from which the dance...comes, is silence, and  
stillness (1988, p. 60).

Thomas Moore links stillness, creativity and the psychological emotional spiritual darkness  
experienced by creative people when he speaks of:

The saturnine quality of stillness, within which apprehension,  
depression and brooding can be understood as a particularly  
creative time. (1992, p. 198).

I believe creators the world over - choreographers are part of this grouping - affirm the arduous  
process of psychological and physical introspection they (we) undergo in creating works -  
“indeed, introspective angst seems to be never far away” (Foster, 1986, p.215).

In my psychotherapy practice I *encourage* a client’s acceptance of and willingness to work with  
his or her introspective angst. If I am encouraging engagement with stillness I am ergo required  
to hold and support whatever shadow may accompany the stillness. I believe that stillness allows  
and holds the arduous process from spiritual source - through shadow - through impulse -  
through shadow - to movement. There is an ongoing search for media through which to express  
the organic progression from internal feeling to external form (Foster, 1986, p. 153). I suggest  
that in dance and conscious stillness this search may be satisfied. In my personal experience my  
dance is my prayer. I observe the experience of my clients and notice that from stillness their  
dance emerges, and that in the dance, in its movement and its stillness - psychological,  
emotional, spiritual hunger demands grow quiet and affect is met.

### Literature from the psychotherapists

We have to relearn how to once again dwell... how to find repose within our bodies... to regain a psychological reflection for the activity of 'soul-making' to take place (Bishop, 1990, p.87).

'Soul-making' is a concept that coheres well with the primary definition of the word psychotherapy. 'Psyche' - the soul and 'therapeuo' (Greek) - 'to attend' suggest that attending to the soul is surely the business of psychotherapy. The business of psychotherapy takes place through traditional psychotherapeutic methodologies as attending, listening, matching, pacing and reflecting and through fundamental ethical tenets as autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice (NZAP Code of Ethics). Dance movement therapy employs movement techniques such as sourcing creative energy, working with specific movement exercises, interpreting muscular, postural and movement expression, and through processing information, feelings and new understandings in words and expressive movement/and dance.

While these above-named activities or principles can be interpreted in a great many ways and every therapist will have their own unique way of manifesting these in their practice, the words suggest pro-active, 'doing', forwardly-directed processes.

Does the particular stillness that is the subject of this thesis have a place in the practice of psychotherapy?

Certainly holding the concept the 'still point in a turning world,' and practicing it, are key in shaping the dance and movement therapy work of my own practice.

Arnold Mindell, founder of Process Oriented Psychology, a therapy that takes especial notice of body symptoms, says that psychological healing can be realised through the dance and stillness of our own bodies. He describes a process:

The dreambody may be experienced through creative dance...experienced as a flow through the body: the earth vibrates, the air is electric, and a mysterious force seems to move one from inertia to life. (1982, p. 17).

Mindell argues that once this movement from inertia to life commences then all kinds of discomfort, distress and 'coming to the edge' will occur, (Mindell, 1984, pp. 175-197). Klaus Bergmann, Auckland Process Worker and student of Mindell's, commented at the Auckland Process group meeting in September 1996:

Bodily disturbance turns out to be the seed of a new process, bringing personal growth, expanded awareness and enriching experiences of life's mysterious ways.

All this, states Mindell, is none other than the story of creation itself, wherein God who creates moves out from, and back into stillness:

Nature is still, and cannot dance until (God) wills it...matter also dances; dancing, He sustains its phenomena. In the fullness of time, still dancing...He gives new rest. (Mindell, 1982, p. 18).

In my choreography I endeavour to show this process: a mysterious force moves the bodies from inertia to life, the disturbance and 'edge' are experienced, and, while still dancing, we find rest.

*But how is this possible?*

Epstein describes his methodology and the principles behind it. For Epstein, stillness is the Buddhist concept 'sunyata':

Sunyata is not hollow; it does not mean a vacuity... the teaching of sunyata is that it is possible to learn a new way to be with one's feelings. It is a method of holding thoughts, feelings and sensations in the balance of meditative equipoise (1996, p. 101).

The 'balance of meditative equipoise' I interpret as none other than the stillness that surrounds, permeates and holds the dance. What precedes the shift (choreographic or psychological) that results in a change of course is the stillness. It is the stillness that holds the moment in time wherein life becomes different:

A moment in time but not like a moment of time, A moment in time but time was made through that moment: for without meaning there is no time and that moment of time gave the meaning.

(Eliot, 1934, Choruses from the Rock, VII).

Knowing the significance of that moment in time; feeling balanced at the balance of equipoise - this surely is a desired position, even the goal sought for both client and therapist alike. Epstein describes the process through which he contends it can be achieved:

Turning the attention inward, grounding firmly in awareness of breath and body...learning to surrender to the ebb and flow of breath, stilling into one's body... stilling the mind... approaching some sense of open space - and surrendering to the flow (1996, pp. 145 & 146).

What is an obvious therapeutic strategy for centring and grounding the client, is as I have remarked (above) also *remarkably* alike to the process of the dancer as she prepares to dance. Epstein's words describe the seamless connection between stillness and dance: these words also describe the preparation *to* dance.

In this frame of mind-body consciousness, it does not seem difficult to find resonance with the words of Van Manen. He writes about silence from which "words begin" (1990, p. 8); or "emanate" (p. 13). He says that this which appears:

Ineffable within the context of one type of discourse may be expressible by means of another form of discourse: the language of poetry, music, the arts (1990, p. 114).

My experience both as dance performer and dance therapist is that something ineffable *is* expressed in the strange, poetic stillness from and within which my movement arises. What this is, is inexpressible in words. And in my work as a dancer and dance therapist, and through the choreography presented here, I seek to draw both dancer and watcher to that place of ineffability - to a place of poetic stillness; a place where "memories still and forgotten - turn to blood, to glance and *gesture*" (Rainer Maria Rilke, Mood, 1975, p. 94).

Child psychologist Marita Hoffart has written her thesis about the child's experience of solitude (2002). Marita's words can equally be applied to my study on stillness:

Solitude [Stillness] has been a concern of philosophers for a long time... Human beings have searched for meaning and struggled with the experience of being alone [still] and have found cognitive and affective ways to escape being alone [still]. Being alone [still] can be scary and can bring with it fears and anxiety; being alone [still] can also be a creatively maturing experience (p. 10).

## Literature from the world of dance

In the area of dance writing, not a lot has been written on the subject of stillness, since most of what is written is to do with execution and performance. The work of dance therapists and body workers however does include profound insight into the subject of stillness within movement.

Amy Kaplan, a Process Oriented psychotherapist says “You wait in the stillness, and watch the creative spirit of nature unfold” (1986, p. 73).

The idea of ‘waiting and watching’ parallels the writings I have included above. In my experience this notion *is* the stillness within the wheel, the moment at the well, the holy place, the dwelling, the new rest, the surrendering to the flow.

I find the notion reinforced by other dance therapists. Joan Chodorow, dance therapist and Jungian psychologist comments:

Movement is followed by a period of natural stillness and continuing inner attentiveness... sometimes the transformative experience simply cannot be expressed in words (1991, p. 196).

And Ruth Noble, UK dance therapist says:

Our embodiment in the material world and our struggle to manifest this creatively... is within body and mind, movement and stillness (Workshop Handout, Auckland, May, 1998).

Rudolf Laban (1879 - 1958), physicist, dancer and philosopher, perhaps the first 'movement psychotherapist', is one of the 'gospel' writers of dance. In Laban Movement Fundamentals terminology, Laban captures the essence of dance and stillness: it is that moment *caught!* - that moment which permits the next to be seen:

Movement is man's magic mirror, reflecting and creating the inner life in and by visible trace-forms, in turn also reflecting and creating the visible trace-forms in and by the inner life. The simplest visible element of this startling and paradoxical operation is the plate between the axial-stable and the surface-mobile bodily movements, or, in other words, the struggle between the binding power of a knot and the loosening power of an untwisting line with an intermediary lemniscate (1966).

My long association and many, many conversations with dancers, plus my personal experience of dance recalls me to Bergmann's bodily disturbance, Moore's saturnine brooding and Rilke's memories of blood. What *is* the dancer's experience of this struggle?

Eluned Summers-Bremner, Auckland University lecturer, dance theorist and dance practitioner, describes her experience:

Listening in the stillness to my dancing body speak results in a subversion of the specular economy in which I learned to separate myself... the listening leads to a new kind of watching, a sensual reciprocity borne of exchange between ourselves... in which I see my body dancing, it starts from where I am - still (1996, p.29).

But this "sensual reciprocity", organic, 'natural' though it may be, is not simple. Choreographers, myself included, seek and seek to chart the 'organic progression.' We find it has its own demands:

The organic progression from internal feeling to external form - in turn suggesting (always) the arduous process of psychological and physical introspection (Foster, 1986, p. 153).

My personal experience as a choreographer affirms the truth of these words. Furthermore I know that any such introspection, despite urgency, production pressure, even joyful excitement, can take place *only* in stillness. From the stillness alone am I then able to experience my body in the organic expressivity I seek; indeed, as the “luminous and fluid manifestation of the soul” (Duncan, p. 1928, p.51).

Long ago, in 1599, dancer and gymnast Archange Tuccaro discerned that the movement of the dance and the movement of the planets are intimately reflective of each other, and that these, in their respective ways, both spoke of the cosmic dance, cosmic unity, and overarching cosmic stillness that holds all things:

All these things, the retrograde motions and the diverse conjunctions of the sun and moon... could be known because they are exactly imitated and represented in the dance; inasmuch as the diverse dance movements are nothing but an imitation of the diverse movements of the heavens, and the return to one’s still place that is performed at the end of the dance is nothing other than the clear attempt to imitate the retrograde motion of the sun and moon... The passages in the dance where one foot is held still while the other moves: these are similar to the planets when they have achieved the full extent of their retrograde movement. The changes of direction in dancing and the new configurations one makes are nothing other than the spirits located in the heavens and the beautiful and diverse retreats to quietness and stillness that one executes are the same as conjunctions and oppositions of planets that occur almost every day among the heavenly bodies in their great celestial sphere (Tuccaro, 1599, in Foster, 1986, p.107).

Choreographer, dancer, psychotherapist; and always learning - I identify my own cry. My cry is to have just such perspective of the dance within the great celestial stillness, and to live with this expansiveness in my life.

#### Literature from diverse sources

In this paragraph I include just two quotations and one passage of poetry. These words are particularly pertinent to my work.

An especially beautiful parallel to Van Manen’s “poetizing of the world” (1984, p. 39) is found in a children’s parable, where, from silence and stillness, Aslan sings - and the world arises

(Lewis, 1955, pp. 93-100). This idea, of creation arising from stillness, is a most apt metaphor for the dance that arises from stillness, and for the shift that happens in therapy when the client, from depression and distress discerns within him or herself the ‘passion to create.’

Van Manen describes the process of reading and writing phenomenology:

Phenomenology tends to be silent as it speaks. It tends to implicate as it explicates. To read or write phenomenology requires that we be sensitively attentive to the silence around the words by means of which we attempt to disclose the deep meaning of our world (1990, p. 131).

Van Manen could be describing my own creative process, for the very same thing occurs, kinetically, in the creation of my choreography. I paraphrase his words:

‘Dance tends to be still as it moves. It tends to implicate as it explicates. To choreograph or watch dance requires that we be sensitively attentive to the stillness around the movements by which we attempt to disclose the deeply embodied experience of our world’.

Here is the notion that attentiveness, awareness (disclosure), mind-body experience, dance and stillness are linked and inextricably part of each other. I suggest this is a ground of and for powerful psychotherapy.

For the core theme of this thesis: the dance, stillness, and the something more that powerfully and indelibly touches the soul, T.S. Eliot captures, perhaps, the purest sense of all:

At the still-point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;  
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,  
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,  
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from  
nor towards,  
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,  
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance....

Burnt Norton (1935).

# Chapter Four

*Some may view my vision as 'vision by chaos.' They may be right. But out of chaos, God creates order (Hjalmarson, L. 2004, p.4).*

## Methodology and Methods

### Approach to Inquiry

The essence of a phenomenological-hermeneutic study is that it is an “attempt to study phenomena as they are consciously experienced” (Beck 1994, p.510). To those unfamiliar with the dancer-choreographer’s way of going about things - (and every dancer-choreographer is different as well) - the intended methodology of this thesis may indeed seem a vision by chaos. For how indeed, in this mostly wordless, mostly physical and emotional fashion, may the essence of stillness be communicated? Obviously I hold that it can. I seek moreover to uncover the meaning from the experience. I want to know if, in this work, the participants see; feel; have any sense at all - of the existence of stillness. I want to know what effect, if any, this experience of stillness has in their lives. I want to know if that effect is therapeutic and if it is transformative.

To this end I use an exploratory, descriptive phenomenological-hermeneutic-kinetic theoretical perspective and approach. I am guided by the work of Heidegger and Husserl, as interpreted by Van Manen (1984, 1990), Crotty (1998), Smythe & Spence (1999), and others. This approach is frame and chart for ‘choreographing’ the analysis and interpretation of data into the completed written work.

This same approach is used for the danced component. I use exploratory, descriptive choreography as I seek the meaning of the lived experience.... “The human world as we find it in all its variegated aspects” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 18). I am seeking to see / dance / reveal even that which “for the most part does not show itself at all” (Heidegger 1927/1962, p.59). My goal is to engage my audience / and readers with lived time, lived body, lived space - the ‘thing itself. In the danced aspect of this work, the essences of this topic, the ‘thing itself’ is shown in all its organic, visceral, sweaty realness.

As I study the dancers' and the watchers' experience of stillness within this choreography and this dance, I become aware of a deep realm of knowing in which is stored archetypal shapes and configurations. Dancing, looking at, and interpreting these enables understanding of what this choreography and dance means to each one.

A guiding principle for me in choosing methods is Gadamer's stand on 'openness:' that is, I wish to demonstrate that the experience contains an openness which is innately also a question (Gadamer, 1982, p. 325). For example, as I make this dance about this life experience I ask myself at the same time: 'what is my direction'? 'what is my purpose'? To neither of these do I have a closed, positivist kind of answer.

I have made other choreography that has been quite different. Then I told a specific story or demonstrated a narrative line that arrived at a clear conclusion with an obvious intention and an obvious message - a form more similar to that of traditional ballets. In this choreography however, I am 'sense-directed' (Gadamer, 1882, p.326), 'feeling' my way as together, I, the dancers, the watchers and the wider audience find our own stillness and our own meaning of that. Heidegger states that meaning will be found "within the horizon of average everydayness" (1995, p.94) and while in the predominant NZ culture of today dance is *not* part of 'everydayness', yet some sort of stillness experience, especially 'stillness in the midst of -' is surely known to all. Thus I present the human condition in the human journey - and endeavour to show how meaning and meaningfulness is found within this.

My research does not seek, nor is intended to result in certainty, consensus, objectivity or accuracy (Geanellos, 1998). In this dance I do not intend nor do I believe it possible to make meanings, realities or truths that are objective or absolute (as in the positivist paradigm). Nor do I intend a playful parodying of the darker side, as might appear in post-modernism (Anderson, 1996, p.11). I desire rather that qualities of empathy, conversation and enlightenment will be evident in the construction of the work (Crotty, 1998, p. 109), and ultimately: openness and poetry. I am inspired by Heidegger's words (1949, p. 283), that "our existence is fundamentally poetic" - and that poetry can lead us to the place where Being reveals itself (Crotty, 1998, p.99). Guiding questions for me then in creating this written/danced work are 'where is the poetry in my life and work'? and 'what must I do/be and present to you, the audience, to ensure that poetry and vision never leave'?

## Epistemology

Epistemologically my work is located within the constructionist paradigm. In holding that:

Meaningful reality is contingent upon human practices... constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context (Crotty, 1998, p. 42),

- I am declaring the visibility, including and especially the physical, kinetic visibility of myself and my participants, in the meaning-making processes of this work.

My work is intentional in that I am reaching into the experience (of stillness) and it is referential in that it is related to the subject, and conscious of it (Crotty, 1998, pp. 44 & 78). This process is identical as I the dancer: in my body I experience intimate kinaesthetic relationship with the essence of stillness, thus my concept and meaning is not separate from my living, physical, breathing, moving, existence as Dancer moving / Dancer-in-stillness (Lyotard, 1991, p. 65).

As per the Heideggerian view, I acknowledge that we come with our own pre-understandings of the subject matter, which informs our reading and viewing of it (van Manen, 1990, p. 47). I acknowledge that I come to this work with a meaning system bequeathed to me as a member of humanity, and (particularly) of the European, female, artistic, religious, educational and social milieu that is mine. While I might protest that my perception and experience of my subject as original, it is undeniable that I create my work out of pre-understandings, prejudices and points-of-view. None-the-less I wish to let the experience speak to me as if it were a 'primordial phenomenon' - an experience so direct that it comes to me and is with me before I start thinking about it or choreographing it (Crotty, 1998, p. 79). Knowing that I can put words and meanings to my assumptions only because I *do* pre-understand (Van Manen, 1990, p. 47) I yet challenge myself to look newly, to 'know (the place) for the first time' (Eliot, 1935).

### An ontological question

How can I, my dancers, my audience - *know* the experience of being still?

To know, knowing how we know - is traditionally elusive in our Western culture. We are geared for action, not for reflection. In holding to the notion that it is 'forbidden to know without knowing' we end up with a personal life that is blind to itself (Maturana and Varela, 1998, p. 24). Maturana and Varela suggest however, that "all doing is knowing, and all knowing is doing" (1987, p. 27) - in claiming this tenet I say this, that my knowing arises through *doing* dancing, *doing* psychotherapy; *doing* everything else that constitutes the activities of my life. Since ontologically, my knowing is within the context of my being-in-the-world and I perceive my existence as a radical inter-dependence of subject and world (Crotty, 1998, p. 45), then movement - my personal kinetic language, my kinaesthesia - is *ground* to my knowing. It is as though I speak in two languages: a primary language of kinesis (Gk.: motion) and a secondary of words. I have an idea. It occurs to me in words but I *know* it through moving my body. My knowing deepens as, flowing from the initial movement phrase, I follow the movement path and its dynamic. Then my knowing deepens again as in words, I reflect upon and dialogue about what has happened. Indeed, my understanding arises as I find:

In the particular the spirit of the whole, and comprehend the particular through the whole... for both are posited with and through each other (Ast, 1990, p.43).

## Theoretical perspective

### *Phenomenology as Philosophy and Methodology*

Phenomenology is both a methodology and a philosophy. Studying the essential structures of experience is a philosophical pursuit. Rethinking and rewriting; choreographing and re-choreographing the movement phrase - each time a reinterpreting of what had been earlier interpreted; each time a refining of thought regards the epistemological position, a honing and restating of the ontological premises in which the experience was embedded - all these come under the umbrella of philosophy. Since the early 19th century philosophical phenomenology has been concerned with the everyday world of ordinary people and with their first-hand lived experience (Ray, 1990). At that time the positivist explanation of reality was the dominant philosophical attitude and Husserl (1858 – 1938) the founder and most prominent exponent of phenomenology (Misiak, 1961), disputed this. He suggested that reality was knowable through the lived experience.

A key question for Husserl was whether two people could know the world in the same way (Natanson, 1973, Ray, 1989). With regards to this thesis, this is a key question. Four dancers dance the choreography. The teaching method and the rehearsal period have been the same for each dancer. Yet their perception of and reception to the material is unique and their performance of it equally so. While body-type has some bearing here, more so has each dancer's unique interpretation of choreography. The interpretation of the phenomenon in question then (stillness within movement) - the conceptual, academic, kinetic, experiential interpretation, is:

The study of the life-world, the world as we immediately experience it pre-reflectively rather than as we conceptualise, categorise, or reflect on it  
(Van Manen, 1990, p. 9).

Certainly stillness is first experienced pre-reflectively. There is no other way it *can* be revealed to us except through doing it; *feeling* it; living the experience of it. In order to study, describe, place a value on, and employ it for psychotherapeutic purposes however, we must translate the bodily, felt experience into some format communicable and sensible to others. For this I use the various media of written word, spoken word, dance and visual tableau. I also make my understandings, beliefs, biases, assumptions, presuppositions and theories explicit. I acknowledge these but hold them at bay, determined not to bombast and intent to expose any

aspect of shallowness or concealment. My goal is to express, in complete sincerity, my “living centre from which radiates all existential possibilities” (Leder, 1984, p. 34).

This I now venture to call *phenomenological-hermeneutic-kinetic methodology*.

#### *A dilemma of kinesis versus language*

My great challenge then is *writing* about it. Dance is felt; experienced; visual - and to share ideas about what has occurred - what conversation, what common parlance is to be found?

The body serves as a physical instrument for an interior subjectivity, and the dance functions as a luminous symbol of unspeakable human truths, which, because they are unspeakable, leave us little to say. Thus the dance remains an ephemeral event whose immediate appeal can never be captured in words, and which is too fragile and too fleeting for comment (Foster, 1986, p. *xvi*).

In this thesis I am specifically researching dance and its conjoint stillness as elements of the psychotherapy healing process (which has its own equally unique and arcane language) - so I must discover seek a bridge, a linking between the two.

But a dilemma arises. Despite that my methodology is ‘unobtrusive’ - in that I am gathering and presenting actual, live data as opposed to lists and explanations compiled by someone else, which is reported data, (Kellehear, 1993, p. 6), and despite that:

The focus of our research will call upon us to devise a way of proceeding that allows us to achieve our purposes... (for) every piece of research is unique and calls for a unique methodology (Crotty, 1998, p. 13),

And despite that my research is to do with an *embodied* activity seeking an *embodied* response, and despite that this danced methodology is congruent with *how* I wish to say what I wish to say on the subject of stillness, yet... we live in a world as a domain of language and in which language plays a powerful and persuasive role. Typically, furthermore, for understanding to occur, interpretation is done in words.

Words - spoken language - are the sounds we know, accept and employ for communication within our culture. Language is a 'marking of the way' and in this sense has a signifying, objective, descriptive role. Signification is a matter of selective resonance with historical and interpersonal conditions related to its use, and signifiers are a set of signs we use to mark the way that the world is constructed for us by our culture. Language, through signification, shapes a world of things into a world of meanings and largely determines how these things shall be arranged.

Through language then, we recognise and understand and 'know' about life and living. And this - could be the end of things.

We live, however, in a complex reality, many aspects of which are inarticulate in the system of constructed verbal manipulations we call language. As the world touches me, it cannot be fully encompassed by the verbal, cognitive signifiers with which I frame it.

There is a causal effect not exhausted by the words that are used to recall or construct the experience and to give it narrative form  
(Gillet, Forum, Vol.9, August 2003).

Within the unconscious domain, that which contains the history of a person's life, there exists a psychic reality quite beyond or 'other' than that indicated by the language signifiers employed.

Were I to attempt to contain my work in written form alone, I would be upholding the Cartesian split in which mind and body and world are seen as distinct and separable from each other. This would be unauthentic to who I am and unauthenticity is untenable for the both the psychotherapist and the dancer. Both are too exposed, and too important to sanction unauthenticity. Were I to employ language alone I would be offering an objective, quantifiable, measurable package to discuss and reveal an intrapsychic complexity that is, in so many ways, inarticulate.

I wonder if there could be a way in which we can let go of the need for a verbal definition - the desire to pin the issue in the often suffocating grip of academic rigour - so that this sense of knowing with my bones; knowing with my blood and sinews honed through hours and years of discipline and devotion could be acknowledged and accepted as a legitimate way of knowing?

Kremer, 1997, (p. 18) asks this question in regards to indigenous science and its way of knowing. It is as relevant here. Rollo May (1964, p. 368) writes: “God moves in mysterious ways” and that the “destiny” of himself and other human beings springs from “deeper levels in the human heart that we are led to believe in our liberalised and enlightened west”.

I believe that in the deeper levels of the heart the link, the bridge between the kinaesthetic experience and the mental exists already and manifests in many and diverse places... dance is one, another surely, is poetry:

Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,  
Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.  
Go, go, go said the bird: human kind  
Cannot bear very much reality.  
Time past and time future  
What might have been and what has been  
Point to one end, which is always present.  
(T.S. Eliot, *Burnt Norton*, 1935).

These words of exquisite poetry can be applied to my thesis and to its directive impetus, psychotherapeutic healing. T.S. Eliot, as I interpret his words, is calling us to this moment, this moment of ‘now’ where past exists only in memory and future only in fantasy. *This* is the moment in which we exist. It is a ‘true’ and ‘real’ moment when we, for one moment, take off our shoes - our embeddedness, our safe routines and habitual modes, and stand on holy ground - that is, acknowledge the pure, unentered particular of this moment, and are, in the midst of all the turbulence and craziness - still. *This* is the moment of potential: potential transformative healing.

Thus the answer to the questions, what methodology most suitable?, what link between seemingly disparate disciplines?, what language? - is in this case, the combination of words and movement that is congruent with my theoretical philosophical positioning on the subject of stillness. Here is a methodology of embodied activity, giving an embodied response calling us into a real experience - academic, artistic, bodily, lived, observed, reflected upon, palpable, felt, discernible.

## Methods

My thesis is placed within three disciplines. These are academic, psychotherapeutic and artistic. Significance or requirements in one area do not diminish or alter significance or requirements in another. The work is intended for psychotherapeutic application, it must meet requirements for academic evaluation and it must hold artistic integrity and excellence.

### Ethical Approval

My thesis proposal was submitted to the AUTEK Ethics Committee and approval was granted on November tenth, 2003 (Appendix A).

I considered that as I have worked with and studied the body and its non-verbal communication of dance intensively for over 20 years, it was ethically appropriate and justifiable that I make this investigation into an area not typically explored by either academics or psychotherapists. Key ethical issues for me were:

- appropriate selection of dancers and watchers
- cognisance of the participants regarding confidentiality and safety; in the case of the dancers agreement regards their visibility
- accuracy of analysis of data that presented in physical kinetic form - yet is written in words

The dancers for this study were obtained through my personal collegial relationships within the dance world of New Zealand. I chose to work with 4 dancers including myself. My criteria for the dancer participation included,

- dancers presently active at a professional or semi-professional level
- those willing to participate
- those able to verbally describe their experience of stillness.

I needed people who are serious about their work and whom I estimated most likely to contribute vivid, accurate, rich and elegant data. I was clear about my expectations of each dancer-participant to be able to describe to the best of their ability their experience of stillness. It was important that none of the people I selected perceived, or would perceive themselves to be in any dependant relationship with me and I advised them that my role in this context was primarily choreographer/researcher rather than dance colleague. The four dancers selected demonstrated

integrity of, and commitment to their work; they demonstrated no explicit evidence of acute or chronic physical or mental illness; and they were able to describe a meaningful experience of stillness within the context of their lives without undue discomfort or excessive anxiety.

Autonomy and control was given to each participant. Dancers typically know exactly how they wish to physically present themselves and I did not override this in any way. I enlisted their cooperation for the interview process by offering that they choose whether to do this in the studio or another location. The dancers were fully aware they were being audio and then video taped, and that the videotapes may reveal their identities.

My process in selecting the watchers was similar. I chose people who while not specifically my clients at this time were receptive to this being a psychotherapeutic process. They were people known to me whom I knew were capable of observing the work and being scrupulously honest with their impressions and feedback.

Invitations to participate were made in a non-coercive manner, and participants' consent obtained before proceeding. A *Consent to Participation* letter was sent to each dancer and each watcher (Appendix B). The consent letter included the objectives of the study and the process to be used. The participants read the information, agreed to participate and signed the consent form. Each participant was asked if the conversations could be tape-recorded and the dance performance videotaped. To protect the privacy of the participants, the audio and videotapes were held in a locked drawer during analysis. They remain in secure holding for six years after the completion of this study and then the audio tapes burned (by myself); the video tape does not require to be burnt since it is an integral part of the thesis whole and the dancers have consented to personal visibility.

### Data Gathering

Data gathering for this research was undertaken through a series of interviews that followed multiple viewings of the danced choreography. The interviews took place in the quiet atmosphere of my home, and often included a cup of tea and lead-in conversations that facilitated the flow of communication that followed. Because the participants were cognisant of the theme of this work I did not ask yes/no questions. Instead I engaged in discussion around the meaning

of the work and the significance of stillness in each person's life.

Throughout the interview process I was psychotherapeutically present insofar as I was alert for signs of distress: any reluctance to reply, restlessness, looking away from me, avoiding eye contact; appearance of any of these signs of anxiety would have prompted my termination of the interview. The participant was able to terminate the interview at any time should s/he have become discomforted and needed to. As it transpired, this did not occur.

In order to facilitate ease of rapport, at the beginning of the interview each participant was invited to share anything that was uppermost on his or her mind. In this way we entered with ease what became a most precious space. The conversation then centred on the dance work and details of what this person had perceived, felt and experienced.

#### Working with the data

Working with the data became like the unfolding of an heraldic script, guiding my thought as I endeavoured to make a way with the task I had set myself. Rather than trying to manipulate the data into predetermined constructs of meaning (as neither do I manipulate dance steps into pre-set combinations) I endeavoured to place myself into the context of the data and of the data provider. Conscious that whatever interpretation I might make could never be:

A presuppositionless apprehending of what was presented for it would be predetermined by the forestructures of the interpreter (Heidegger, 1990)

- the 'interpreter' here being myself, I challenged myself to openness. I did not wish to surrender to manipulated regurgitation of ideas just as I do not wish to surrender to choreographing movements I have done before. When this happens in the choreographic process I have come to an 'edge' (Mindell, 1982). If originality - (of movement, or perception, or interpretation) - is to follow I must allow myself to go with what is:

Approximate, incomplete and changing, trusting at the same time that this diversity is both uncertainty and strength (Geanellos, 1998, p. 160).

Despite that my research is presented in a medium so *other* to the words - written and spoken - that discuss it, I sought to be faithful to the original thoughts or context of the its authors. I have sorted and sifted, searching out the links and parallels, the synchronicities, contradictions and the meeting points that offer “not necessarily a superior understanding but understanding in a different way” (Gadamer1965/1982, p. 264); and which speak to the “essential theme of my work” (Gadamer, 1987, p. 128).

As I perceived elements of what I saw to be similarity or coherence I grouped these into what I chose to call ‘essence-truths’. Essence-truths are truths with definite content that displays what belongs to the 'whatness' or 'essence' of a thing. They are known by insight, and not in the usual sense of 'immediate' -

Rather they must be gained by working (in phenomenology by description, and reflection working with text). The process is not by induction because it does not rely on sensible evidence but on intellectual insight through working to penetrate into the moments of experience (Hoffart, 2001, p.62).

Placing my findings into essence-truth groupings was a carefully-considered choice. This way seemed a way of clarity, simplicity and refinement - mirroring the qualities with which I aim to create my work, and wish for the choreography to epitomise.

### Rigour

Regards rigour, my work has been scrutinised by members of the dance, psychotherapy and lay-person's worlds. For this thesis to have soundness the essence of stillness that I explore must be perceived not through abstraction, generalisation, or inference, but seen in the sense of 'Anschauung'. It must be:

Not a mystical or lyrical leap but a rational insight or cognition of a non-empirical structure of consciousness; not ineffable, but fully articulate (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 45).

### The hermeneutic circle

The doing of this research, the writing, dancing, choreographing and living of it - involves me as dancer *and* choreographer *and* psychotherapist *and* all the roles in which I daily engage. My work comes from the whole of me: one role supporting and informing the other, and each one enhanced - grown - through the effective existence of the other. Anything less would be shallow and partial. (The psychotherapist, no less than the dancer, is also on a stage of sorts and any indication of compartmentalised, disowned or conflicted behaviour would serve only to create distress and confusion. Were that to be the outcome of my work then I should have failed indeed). The joining of the various roles from which I now write and which together constitute who I am, seem reflective of the words of the philosopher Flacius in 1567:

The individual parts of the whole draw their comprehensibility from their relationship to that whole and to the other parts (in Geanellos, p. 45).

In this sense I / and my work are a metaphor for the hermeneutical circle.

The written part of this journey is circular: I bring my understanding of phenomenological writings into my interpretations of the subject, thus coming to a deeper understanding of the subject than at first. This in turn leads me to a deeper understanding of the ontological nature of my dance and my subject - leading me to a deeper understanding of the notions of phenomenological authors - and so on. My hope is that audience; readers; dancers - will make this circular journey also, and that as the words are read and the dance watched, inquiry will be stirred and understanding enriched. And that in turn, this will enable audience, readers and dancers alike to look again at the philosophical premise(s) of their pre-understandings (Dilthey in Palmer, 1969 & Heidegger in Ormiston & Schrift, 1990). I contend that any willingness to think circularly; to look forward and back, and be open to new insights, is indicative of readiness for psychotherapeutic intervention, for change, for potential transformation.

### The hermeneutic circle, choreographed

The choreography I have made is crafted with the principle of the hermeneutic circle in mind. The dance progresses through five sections that each express a different emotion and altogether tell a narrative-type story, and each section derives its initiation and motive from the section that precedes it, and its direction or movement intention from the one that follows. Each section of the work is integral to the whole, and for the unifying theme of the work to be communicated and perceived, the work must occur in its entirety. One of my choreographic goals is that each section will contribute to a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. A further goal is that while each section of the dance, and individual movements, may be identified with or introjected as being 'voice' for those who dance or watch, the deepest experience will be from the dance as a whole. As dancer-artist-psychotherapist-hermeneutic-researcher my personal 'meta-goal' is to be continually open to the winds of imagination, fluid before fixity, available to the "fusion of horizons" and willing to partake in the "communion" (Grenz, 1996, p.110) in which I may no longer remain the same.

### The body of the dancer

We dancers are students of this art. In all our years of dancing, and in all the years to come, and despite that we have achieved the label 'professional' we will also always be students. Training my body: to be, and being, responsive to the controlling self-disciplined mind; obtaining mastery such that it will not compromise the choreography and that it will express what I have to say - is a life pursuit.

Just as a musician will tune his instrument prior to playing, the dancer, prior to executing any choreography - prior to dancing, prepares his or her body. He/she must *warm-up* in order to try new ideas, *strengthen* in order to execute the ideas, *rehearse* in order to perform the ideas. Disciplined attention to all the elements constituting the dance is required. The elements include: the body itself - specifically the dancer's body and all that is involved in caring for this body, the technique - which is the physical structure of the movements; and strength, agility, control, grace, memory and syntaxes of style and expression. These are elements not lightly or quickly put together. Certain tools are requisite - an alert, meditative mind, a graceful, supple body, movement of physical articulateness, cells animated with a life energy that plays across my body,

transmuting it and reconstituting it so it can commune with the world. Each muscle, bone, sinew and nerve must be ready: physically organised to move with tension, liquidity, percussiveness and lightness and with enormous variations in shape and timing at each jointed segment. Paul Cunningham, the great choreographer, said:

To articulate the body through space and time the dancer must exercise assiduously and must also recognise and become attuned to the body as an entity with its own logic (in Foster, 1986, p. 49).

Not only is physical attainment sought. Echoing another great dancer and choreographer, Martha Graham, I declare that I the dancer must also be:

Acutely sensitive to my psychological inner life and willing to persevere in promoting expression (Graham in Foster, 1986, p. 48).

Though I knew it before, my research impresses upon me now how utterly so is Graham's statement. Movement alone - clever, articulate though it may be, is not enough if my aim is to provide the therapeutic context and inspiration wherein another may discover 'healing for their souls'. It is not enough if my aim is for the witnessed or danced dance to not only to facilitate - but actually *be* the act of *therapeou*.

If witnessed movement is to have the therapeutic value I seek, one aspect I believe requisite is that it must have form - it must be shaped, choreographed, and the sections or parts (regardless of whether the work is narrative or not) in an order of sense and 'right' progression:

Audiences want to feel that some form of logic - even if it's dream logic - is operating. And we want to feel that each section, no matter how ample or lean, is essential to the expressive thrust of the work (Perron, 2004).

I have been a dance practitioner for 38 years. As a student, then performer - company member - tutor - choreographer - and company director, I declare from first-hand and intimate experience, that the same years of the same personal dedication and application that go into the business of performing go too to the business of choreographing. Discipline, experimentation, development, re-development: these combine and eventually emerge as the choreographic form. And never do the discipline and commitment abate, for the whole process is continually changing as I the

choreographer grow older and my experience deepens. It is a high goal; at times (it feels) a relentless tyranny. Until that is, I remember the promise I have made to myself and to my God – echoed in a strangely parallel sense by these words:

He determined to run until he was touched on the shoulder (Randerson, 2004, recounting the story of Kursk nuclear submarine victim Dmitry Kolesnikov).

Thus, my body must ‘speak’ the choreography like the finely tuned Stradivarius speaks the violin concerto. My choreography must be clear, it must ‘speak’ its truth.

### The choreography

Through a work of art - we experience truth that we cannot attain in any other way (Grenz, 1996, p. 109).

In all my choreographic work (including this thesis) my concern is to *communicate* - with and to the audience, who are my watchers. I am particularly mindful of the dramaturgy of the spectator and the performer-audience connection. There are certain ‘mechanisms’ with which I seek to construct, structure and influence the audience experience. These ‘mechanisms’ are not underlined yet they are yet intentionally present in my choreography in order to promote the understanding of this work. The mechanisms are -

- Spatial: I use different levels of movement and specific siting of the movement on the stage. The use of mid-range contraction-expansion, suspend-release movement signifies the tension between two poles: we are of the earth and we aspire to fly. Likewise moving close to the earth or reaching upwards is part of a precise architecture designed to embody and fulfil the meaning of this story.
- Temporal: My intention is that the audience engage with this choreography and story in a way that coheres with their present experience. I wish that they will ponder at my choice of story, ponder how well or not well this story exemplifies my theme, and ponder its relevance to their personal stories.
- Visceral: I seek a physical reaction / response to the physicality of the dance and as that physicality changes. I imagine that the physical response will differ according to which part of the story is occurring... be it hunger, sinuosity, ‘other-worldliness,’ determination, domination, tenderness, aloneness - all of which are qualities successively present as the

dance unfolds.

- Aesthetic: I seek that the audience feels wakened to the sense that artistry has occurred before them.
- Emotional: I seek that the audience feel, or at least catch a glimpse of the feelings I felt when I choreographed it; even feel them along with me.
- Spiritual: I seek that the audience find inspiration - maybe a prompting to look within for personal spiritual significance; maybe an invitation to personal prayer.

While it would have been eminently possible to express the themes of this thesis - Chaos, Turbulence, Hysteresis, Equipose, Stillness, Healing, Transformation - through any number of stories, I have chosen a story that holds the capacity for me to choreograph movement 'metaphors' accurate and relevant to these themes.

This story is Biblically-inspired, being an interpretation of the Christian creation story beginning at the first book of the Bible: Genesis, verse 1, and subsequent human condition. It is allegorical in nature and follows an imaginative sequence reflective of although not rigidly adhering to the Bible story - poetic licence has been taken. While this story could be seen to be telling about one time in the existence of the universe - (whether an actual or mythical time is not relevant here) - I believe it is timeless, archetypal, and peculiarly accordant with the state and situation of life we experience today.

My choreography are allusive and symbolic; it is also sequential, creating and communicating meaning like sentences of a story: connected to and proceeding from the one before, and connected to and leading to the one after.

When I choreograph I produce piles of movement phrases. I say 'piles' for I feel as if I surround myself with small heaps of movement material that then need to be sifted, sorted, arranged, highlighted, diminished, positioned, re-positioned, bridged, cued - or tossed altogether. Ultimately all of it is given definition and punctuation by that which surrounds it and holds it, and without which it remains forever piles and heaps and essentially indistinguishable. I refer to the stillness.

These elements combined, then: poetry, Scripture and the dance, together tell this story. Chaos -

tumult - suspicion - greed - mercy - compassion - striving - hunger - longing - togetherness-yet-alone: follow each other, mingle and make up the whole, with stillness being the underlying, over-arching milieu in which each part, and the whole exists.

### The Dance Performance

There are five parts to this work.

#### *(1) Dance of Lilith*

The work begins at the time of The Beginning: movement welling as if from within the *a priori* darkness and chaos:

In the beginning GOD created the world. Waste and void.  
Waste and void. And darkness was upon the face of the deep.  
And when there were men, in their various ways, they struggled in  
toment towards God  
Blindly and vainly, for man is a vain thing, and man without God is a seed  
upon the wind: driven this way and that, and finding no place of lodgement  
and germination.  
(Eliot, Choruses VII, 1934).

The allegorical figure who symbolises this chaos is Lilith. Lilith is a creature of Jewish mythology (Humm, 1997), symbolising unrest, madness, lust, hunger. The Lilith energy is sensuous, passionate, irrepressible; she streaks through the night; entering our dreams, whispering of *what* may be...

There shall Lilith alight, but where findeth her a place to be still?  
(Isaiah 34:14).

Thus I begin the story of stillness with its opposite, chaos. Lilith stands for the chaos, hunger, distress, *un*-expressed passions and desires residing within us all, which, if *un*admitted, overturn our equilibrium and sanity. Here, we admit the passion... Psychoanalyst / psychotherapist, George Winnicott linked what is most real with a madness one can only partly touch, saying too much 'sanity' kills spontaneity, and a touch of madness adds taste to reality (1989, pp. 119-129). While the chaotic madness of the Lilith movement symbolises disequilibrium, it can also be reframed and perceived as that which grounds us and reveals the passionate pulsing energy through which we are most vividly alive. The Lilith presented here is also the symbol of which

Merton (1958) speaks which makes us aware of the inner meaning of life, or as described by Carl Jung:

The symbol which by its very nature can so unite the opposites that these no longer diverge or clash but mutually supplement one another and give meaningful shape to life (1965, p.338).

At the end of this part the dancers shudder to a stillness. Here, now, is the moment when something new may emerge.

The 'Lilith' section is danced by four dancers, portraying my hypothesis that Lilith is present in all of us - our clients, our families, ourselves...

### *(2) Dance of Eve*

The second section is the Dance of Eve, but this is not the Botticelli Eve of reclining lustrous languor. This Eve is she who is made of, and emerges out of the earth: "for out of the dust you were taken" (Genesis 3:19). Lilith, metaphor of madness and chaos, has been exiled from Eden. Now the new creature comes - Eve:

Then it seemed as if they must proceed from light to light...  
Through the Passion and Sacrifice saved in spite of their negative being;  
Bestial as always before, carnal, self-seeking as always before, Yet always  
struggling, always reaffirming, always resuming their march on the way  
that was lit by the light;  
Halting, loitering, straying, delaying, returning, yet following no other way  
(Eliot, Choruses VII, 1934).

This Eve is indeed a new creature, she whose "memories turn to blood and glance and gesture" (Rilke, 1975) - and she still has the earth about her. She is woman... part-snake - *femme* - Lover - Mother - Birther of men - Creatress - forever emerging. She looks, reaches, tastes, touches, feels. This woman is our clients; ourselves; and we search out the energies that give life its meaning... the hunger, lust, sacred, exalted, and moments of stillness, when all things suspend in balance.

### *(3) Dance of the Spirit*

From almost pre-creation chaos, and then primal, snake-like energy, the human spirit seeks to go

higher, to go beyond...The Bible records at the beginning of the Creation account that “the Spirit was moving over the face of the water and God said **Let there Be**” (Genesis 1:2).

A moment not out of time but in time, transecting, bisecting this world of time, a moment in time but not like a moment of time,  
A moment in time but time was made through that moment: for without the meaning there is no time and that moment of time gave the meaning  
(Eliot, Chorus VII, 1934).

The third dance is the Dance of the Spirit: the Spirit that moved upon the face of the water, that broods forever over us, and in this moment, and forever, falls and is present among us. The Bible records that “the Spirit gives life” (John 6:63). As a dancer I know that if I do not in-spire (breathe in) breath (spirit), then my body will not live. This section suggests that dimension of living that invites us on: into realms of mind and thought, awareness, creativity, choice and spiritual mindfulness - that which Thomas Moore disuses in *Care of the Soul* (1992) and which in Christian belief is held to animate the whole. The music and movement of this section has a quality of near- suspension about it... we do not wish to disturb the stillness of the air as we move so stilly through it.

#### *(4) Dance of Humanity*

We are here. We are HERE! The movement of this section demonstrates a paradox peculiar to the human condition - First our questions, as we (our clients, ourselves) wonder, ‘what is it like, what does it *mean*, to be alive’? Coexistent with our questions is the drive to be bold, to assert, to claim This Earth Is Mine! We insist on ‘staking our claim’. The movement of this section is sculptural, controlled, signifying the modes and codes inside which we encase ourselves in our effort to give life order and direction. Gradually the movement becomes more desperate as we:

Struggle in torment towards God  
Blindly and vainly, for man is a vain thing, and man without God is a seed on the wind: driven this way and that, and finding no place of lodgement and germination... “crying for life beyond life, for ecstasy not of the flesh”  
(Eliot, 1972).

We cannot quench the yearning - we cannot be still - what we have is not enough - we must have MORE...

This dance is a metaphor for life as I see it today, lived in varying degrees of tension by everyone alive. (Some manage the tension, psychotherapy clients struggle with it):

I am no fugitive - escaped, escaping,  
No one has seen me stumble looking back. My fear is not behind me  
but beside me  
On either hand to make my course perhaps  
a crooked straightness yet no less a straightness.  
I run face forward. I am a pursuer.  
I seek a seeker who in his turn seeks another still, lost far into the distance.  
Any who seek me seek in me the seeker.  
My life is a pursuit of a pursuit forever. It is the future that creates  
the present. I am an interminable chain of longing  
(Frost, 1973).

Crying for life beyond life - for ecstasy not of the flesh, always struggling,  
always reaffirming, always resuming our way on the way that is lit by the  
light - halting, loitering, straying, delaying, returning –  
yet following no other way (Eliot, 1972).

*(5) Dance of Being*

The work ends with a dance of quiet intimacy. After the thrust and hunger and unsatisfied yearning, it is as if finally, we find peace; we finally glimpse the stillness at the heart of all things. This closing dance is in a way, a beginning:

What we call the beginning is often the end  
And to make an end is to make a beginning.  
The end is where we start from  
(Eliot, Little Gidding, 1942).

Here once more is a sense of origin and birth, but a maturing has taken place. We are conscious - with a consciousness that brings simplicity rather than sophistry, and a quiet acknowledgment that, in the end, we are simply - ourselves. We have ourselves and we have each other. There is a sense of other- and self-acceptance. Here is some recognition of that which moves us to “build an altar to the Invisible Light” so that we may “set thereon the little lights for which our bodily vision is made” and be thankful that “the darkness reminds us of light” (Eliot, Choruses X, 1972). Now we are able to wait, quiet and still, until in the stillness, we hear the still, small voice.

This is not any stillness of cessation or stopped-ness however. There is a state of paradox: for even as we are together, so are we alone, and in the seeming aloneness there is another position.

We do not know what comes in the stillness *afterwards*:

Stand by, and look, and ask, 'where is the good way'? - and walk ye in it,  
and findeth there stillness for your soul (Jeremiah 6:16).

My soul breaks with longing for the courts of the Lord... O Lord my God,  
for a day spent in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere  
(Psalm 84:2,10).

Indeed may I be willing to partake in the "communion" (Grenz, 1996, p.110) in which I may no longer remain the same.

### What point?

The question may be asked - as may equally be asked through the course of any endeavour requiring effort - *what point?* In the case of this work, the question is *what point* this extreme training, this discipline, this emphasis on the Stradivarius-tuned body, this honing of choreographic skills until the distillation of ideas can be harnessed and transformed into shapes, sequences, embodied stories? In the context of doing psychotherapy, what here *is* the psychotherapeutic application, and where is the psychotherapeutic value?

Simply: if I am to tell, to communicate this message with clarity, in this unique manner in which I wish to tell it, and if it is to have any psychotherapeutic effect, any effect for healing and transformation as defined earlier, and if what I express is to be congruent with the principles I espouse - then it is required of me to be equally in body and in mind; in movement and in words - coherent, professional, fully present, explicit (in some aspects) and implicit (in others), and endlessly humble.

These last words I say in reference to my sense that if healing takes place, then there exists a power; a source, or Source - greater and beyond me that has used me and my work to effect it.

# Chapter Five

## Findings of the Interviews

### Approaching the essence

In this section the heart and substance of the participants' experiences of stillness within movement, as demonstrated in the dance work, are presented. Jan, Don, Neil and Sheryl<sup>4</sup> are the four watchers, and Sjouke, Iris, Catherine and myself, the four dancers. Jan is 30 and a working artist. Don is 40 and an I.T. specialist. Neil is 75, Jewish and a survivor of Belsen concentration camp. Sheryl, 51, is a Minister of the Christian church. These people were interviewed regarding the dance work and its core theme, stillness. Despite coming from eight individual and disparate people I was struck by the unity and coherence of the themes and 'essences' that emerged. I felt encouraged to realise that in terms of the choreography, communicating the specific theme of my thesis had been achieved. In terms of psychotherapeutic application - providing healing for the soul - I dared speculate that I may indeed have touched into something universal and archetypal, for each interviewee recognised stillness and each one in the process of working on this project also made their own journey inwards; made their personal approach to their personal 'essence'.

### *Chaos*

Very early in the process Iris (dancer) asked me "where is the stillness"? She had been learning the movements for Lilith, dancing and feeling the hunger, unrest, of this elemental and most *unstill* archetype. I answered that in Lilith there is perhaps no stillness, only madness and hunger. But as I watched the dancers dancing, and myself danced, I realised our *experience* was otherwise. We discovered that in the quality or aspect of movement known as 'grounding', in our 'connecting to the earth' there was the stillness. And it was there because these aspects of grounding or connecting are eternal. We noticed too that the gradual rising to full stature of the dancers (in the second section of the dance) contains stillness because you cannot get there (upright) without balance, and balance requires the inward muscle structures to be - still.

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<sup>4</sup> These are not real names

Sheryl (watcher) said the chaos expressed in the Lilith section of the dance was voice for her own chaos and that yet she saw stillness under, somehow *within* the frenetic movements, and that this enabled her to make the journey to her own source of stillness:

We cannot find our own stillness unless we're in chaos. Out of our own madness, our freneticism, our searching, always searching, searching... and unless we look within we can't find the stillness - and the healing. Every time I've seen you dancing I have seen the potential, showing us that there is something more than we can achieve.

It was in the forth segment that the sorrow and freneticism of a humanity in chaos struck me deeply and moved me to tears. Your portrayal of chaos was clear and powerful and had the effect of leading me into my own stillness by way of comparison. It certainly led me to reflect on the healing nature of stillness and how that can be encouraged within the context of daily life. It is another challenge to ministry (Sheryl, watcher).

I asked Sheryl what she meant by 'seeing the potential' and she answered that when she watches me dance she perceives that I carry madness and turbulence in me, that I dance it, then *through the dance* I find my stillness. She said:

And that translates itself to people who are watching. It is one of the most powerfully healing things...I have to let go - of all the stuff that I'm concerned about; a feeling of moving through my own absolute anxiety, to be centred and still ... and the dance brought me to that point. And the dance and music together and the dance and silence together, invite that inward reflective healing (Sheryl, watcher).

Sheryl said she *could* have stayed in that frenetic space but instead, the dance was profoundly centering. "It was like everything went: it was an invitation to my own journeying." For Sheryl this journey was powerful in its psychotherapeutic capacity. The dance, she said, was about:

Identifying one's internal and external chaos, and it encourages a person to journey with that: to journey *with* one's own chaos and journey *through* that chaos into the stillness, and it brings you to a point of - hmm - there's more to do (Sheryl, watcher).

For Sheryl, engaging *with* the chaos of the dance was what then brought her to a point of stillness. Engaging with the chaos was critical in her journey.

Sjouke (dancer) said his experience of the stillness within the chaos was *why* he danced:

It's the thing I am looking for in dance. It's what makes me keep dancing. It's the moments of stillness where everything turns around. It's like happiness - you can't look for it. As soon as you look for it, its gone, you have to experience it (Sjouke, dancer).

I asked Sjouke how he knew he was feeling it:

Everything is in balance; you don't have to do the movements, the movements just happen. You're doing the dance how it's supposed to be done; you're in control of the dance. Not struggling to just do the movements. You get in deeper and deeper, you feel you can relax - almost - it's not that you stop improving but you get more relaxed about it because you know you will be able to do it- that's when you get to the stillness (Sjouke, dancer).

Here is the idea of equipoise, Epstein's "surrender to the ebb and flow of breath ... surrendering to the flow (1996, pp. 145 & 146).

### *Relationship*

For Jan, watcher, stillness existed in the relationship between the dancers:

The essential stillness that existed in the dance was that created by the relationship of the two dancers. When each brought their own essential stillness onto the floor, a whorl, a vortex, a core of far deeper stillness was established between them... It was created by a deliberate, careful, controlled, poised, centred, self-contained way-of-being. It is as if the really poised moments were deliberately creating and holding the edges of a space within which stillness could live. When the two bodies were 'breathing' together - these were moments - peaceful, intense. So the more poise each dancer had, even in fast turbulent movement - the more stillness could be held between them both. What is important - was inner poise. Centeredness. Quality of spirit. Essential self-containment, actually (Jan, watcher).

When two self-assured and self-contained individuals locked eyes and created a relationship between them, that relationship was a large space and contained within it plenty of stillness. The *core* of stillness. When the dancers were on opposite sides of the room or whether they had their bodies pressed tightly together - there was still the core of stillness between them (Jan).

If that internal poise comes from a deep internal confidence, then it follows that the more self-assured each dancer is, the more composed he or she will be. Personally I recognise times when I feel keenly that we (dancers) are saying, silently, one to the other, “Here I am. I stand here in my strength and in my power.” Then I am impressed by a peculiar stillness, one so much bigger than I am and we are:

It’s more than just two people being together, it’s the unity thing. You both need each other... but it’s so much bigger than just the two of us. You don’t try to overshadow the other, what we make is bigger than us. The stillness is there in the unity of it. I dance because I need the stillness (Sjouke, dancer).

Surely this is Epstein’s equipoise (1996, p.145) - grounded in awareness of breath and body and being still within our own bodies. Jan (watcher) observed:

That’s where the stillness comes from: two powerful persons holding themselves tall and separate, in order to engage with the other (Jan).

Jan seemed almost in awe of what she perceived in the dance. Awe has its place in all relationships, including the therapeutic relationship, but it must inevitably metamorphose and become accessible and human. I asked how this quality of stillness affected her. Jan said:

Oh, it’s beautiful, it’s profound. But I can only observe; I can’t have that because what you have is exclusive. I see you have the stillness, the grace - it’s *love*; it’s exaltedness - these are aspects of what the stillness means for me. But I can’t have it because it belongs to you and I am outside. Ineligible (Jan).

When Jan observed me dancing solo however, she felt entirely differently.

It was as if it was all of us. Over the weeks there’s been images that have imprinted on my mind. And in my body. I felt like I was dancing *with* you; I could *feel* the images. I did not feel excluded then, like the stillness *could* be mine too.

It’s really powerful - it’s identification - here is a person expressing for us what it’s like to be human, in a way that most people are unable to get in touch with but here it is truly... I find it so much more real than a painting. It’s identification at an organic, primal level (Jan).

Later, after more viewings, and as the dancers became more familiar to her, Jan said she increasingly 'allowed' herself to enter the stillness of the relationship space. I am reminded of a core factor of the therapeutic relationship - trust, and that this does not exist without there first being empathic recognition, albeit transference at first.

Don (watcher) did not feel excluded. He said the work, solo, partnering and group, held for him "an invitation":

The physical moves were astounding - I could see that you were happy; I found myself thinking I can't dance but I can be bigger; it invites me to be bigger (Don).

My response to this is 'Surely anything that invites a person to be bigger must be good'!

Sheryl (watcher) also did not feel excluded. She felt that Sjouke and I were "so much in tune" that the stillness existed within the dance itself rather than in the space between us. Sheryl observed a profound connection of trust and that that, far from excluding her was instead "an incredibly embracing holistic experience; I never got the feeling of being excluded". She noted that what she perceived in the relationship was "modelling something incredibly beautiful:"

Within relationship we are always alone - the question is always there - does my partner know me? You know, psychotherapists are trying to do it all the time - get the clients to interact with each other... well, what *you* two do - in your dance and in the stillness that's *inside* the dance - cuts right across that. You know each other so well, you are so together; you *hold* the paradox of relationship. It's very powerful (Sheryl).

Sjouke (dancer) experienced stillness when *together* we achieved a unity of the elements, space, time, effort and shape. Unity of these elements can be achieved in solo dance but when achieved in "compassionate co-ordination" (Maturana, 1987) the experience is amplified and heightened. Sjouke likened his experience to being relaxed, the kind of relaxation that can occur between close friends:

When you don't feel the urge to talk, there's real stillness. It very honest, like when someone is born or when someone dies, there's stillness there, there's something real happening here. The rest is wearing glasses. We both accept each other. That's when the stillness comes in (Sjouke).

He commented that it would not be a 'good performance' if we did not find that sense of 'together', and that the 'together' was bigger than the two of us:

A good performance doesn't mean that everything went well; it's when you have a state of being together. It's more than just two people being together; it's a unity thing, you both have each other and there's something more happening than just two people doing the same thing and being in the same space. It's something much bigger than just the two of us. That's the most rewarding thing, people see it and they say 'you're so good together'. When you don't overshadow the other person and you are a unity; you take a person which is male and stronger and the other which is smaller and female and more subtle and there is unity. It's the male-female yin-yang thing and you have a unit. That's where the stillness is (Sjouke, dancer).

Sjouke here made an interesting, possibly contentious observation about the kind of relationship that exists in the choreography I create. For Sjouke there is a kind of fundamental rightness about the male-female unit. For him this is a perfect balance and it is this balance that gives the male-female unit its inherent stillness. Sjouke added this could not be achieved between two partners of the same sex because the intrinsic balance would be lacking and the stillness could not therefore exist:

A man and a woman make one unit whereas you get two men dancing together: they're both strong and you'll have completely different qualities. And you won't get the stillness (Sjouke, dancer).

Being heterosexual myself I find I agree with Sjouke's words. I feel unqualified to comment whether the particular 'stillness in relationship' observed by Sheryl and felt by Sjouke exists in equal measure for homosexual couples and suggest this is the subject of a further study.

### *Design*

Neil, watcher, did not mention the relationship at all. Instead he spoke of the shape of the movement: for him the stillness existed not in the relationship but in the architecture that the relationship created:

It was the way you were standing; it wasn't anything to do with gender, it was just the way the feet and the legs were standing on the ground. It was sheer poetry. There was strength in it, you weren't just standing there, there was connection, a kind of growing into the wooden floor, you were actually part of the floor. I didn't know at the time that it touched me but I can still see it, a planting, it was such a peace (Neil).

Sjouke (dancer) said there are "different layers of stillness" and for him being still in the sense of holding a pose was "one level of stillness - quite a low level actually". I commented that I supposed it was *not* when we were running and leaping but Sjouke said yes! it *could* be then:

Even in leaping - in every type of movement you can have stillness, but you have to be in a state of mind that you don't have to worry about anything. Holding a pose is not stillness though, it is lack of movement (Sjouke, dancer).

### *Time*

A choreographic challenge existed for me - that if there is to be therapeutic value in this stillness: in the moments that exist between the moving others, and in the greater stillness that undergirds the whole, then it must have some *different* quality about it that impresses upon those who dance and those who watch. T.S. Eliot captures this quality:

Erhebung<sup>5</sup> without motion, concentration...  
Both a new world  
And the old made explicit, understood...  
Time past and time future  
Allow but a little consciousness.  
To be conscious is not to be in time...  
Only in time can the moment...  
Be remembered; involved with past and future.  
Only through time time is conquered  
(Burnt Norton, 1936).

A goal of this choreography and of its performance is to capture this, or a like mystical sense of time wherein dancer and watcher transcend the constricts that press on us, impelling us to order our days according to the clock. This sense of time is, in a sense, timeless and in it, we are fully present.

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<sup>5</sup> Erhebung: a swell, an upwards curve

Neil (watcher) said:

At the time it is timeless. The difference is you see most of the dance visually, through hearing, through the senses, and then you get a moment like that and it goes straight into your soul. And that awareness that you really see something that you are totally enwrapped in; that moment becomes timeless because you are not actually seeing the dance anymore, you see the repetition of that moment that you cherished and it continues and then you get this timelessness that is deep within you, it's implanted into my whole being. I cherish it. It's moments like that that I take away (Neil).

Sjouke (dancer) said that peculiar quality of stillness can "last a moment or quite a long time", and could never really be defined:

You can describe it but not define it. When the breathing goes right - like the ebb and tide of the sea, there's certain stillness there, it definitely doesn't mean no movement because that is static, and this is a dynamic something. It starts as moments, but you hope to be getting to stillness as a state (Sjouke).

For both dancer and watcher it was a sense of time - or rather suspended time; timelessness - that seemed integral to their way of being; it was a 'space' that released from the need to do and do, and simply - be.

### *Authenticity*

"It was an invitation to my inner being" said Sheryl (watcher).

Jan and Don (watchers) stressed the importance of authenticity over contrivance:

I have my radars out for something that is driven; compulsive; if it's coming from a place of dominance then I do not want it; I am looking for something coming from the authentic self... Your dance was 'it' rather than 'doing it' (Jan, watcher).

It was important to these watchers that they were not asked for anything; they felt more present to the dance; more open to receive, when the dance was freely given and nothing more was expected:

The stillness means that the dancers can be themselves; they are not looking for anything and that means I am not having to respond in a certain way. It's more likely to free me to engage with it in any way I want to - and that makes me interested in engaging with it (Don, watcher).

Sjouke (dancer) said the stillness had to do with being utterly himself, free from ego and thus free from what other people thought. He felt he could be so "in the moment" it was almost 'stopping trying:'

Not that you release muscles or technique and dance floppy, but you have an inner strength, not running ahead of what's coming - almost like dragging behind, just holding the movement. You are relaxed; seeing things happening, everything suddenly makes sense because you don't try to be someone else; you are *in* the moment. It's like the ego is gone, you are not faking it, you have a right to be there; you're *in* the moment - and there is the stillness (Sjouke).

In my role as choreographer / dancer I recognise that when I lose my central core of stillness my dancing exposes a neediness. When the dancer is hesitant, as if seeking reassurance, that sucks energy out of the watcher. How often that dynamic occurs in the psychotherapy session! - and is named there 'toxic counter-transference' (Gregory, R. p. 781). I recognise this state and it is then the time to stop, centre myself, re-connect with the stillness.

### *Symbolism*

Carl Jung states that the unconscious is constantly changing and it is this process of change that leads to eventual transformation. *Symbols* are what chart and map the journey through these changes. Jung further states that when unconscious material is brought to consciousness what happens is a cleavage and tension of opposites which in their turn seek compensation in unity. The adjustment is achieved through symbols (Jung, 1965, pp. 209, 335).

Langer (1953) echoes Jung's idea in her proposition that in the process of choreographing a dance the choreographer is "setting up tensions, exhibiting forces, creating gestures that connote feelings and thoughts" and that the "feelings shown" evolve into the "feelings represented." In this way says Langer, dance functions as a system of representation; of symbols that arouse "implicit recognition of created forces, impersonal agencies, emotions and wills" (pp. 184-185). In that the method of expression of the dance work is not pantomime or literal demonstration, in

that this dance has arisen from a wordless place deep within me, and in that the point of it is to reveal archetypal themes that when witnessed will affect the person's life - the work is then symbolic. All the interviewees said the dance was powerful for them because of its symbolism. Jan (watcher) said:

It is as if you are saying 'Can I reflect this back to you and validate what it's like and acknowledge the depth of the conflict' - and it's really powerful. It's a symbolic dance; I didn't get a sense of 'watching this dancer'; it didn't feel as if you are just wrapped up in yourself - it's an identification, it's symbolic (Jan).

Neil (watcher) said:

Yes, you are looking at the excellence of the human body, of the human spirit - you are looking at a manifestation of Godliness. It is the experience and the mystification of that moment, I cannot fully understand what I am seeing; it is something that is not referenced and that is what makes it so beautiful (Neil).

I asked each interviewee what the particular quality of stillness dance made them *feel*: 'I know you appreciate it but does it make you feel anything'? Jan (watcher) answered:

I wanted to enter into it - because that's beautiful, that moment; I wanted you to hold it; when it fell away it was disappointing; it was something that I wanted to absorb into myself (Jan).

'Entering the beautiful', 'absorbing into oneself' - could this experience of watching stillness in the dance be an experience of healing and of psychotherapeutic value? After watching the dance Neill (watcher) said:

The stillness of the dance is when motion stops, and sound fades out, when understanding becomes mystification, and the senses synchronise into the soul - piercing an infinite small pinhole into the imagined concept of heaven, breathing those in cadence with the dance and then the vision unfolds, and it is without beginning and without end and it is a timeless present, unfolding...(Neill).

Initially Neill hesitated to categorically define the experience as 'healing'; he said it was about creativity and inspiration. Later in the interview he acknowledged that these were precursory to

psychological, emotional and spiritual healing that could potentially follow:

That's the stillness of the dance - where the mind, in that moment that you see something - the rationality is stopped, even the emotion is stopped; it is an awareness of mystification - you don't really understand why what you see is so beautiful, because its not being analysed, it becomes the mystery... an awareness, although you don't know of what (Neil, watcher).

Stillness is when motion stops and when sound fades out, when understanding becomes mystification and the senses synchronise into the soul, piercing an infinite small tempo into the immensity of heaven and our breathing goes in cadence with some motion, without start, without stop, without time, this is a summation of the stillness of the dance (Neil).

Is not this awareness, this deep, poetic murmuring, in itself, agency of healing?

### *Shadow*

The stillness of the dance was a kind of confessional space:

I find it difficult to let things into my deep self. If I could be *really* present... and it depends if it's 'out there' and I'm the observer... but not included. But this is something that happens in all areas of my life; I don't let myself get too close (Jan, watcher).

A core belief for Jan has been revealed. Jan does not let herself get too close - she avoids intimacy - and her experience of watching the dance has brought this issue to the fore.

I wished to know the shadow side of this work. Where did it not serve the goal of psychotherapy and perhaps not even of dance? Jan had told me of her sense of exclusion. Sheryl (watcher) affirmed this:

Because of the incredible rapport, that great trust: that could create for some people who wanted that, the knowledge that they couldn't have it without a great deal of self-exploration; a great deal of work. If we know we have issues we need to deal with, it - the rapport - the great trust is right in your face and you are confronted with your own inadequacies (Sheryl).

The psychotherapist is faced now with a challenge. The dance has triggered a response of sadness in the watcher. Recognising and acknowledging this sadness the watcher faces her own

issues of pain. A question arises here, one which I believe must be answered within the context of each individual client-therapist relationship: is this the kind of pain for which psychotherapeutic response is appropriate - or is there perhaps, no appropriate human response?

*Awareness, Focus, Release*

To my questions, is it therapeutic? what does this state, be it a moment or of longer duration contribute? what effect does it have in the lives of people when they become aware of it and when they experience it? - participants' recurring response was that the stillness made them aware, focused; it seemed to be a kind of *permission* that allowed themselves to set themselves free from the pressures, requirements and impositions they otherwise perceived. Sjouke (dancer) said:

When you get to a stage when you are confident with the dance, then you can let go more. It's when you stop trying, then you get to the stage where there is more chance of stillness. You realise there are certain things happening which you didn't realise before... (Sjouke).

In the Western world people are so hyped-up about things, so over-bothered by impulses that pull you in another direction; you think you have to do things. In your mind you say 'don't fall for it' but your body responds to it. You have to go to a place where you don't have all those influences, and in dance you can get to it because everything else falls away, you concentrate on the movement. Everything else can fall away. Doing the dance allows me to be still (Sjouke).

In the midst of that crazy time you made it possible for me to be still (Sheryl, watcher).

For Iris (dancer) the stillness emphasised her sense of oneness and 'rightness' within herself:

Being a dancer is a privilege that I treasure. The musician, the painter, the sculptor - they all have to use some material or instrument in order to express their art. The dancer has nothing but her body - which becomes the dance. There is no ego left when that happens - just truth and beauty. Dance is a powerful language and you know when you dream in that language just like in any other language, you have internalised it. It belongs to you and you belong to the dance. I dance - therefore I am (Iris).

For Catherine (dancer) the dance and the stillness that she experienced when she danced were of extant value. It was what gave her life healing; gave it its focus:

To me, there is no point in dancing if one cannot derive pleasure and satisfaction from doing it. Having said that, with a trained dancer, true satisfaction is encountered when all the hard work has paid off and you become the music and the dance. It's an emotion that could be described as a feeling of quiet ecstasy when body, mind and music all meld together and the dancer is still, simply 'being'. No longer a tool for the outside world, but only for the feeling that we live to dance, so that we must dance to live (Catherine).

I asked “but does it heal? Sjouke answered:

Yes, yes that's why I do it, the one reason why I do dance is because I need that stillness in my life, I need to know there is more than just working and going to bed. I get energy out of being in balance, and I find that balance in the movement, and then I have the stillness. You can't know the stillness without the movement (Sjouke).

To the same question Sheryl (watcher) said:

If somebody who did not think they had any other choices in life saw what you did, I would say that they couldn't help but see an alternative offered. I don't think you could miss it (Sheryl).

I was curious about what psychotherapeutic worth the dance work could be despite that no traditional therapist-client dialogue takes place. Sheryl (watcher), whom I knew had been experiencing a prolonged time of severe stress, said she had been deeply affected when she watched the work and yet, no words had been exchanged between us:

What you offered was like a drink of water in a desert. In the midst of all the chaos of what was going on I found it offered that still small point. It invited me to engage with the reasons *why* (I am doing all that stuff) and the invitation was there to let go of all that stuff; the invitation was there to interact with the dance...It created a balance for me in the midst of all the chaos and it gave me what I needed to go on (Sheryl, watcher).

Neil (watcher) wrote poetry to communicate his thoughts:

A Foal  
Foiled with life  
Rising to an Untmost high  
The sinews, what might  
As they control the faithful muscles  
With so slow a cadence  
Through introvert movement of hands  
Exchanged into delicate motion  
Bursting / out / with a gift  
Immense  
Of swirling and turning near uncontrollable  
Variations of quivering lines.

The face  
Like a flower on a stem  
Unites the total perfect frame  
Resolving and then emerging  
The whole back again  
Into motionless life.

Thus, energy spend  
Shared  
Like a tear from her soul  
Into our eye  
She bows  
She said: Goodbye... Goodbye.

Sheryl (watcher) said:

I feel like I'm dancing with you, when you dance my soul dances.

Later I said to Sjouke (dancer), "it's an inner thing" and he replied "what else is there"?

# Chapter Six

## Discussion

The question may be asked - as may equally be asked through the course of any endeavour requiring effort - *what point?* In the case of this work, the question is - *what point* this extreme training, this discipline, this emphasis on the Stradivarius-tuned body, this honing of choreographic skills until the distillation of ideas can be harnessed and transformed into shapes, sequences, embodied stories? In the context of doing psychotherapy, what here *is* the psychotherapeutic application, and where is the psychotherapeutic value?

Simply this: if I am to tell; to communicate this message with clarity, in this unique manner in which I wish to tell it, and if it is to have any psychotherapeutic effect, any effect for healing and transformation as defined earlier, and if what I express is to be congruent with the principles I espouse - then what is required of me is to be, equally in body and in mind, in movement and in words - coherent, professional, fully present, explicit (in some aspects) and implicit (in others), and endlessly humble.

With this last phrase I refer specifically to my sense that if healing takes place, then there exists a power: a source, or Source, greater and beyond me that has used me and my work to effect it.

### Stillness and healing

In the beginning God created the world. Waste and void.  
Waste and void.  
And darkness was upon the face of the deep.  
And when there were men, in their various ways, they  
struggled in torment toward God  
Blindly and vainly, for man is a vain thing, and man without God  
is a seed upon the wind:  
driven this way and that,  
and finding no place of lodgement and germination.  
(Eliot, Choruses from the Rock, VII).

So I hated life, because what is done under the sun is grievous to me;  
for all is vanity and a striving  
after wind. (Bible, Ecclesiastes, 2:17).

Creating and crafting this choreography, writing the exegesis and combining these - the artistic and academic, into a completed whole that can rightly be called a thesis, has not been a process without struggle. Demands on physical and emotional resources, commitment and perseverance have felt at times something akin to ‘struggling in torment toward God.’ I suggest this is not however a feeling either unique or special to this choreography and this written work. I suggest that a recurring motif in the human condition is indeed the struggle in torment towards God (Job 3:20,23, Ecclesiastes 1:2,3; 2: 17, Habakkuk 1:2, 11 Peter 3:9, Holy Bible). Inasmuch as the dance reflects this struggle then I have joined with the world soul in its “groaning in travail, waiting for adoption... for redemption” (Bible, Romans, 8:23). Psychotherapeutically speaking, groaning and travail is the cry of the client in need. Here, it is as if I say “you are not alone.”

So what then does this work contribute? What vision lies behind it? What new understanding does it provide? Is the point of it to do with dance and choreography, or psychotherapy? And is the use to which it can be put artistic or therapeutic? Is this pursuit of understanding of stillness worth it at all - or is it simply a vanity and a striving after wind?

Essentially the point was to create, in words and in the language of dance, a work that would provide opportunity for a transformative experience.

Does the data bear witness that this happened?

My interpretation of the data tells me that the dancers and watchers I interviewed found life-enhancement in the process they had been through with this study. Without exception they stated they experienced a measure of transformation, (as I have defined this word on p. 3). And yet, it has not been possible to state a categorical ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to the question ‘is it worth it’? Rather the data suggests that this endeavour is one part of the ‘Great Dance’ of all of humanity in our pilgrimage “to understand life out of life itself” (Geanellos, 1998, p. 45). Those interviewed are a sample of humanity and what was revealed is that in our unique ways we all - clients, therapists, dancers, watchers... (the human race) - seek meanings and moments which give our life purpose, direction and fulfilment. This is the *Dasein* of existence.

The concept of Dasein ('being in' or literally, 'being there') is the cornerstone of the early work of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). Dasein refers to a reality concerned with the nature of being, and of being-in-the-world, the concrete, literal, actual, daily world (Steiner, 1989, Smythe, 1998). Gelven (1970) suggest that the salient point about Dasein is that it itself can wonder about itself as existing (Smythe 1998, p. 23) and thus urges us to be asking questions such as 'What am I'? 'Why am I'? 'What does my existence mean'? Such questions are the stuff of life itself.

This journey of this thesis is to chart the process of being in the moments and seeking the meanings; of working out possible answers (to who, what, why and how we are). No solutions are offered and no final answers ever emerge, yet the dance, with its vicissitudes of emotion, its movement and quietness, its hunger and appeasing of hunger; with nothing ever entirely complete, nothing ever quite 'tied up' and unarguably certain - does, said the participants, express these 'stuff of life' issues. In so stating; mirroring; expressing stuff of life issues, the choreography could be said to be the choreography of dasein.

True to life, true to the psychotherapeutic journey (and the journey of the soul) there is no tidy end and I have not 'tied things up.' I have created no grand gestures of finality, no carefully assembled poses or tableaux announcing, (as is the norm in classical and most modern choreography)<sup>6</sup>, 'this is it'! Any 'answers' (if such they could be called) that might seem to be presented in this dance are those that have come to the participants through their living in the world and then seeing for themselves the 'answers' expressed.

Occurring conjunctly with the 'answers' and no less integral to the *dasein* of living, are the ongoing questions that stimulate and provoke us to *go on* living.

Sometimes the questions are felt to be overwhelming.

In our rhythm of earthly life we tire of light. We are glad  
When the day ends, when the play ends...  
We are children quickly tired: children who are up in the  
night and fall sleep when the rocket is fired; and the day  
is long for work or play...  
We sleep and are glad to sleep.  
(Eliot, Choruses X, 1936).

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<sup>6</sup> It is not the norm for post-modern choreography which is intentionally open-ended and often ambiguous

In the midst of living we are dying and the client seeking psychotherapy is (here I reduce all presenting problems, reasons, manifestations and issues into the one core issue) - afraid (Jung, 1965, p. 314). Is not one of the questions of *dasein*, if not *the* ultimate question of life, this knowing that we are dying and therefore - How shall we live? Indubitably therefore, I suggest this must also be the ultimate task of psychotherapy: to create an environment wherein the fear (of dying) may be brought into the open, where it may be met, and the life lived again. For this, what is required is a psychotherapy that dares work with clients who are afraid, dares confront the terror, dares admit the paradoxes and the unanswerable.

James Hillman comments (1975, p.x) that “the significance soul makes possible derives from its special relation with death” – then if psychotherapy is to do with the healing of the soul then it must be a psychotherapy that has relationship with death.

Is the dance - *this* dance, with its movement and its stillness, adequate for such a task? I believe there is no one methodology of psychotherapy that meets the need for every unique individual but I hold that the stillness that is explored and expressed in this thesis is at least contributive to, and certainly appropriate for the task. I dare make this claim because my research suggests that the stillness within and undergirding this choreography is seen to epitomise, or stand for the greater stillness that undergirds all psychotherapy and all of life’s transformative experiences. My research suggests it is the stillness, the moment caught! in the midst of the turning world, in the midst of turmoil and busyness, that gives the space and the pause to make the psychotherapy work at all.

In that this thesis is concerned with bringing the experience of stillness to our attention, so, similarly, have the participants said that the ‘thesis experience’ brought stillness to their attention as never before. Investigating stillness had expanded their perceptions, enhanced their noticing and made them aware of physical, kinetic and mental-physical dimensions they had not known before.

For the dancers, a year of working with this choreography resulted in deep connection with the subject. This finding *stillness in the midst of turbulence* - experiencing *the still point of the turning world* - became a personal journey for each. They connected with this theme and made it their own, the dance becoming a voice for their thoughts and feelings too. I saw the physical,

kinetic, wordless connection that existed for the dancers - I too experienced this. But I did not know if it could be so for the watchers. It thrilled me therefore, to discover that for the watcher also the connection was also physical, kinetic, wordless... The watchers said it made them aware *in* physical, kinetic and mental-physical ways they had not known before. They experienced a sort-of cellular response - "an innate sense of kinaesthetic empathy with moving bodies to directly receive the dancers message" (Foster, 1986, p. 230) - that while not *without* mental comprehension, was yet not dependent on it. Thus I learned that the choreography was a voice for the watchers too: while they had not learned the movements or the shape of the choreography - yet it 'spoke' for them. They had seen and felt the wordless emotion within them being expressed; their sense was that despite (or because of) wordlessness, their emotion was being shared.

I realised that for both dancer and watcher, this connection was something that while they could partially verbalise it, it was also something bigger. The dance served greater, and beyond, the dancer and the dance audience alone. It seems that in its capacity to hold and express the *dasein* process of the dancer and the watcher, the stillness became a vessel, or container, in which healing may take place; it became the "therapeutic crucible" (Dallaway, verbal communication, psychotherapy class, AUT, 1989).

### Stillness and unknowing

If the choreography, with its joy and hunger and rush! of living, with the dancers so intensely and passionately feeling the 'I am' and 'I am here' - is the stuff of *dasein*, then is the vast stillness within and without the dancing: holding it, defining it as 'dancing,' and at its source - this too? Heidegger (in Kemerling, 1998-2002) argues that "what-is is slipping always into what-is-not." In same vein I argue that here is an example of Heidegger's words - that here the stillness and the movement are also continually slipping one into the other - they are not opposite poles but concomitant, interwoven. It seems that it is awareness of this: of the movement as distinct *yet* continually slipping that provides recognition of the still point - and it is the still point, that time-place junction, that time-place hysteresis, wherein clients may potentially find a way to deal with the systematic, radical uncertainty of *dasein*. (Is it possible that the still point might even be then, the unnameable, that which holds even *dasein* and which ultimately is the place where God is....)??

A question I hold throughout this work is whether the work is to do with dance and choreography, or dance and psychotherapy, and whether the use to which it can be put is artistic or therapeutic.

I suggest there is not, in this case, any obvious demarcation to define one from the other. It seems to me they are both. I return to the Eliot poetry that has inspired me throughout this thesis

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Except for the still point, there would be no dance, and there is  
only the dance....  
The inner freedom from the practical desire,  
The release from action and suffering, release from the inner  
And the outer compulsion, yet surrounded  
By a grace of sense, by a white light, lifted and moving  
(Eliot, Four Quartets, 1972,).

In these words I am met with the opposites of movement and stillpoint, freedom and desire, compulsion and grace, sense and spirit, and there at the vortex of opposites, at the hysteresis (see page 19), I believe I and the participants received the grace to be still.

### Stillness, relationship and exclusion

Despite that in this work the characteristic sitting-down-talking-together formula of traditional psychotherapy does not occur, and a treatment plan of strategic psychotherapist → client interventions did not exist, yet there existed a series of most dynamic relationships. There was relationship between the choreographer and dancers, dancers and audience, choreographer and audience, dancers with each other, and each individual with themselves. In truth the dance work could not have been made *without* relationship for it is the quality of vulnerability; nakedness between each other that gives the choreography life.

Within the intimate confines of the stage, dancers undergo a powerful transcendental experience. No longer accomplished technicians presenting story and movement to an audience, they instead become transported into the dance itself. Their actions are vivid and full of passion, as if, unaware of either the performance context or even of the vocabulary of movements they had studied, they might transform feelings directly into actions (Foster, 1986, p. 150).

The watchers are no less 'caught up' into this relationship of emotion.

The audience, drawn into the dance by the power of its characters and its symbolic forms, no longer plays the role of spectators or voyeurs but empathises with the dramatic action. As the process of identification between viewer and dance gathers momentum, the dichotomies of intellect and emotion, form and feeling, personal and universal dissolve, and the viewer is swept into the catharsis and ecstasy of the moment (Foster, 1986, p. 167).

There were times that arose in the learning, doing, watching and understanding of the choreography when the watchers or dancers said to me, 'Yes. *I know...*' It was then that the poetic words quoted above became real to me and I perceived empathic accord and the peculiar and holy presence of relationship.

It became apparent through this study that relationship does not exist separate from its other - aloneness. As the movement of the dance cannot be identified or defined without the stillness, so relationship and 'aloneness' are also concomitant. The participants identified that the stillness was the time-space 'holding' that invited contemplation of relationship. It was the conduit for our communication, spoken and unspoken. And it was, as well, the time-space of deep aloneness.

Jan's experience - of feeling excluded when she observed the rapport that existed between particularly Sjouke and myself when we danced, was an important contribution to the psychotherapeutic process. Such material provides the therapist useful material with which to work. Exclusion issues that may have lain buried or deliberately concealed have been exposed. These may be the all-important key to unlock related issues of blighted self-image, shame and early rejection.

A thought lingers, on which I ponder... while this certainly does expose an issue of exclusion demanding perhaps long weeks or months of work, does it not also reveal an irrefutable truth: that the aloneness, and loneliness we experience - each one of us managing it differently - are these not, quite clearly, the enduring and inescapable *weltschmerz* of the human condition?

In our rhythm of earthly life we tire of light. We are glad when the day ends, when the play ends; and ecstasy is too much pain.  
(Eliot, 1972, Choruses from the Rock, X).

One indication of our desire to protect our aloneness is the feeling of shame. We are ashamed if our intimate self is opened, mentally as well as bodily.

We try to cover our nakedness as Adam and Eve did after they had become conscious of themselves.

Man and woman remain alone even in the most intimate union. They cannot penetrate each other's innermost centre (Tillich, 1957, p. 548).

At the very end of this dance (as at the end of life); after the hunger - lust - emergence - blessing-striving - and joining, we are, in the end - alone.

Being that this is so, can the dance do anything to ease the pain for those who experience it, who cannot yet come to terms with the *weltschmerz* and are groping for relief?

The answer to this question was paradoxical. On the one hand the participants experienced the stillness as profoundly healing: a kind of meeting-place, communion, a place of recognition. They felt the choreography, or aspects of it, was something they could appropriate for themselves. They felt that in its time-space location as 'common property,' or common ground, there was recognition of "I - Thou" (Schmidt, A. 1999).

On the other hand, *and at the same time*, there was this sense of aloneness: in which a strange duality: a sense of connection and commitment *and* a sense of existential exclusion was present. A realisation seemed to emerge: that the person who can apprehend this duality, (the same duality as the stillness within chaos, or the still point in the turning world) - has understanding that emotions are temporary; that they will change. They have a sense of being part of something greater than themselves.

### Dancing the hermeneutic circle

Through the multi-levelled process of doing this thesis: writing, choreographing, dancing and living it; teaching and coaching the dancers, and questioning all the participants and myself deeply on the theme of stillness, the choreographed stillness and the stillness deep within us - much self-revelation has occurred. Perhaps we all knew 'bits' of it, but not to the depth or extent that has been revealed through the research. The discovery, the realisation is this: that this act of

dancing involved us as dancers *and* choreographer *and* psychotherapist *and* teachers *and* trades-people *and* family members and *all* the roles in which we daily engage. It dawned upon us how completely our work comes from the whole person, one role or ‘aspect’ supporting the other.

In one way, the dancer is no different from the watcher, in the sense that a person walking in one direction is no different from a person walking in the opposite direction. In another sense however, the dancer is *totally* different from the non-dancer, for the dancer’s life, the life that trains and sweats and rehearses and forms within, transforms every part: spirit, body, soul and will are all remade, reborn even, in this pursuit, this love, this way of being. Thus ‘the dancer’ cannot be *part* of the person because when the pursuit is chosen it does not rest until it becomes the whole person. It is not divided from any of the parts as they are divided from one another, because the dance eventually:

Remoulds, eventually harmonises all the disparate modes, all the threads and loose ends, all the corporeal with the untouchable, the immaterial and the intangible (Lewis, 1947, p. 280).

It is an utter involvement. Simultaneous with this realisation is this, that utter involvement does not render it good or bad. It may be both. It can lead to intolerance *and* compassion, fanaticism *and* lenience, prejudice *and* generosity. The realisation is to do with *who* we really are... and how *wholly* we are that whom we are. Indeed, as Gadamer said:

Every experience is taken out of the continuity of life and at the same time related to the whole of ones life.  
(Gadamer, 1960/82, p. 62).

### Phenomenon or evidence (Smythe, 2002)

Dancing or watching this work, the participants described their experiences of perceiving stillness with deep feeling. The level of personal investment in how each participant entered and then engaged with this whole process initially surprised me. I did not expect that stillness, and the experience of it, as perceived in its counter-positional context (the dance) would be something that so aroused introspective inquiry into life’s meaning and purpose. But then I recognised that the window of stillness, juxtaposed as it was, in this case, against the whelm of

movement, story and emotion, provided a singular opportunity for contemplation and exploration, for seeing another perspective, for entering that prayer space so richly described by the mystics - for “becoming more conscious and kindling more light in the darkness of mere being” (Jung, 1965, p.326). This was no statistical survey to add numbers to numbers but for each, a personal exploration of life meaning. Many of the answers were given in graphic language and expressed deep emotion, seeming a close fusion between spirituality, artistry and psychotherapy. Still, psychotherapeutically speaking, this did not imply that any ‘successful intervention’ had taken place, or in fact whether anything psychotherapeutic had happened at all. Apart from personal report there *is* no external standard of measurement by which to evaluate the outcomes. Thus in declaring myself the dance-artist, and presenting work so vulnerable to interpretation, I acknowledge that I am unable to offer any ‘hard’ evidence for the claims I make regarding the healing and transformative power of the experience of stillness in the midst of chaos. (Even I am unwilling, for evidence, hard or otherwise, is anathema to the flow and tensile flexibility I consider the hall marks of my work).

Evidence is brought before a court of law... The difference (between phenomenon and evidence) lies in the process of dealing with the evidence, of needing to come to a firm decision about the truth of the evidence, and then being bound by that decision. Once that decision is made there is no room to be ‘open to more understanding’ Understanding about evidence is under the control of formal legal processes (Smythe, 2002).

With regard therefore, to a fundamental inquiry of my thesis work - (what psychotherapeutic application the experience of stillness)? - And the lack of evidence thereof, I acknowledge the inherent irresolvable problem of:

Finding a transcendent starting point or a self-evident, self-contained certainty on which we can construct an edifice of unconditioned knowledge...  
of discovering a universal law (Grenz, 1996, pp. 102-103).

However! Neither my goal nor my vision are thwarted, for in the end, the lived and felt experience of this dance work, and of the stillness within it and surrounding it, are *neither meant* to provide, nor be, any necessary, universal meaning to tie all things together. Neither the experience, nor the meaning of my dance, nor its stillness are *intended* to become:

Some subject as independent substance existing above time and human society or inhabiting some eternal, transcendent realm detached from life (in Grenz, 1996, p. 105).

In other words: what I demonstrate and offer here is no psychotherapeutic (or any other kind of) technique (or method or intervention or knowledge) that stands independently of we who dance, (and look, listen, read, seek healing, provide healing) and wonder about all things. What I demonstrate and offer here is research that suggests there is paradoxical understanding of the stillness experience.

While on one hand it is unique:

In hermeneutic philosophy it is a central principle that understanding is approximate, incomplete and changing and that interpretive diversity is one part of its certainly and strength (Geanellos, 1998, p.46).

On the other it is profoundly all-embracing:

No conceptual formulation or single statement can possibly capture the full mystery of this experience... It serves to point at, or allude to... themes of the existential life-worlds which pervade the experience of all human beings (van Manen, 1984, 1990).

I marvel at the breadth of interpretations and understandings I have heard of what actually constitutes stillness and what it individually means to each one. The interpretations and understandings arise from a breadth of equally unique interpretations of reality. It seems the 'reality' in which each of us is living is what dictates whether or not stillness is effective in healing. But which reality? What *is* 'reality'?

In the quietness and solitude of my long stillness times - from the hours (and hours)! spent alone in the studio, working out movements to best illustrate and embody my theme, to the moments suspended between other moments, I consider...

## Stillness and Reality

The 'reality' of the experience of stillness as occurring in this study does not emerge as any externally fixed or global definition but a very subjective description of what I and my interviewees perceive as the constituents of our experience. The wealth of data and observations I have collected in this study (and in my life) indicate clearly differing realities. "There is no objective world," says Humberto Maturana (1985, p.41). Maturana further states that we live in a subject/object split and that "any 'outside' that we might get to would be just as 'inside' as the place from where we began" (p.35). Maturana's words are reminiscent of T.S. Eliot's lines:

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.  
(Little Gidding, 1942).

An understanding confirmed then, is this: I always perceive the world - my existence; 'reality' - from the point of view of "I". After all cogitations and intellectual forays, I still speak from the subjective I. I am always looking 'out' from within, and the 'out there' is not more than my observed and subjective explanation of it. My observer explanations are constructed from my thought, and even that is not original. Dilthey (in Grenz, 1996) "denies that the structures of thought are a priori" (p.100); which is to say, that, just as the illusion of objectivity, neither is thought, nor even how I think a 'given', nor anything outside of my experience, context or interpretation:

Thought is gazing onto the face of life... pondering over an  
experience...thought is a man in his wholeness  
wholly attending (Lawrence, 1972).

While in my gazing into the face of life and pondering this experience of stillness I cannot claim pure originality of thought, I may however claim a unique process of intentionality and focus. My intention and focus throughout this choreography is to demonstrate the process of 'wholly attending,' of 'returning to the place we started,' of coming to the inner self. And this task, I claim, is a psychotherapeutic activity. My research suggests that in a world where the imperative is to "get going"! "move ahead"! "take action"! this 'stillness-in-dancing' or 'dancing-in-

stillness' is an activity of soul-making (Moore, 1992). I propose that the act of stillness-making within the turbulence of moving-living, is an activity of healing in, for my soul - and what else is psychotherapy but *psyche* and *therapeou* - the healing of the soul?

It is not for nothing that the Psalmist says "Be still and know... God". (Holy Bible, Psalm 46, verse 10). Whatever God means to each one of us, in whatever sense the word 'God' stands for the Ultimate Fact or simply The Ultimate, we are all born, I believe, to long for, and sometime enter the stillness that permits experience of (Him).

In a land of the blind the one-eyed man shall be king

Disconcerting - perhaps, but undeniable is the bias I bring to this research. My research questions, my deductions and what I offer as conclusions - all reflect who I am. While indeed I *am* all the various roles (dancer, choreographer, psychotherapist, teacher, mother: these roles in which I daily engage) my bias is to my being as dancer - and in so naming and self-evaluating myself it is inevitable that I come, not 'with strings attached' but with in fact, a whole world attached. Gadamer (1969/82) wrote, that:

We stand always within tradition, it is always part of us. It is a precondition into which we come; we produce it ourselves; we participate in its evolution and hence further determine it ourselves (p.261).

Thus, when confronted with new ideas and opinions I refer to the ideas and opinions I have already formed. And these 'already formed' ideas are not original, though I might think they are, for I am embedded in the milieu of my upbringing, my environment and my time of living. Thus in saying "I am a dancer"; in attaching this ontological 'tag' to the person who is me, I candidly acknowledge the wealth (weight) of "foreknowings" (Gadamer, 1987, pp. 82-140) that are attached to this tag. It is through the foreknowings that I evaluate my new perceptions and determine their relative importance in my overall understanding.

An example is the interview I had with Jan: her experience of the stillness she perceived in our dance relationship was one of exclusion. My already-there opinion is that this is surely Jan's *via negativa*. Feeling excluded, left out, peripheral, was a dominant underlying issue in her life that Jan told me showed itself again and again in diverse ways. It would reveal in the course of

psychotherapy treatment and would ultimately, if the psychotherapy is good, be the provocation that would inspire the energy and imaginative passion of the *via Creativa* (Fox, 1989, p.84; De Leon, 2000, p.17).

Gadamer tells us that “understanding belongs to the being of that which is understood” (1969/82, p.xix). cursory reading of these words suggests an exclusivity of appreciation: *only* those who know the being of a thing can understand it. Here I find words to support what surely is the shadow of my vision, a most *un*-psychotherapeutic, even narcissistic prejudice:

A prejudice is a judgement that is given before all the elements  
that determine a situation have been finally examined (Gadamer, p.240)

- and mine asks, how can anyone *but* a dancer catch a glimpse of this so transformative, so all-encompassing paradigm of wellness and wholeness?! How can *anyone* feel what I feel when it is through the commitment: the absolute commitment to personal discipline<sup>7</sup> that I set myself free? It was not only that I did not know if the watcher watching the dance could have this all-filling awareness also - I almost did not want them to, so heady, so ‘special’ is the clarity and numescence I experience when I choreograph and dance. My prejudice argued that *only* someone who has experienced the dance and the stillness as I have would be able to grasp its efficacy as a powerful healing agency. The prejudice I harboured was so great that had I hugged it to myself; had I not deliberately exposed it to Supervision and self-scrutiny, I imagine I could have otherwise blinded myself. And then I would have missed out on the revelation (not to mention opportunity to release my prejudice) - that the non-dancers really *could* feel the movement; *could* apprehend it; *could* ‘dance’ it with me.

For while my personal experience may indeed be rich because of what has happened in my life’s journey thus far; while it even is, in a small, particular sense, legitimately ‘ok’ for me to claim with special glee “*it’s mine!*”- yet neither number of experiences nor measure of possessive glee will ever communicate the sole, entire and final apprehension of the stillness-in-chaos experience. Certainly one’s prejudice cannot confer ownership because “lying behind the Babel of competing interpretations is a shared reality, a tradition, a world, a language” (Grenz, 1996, p. 110). I believe dance *is* a shared reality, tradition, world, and language. I believe it *can* foster a

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<sup>7</sup> This discipline, while similar to that practiced by athletes, is different – for this discipline, as well as training for physical and technical excellence, also trains the ability to realize artistic expression.

climate in which dancers and viewers, artists, therapists and clients are enabled to enter a dialogue between the work and its interpreter. This is now a 'hermeneutical conversation' in which prejudice, possessiveness and narcissism dissolve. Thus, the interpretive, hermeneutic aspect of this thesis allowed further dimensions of meaning, relevance and significance to emerge. Two important realisations occurred for me. One is that this process provides a way for exclusivity of original opinion to drop away into something wider, broader and deeper; to being open to what is 'other;' to being sensitive to the 'something new'. As Gadamer (1960/1982) remarks:

The interpreter does not necessarily attain a superior understanding but may understand in a different way (p.264)

All understanding is always more than the mere recreation of someone else's meaning (p.338).

The other is that the acknowledgment of shared understanding (Kohut, 1971) is intensely satisfying, bonding, comforting and inspiring. It spurs one to take one's prejudices: examine them, own them - and to be open to new awareness and understandings:

If I see something I can be deceived. Only if another sees it too, and confirms it for me do I know it was no deception... The community and universality of truth means that we engage with others, in full reciprocal openness, and that in such testing and clarifying, we stand on common ground  
(Bollnow, 1974, pp.12-13).

#### Two diverse notions about stillness: To be commended or condemned?

I return to the question that is a constant throughout this thesis: Does it heal - does it have psychotherapeutic efficacy? My data has shown me that for these participants, their experience of stillness - as they felt it kinetically, visually and emotionally, does have psychotherapeutic healing power. We nine dancers and watchers were convinced of its therapeutic worth. The challenge could be thrown that, by virtue of working with one so convinced (that is, myself), the participants, dancers and watchers, were predisposed to if not the same outcome, at least one not too dissimilar. But it seems this is a narrow assumption. A curious anomaly presented itself. While we nine participants all espoused the worth of stillness, we were also incredibly busy, and

sometimes over-busy people. What was this disparity? Was this an unspoken, unacknowledged contrariety existing here?

To talk about the disparity, I look at some aspects of psychotherapeutic belief and practice. Firstly, why do clients seek psychotherapy? The short answer is this: clients have personal difficulties and life issues in which they feel they have limited or no choice; they feel trapped, overwhelmed, unable to cope (Faye, 2002). Consequently, and as part of the treatment plan, the psychotherapist (I have done this) may recommend and encourage the client to do some version of stillness - for example: take some time out, allow time for rest, 'ease up', 'chill' - simply be still. However, in observing and talking to the participants I see that there is a *shadow* to this 'stillness-taking.'

I present an example from my personal journey: My life thus far has included approximately eight full years of enforced stillness, when, due to accident or illness I have been obliged to lie down and lie still. In these periods of enforced stillness I experienced a sense of demotion: 'if she doesn't move she's not 'in the running'.' Concomitant with and subsequent to this time has come the (sometimes insinuated, oft-times very direct) recommendation to *stay* down - in other words: to *quit*. It is not the purpose of this paper to inquire into that shadow of the human psyche that is pleased to see another person beaten and down, and Dante expresses it far better than I:

If he were beautiful  
As he is hideous now, and yet did dare  
To scowl upon his Maker, well, from him  
May all our misery flow. Oh what a sight!  
(Dante, Canto 34).

Yet it has been, and is still, my experience that the physical, actual doing of modes we call 'rest', 'recovery', 'repose', 'tranquillity', can with disconcerting rapidity be transposed to the more negative 'inactivity', 'immobility', 'stopped', 'useless...' These are emotionally laden terms describing a reality negative and bleak indeed. And here the shadow is most apparent, in that the perverse impelling force to conform: to be seen to be part of the group or organisation prevails, so that it seems better to be 'down' than too active or, God forbid, too successful. (May, 1964, p. 372).

It seems a commonly held societal opinion that to rest up / take time out / be still - is good. Doctors, friends, mothers, well-meaning neighbours - all recommend it and while psychotherapists do not (consciously) dictate, if their underlying opinion is this then that will almost certainly be apparent, albeit subtly, through the interchange of a session. In the face of the not-so-subtle indictment however, can psychotherapeutic counsel for stillness *really* be perceived as efficacious, or even appropriate? And if the opposite is just as true, and psychotherapeutic encouragement to 'get moving'! has just as contrary an outcome, then we are truly caught in a dilemma that can wreck havoc in any client's fragile equilibrium. I reflect upon the bizarre inconsistency that in this post-modern age when we each may write our own value system, morality and meaning to life, there yet exists this pervasive persuasive indictment on this aspect of living.

Indeed a dilemma! We are confronted by the dichotomy of a stillness that on one hand epitomises a reality that has to do with quitting, being beaten, not succeeding, not achieving, conforming, definitely *not* standing out - and, on the other has to do with inner growth, emotional maturity, psychological healing, spiritual transcendence. So is stillness the one - or the other?! How may we psychotherapists equip our clients to manage and reconcile the antithesis between the stillness that is healing, and the stillness that denotes down and beaten? Do we know how to prepare ourselves to deal with this antithesis?

An answer seemed to emerge as I choreographed: a paradoxical 'answer' for it is the very same stillness around which the dilemma turns. My point, congruent with the premise on which I began this inquiry, woven into my choreography and the story I present - is that it is *in and through this stillness that the oppositional currents may meet*. The stillness is the dilemma *and* the reconciliation; the heart of the conflict *and* the management of it.

I believe the human soul seeks "a place to be still" no different from Lilith in the distant reaches of ancient mythology - and it is the purpose of this work to reveal one singular and potent way in which the place to be still, the condition of stillness, may be attained.

(There are certainly other ways and other psychotherapeutic interventions, not covered in this work).

Here is the 'showing' of it then. The research shows the stillness is here: it was discovered, was entered into, was real in our lives, and was – and is - effective in the healing as defined in this paper.

Regarding the dilemma I believe it would be worthwhile to include recognition of this factor in psychotherapy training and treatment. I suggest also it is a subject on which further research is required. While the gross difference between 'being still' and 'getting moving', and the antithesis between stillness that transforms and stillness that depresses are obvious, my research tells me that the meaning of these phrases is for each individual, unique.

Further investigation into individual perspectives of what it means to 'get moving' and 'be still,' would produce useful and interesting data pertinent to any inquiry regarding the art and science of psychotherapy, dance therapy and the mystery of stillness.

Intentionally promoting (i) stillness and (ii) the practice of rigour and discipline in psychotherapeutic training and treatment raises axiological, philosophical and clinical questions. From the experience of both the participants and myself I hold that it would be a positive and important teaching.

#### Fact / Phenomenon

A person who seeks to understand must question what lies behind what is said. If we go back behind what is said then we inevitably ask questions beyond what is said. (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p.333).

While I did not create this work holding either agenda or need to espouse postmodernism, there are yet some postmodern characteristics. I offer no universal, objective reality statements about stillness, healing or the human condition. My research does not seek, nor is intended to result in certainty, consensus, objectivity or accuracy (Geanellos, 1998, pp. 46 & 47). "Hermeneutics is an art, not a mechanical process", said Geanellos, (1998, p.168) and "Discovery of true meaning is never finished, it is an infinite process' said Heidegger, 1927/1962, p.26). Choreographing dance to express this idea of stillness within chaos, of the still point - then dancing it through

hours and hours of rehearsal to performance readiness - then performing it through degrees and levels of tiredness, pain, frustration and exhilaration of body and mind - and through all this seeking the healing value of it - has been a process that has made these words profoundly real for me. I mean real not only in terms of mental comprehension, but at a deep, wordless bodily level also. Creating choreography to express the search for the essence of stillness within movement, or for simply the stillness within, never was and was never intended to be a categorising or measurable activity. I found I could think my way into stillness, joining with countless numbers of people who meditate, pray and simply wait. But when I danced my way into stillness I experienced something quite different and, for me, deeper. As I danced I *felt* myself listening: the solids and fluids of my body listening to minute messages from my brain to indicate when moments of stillness were to occur. It appears to me that this process of moving → feeling → listening → stillness emerging (which is also is a hermeneutic circle sequence) cannot be tied up neatly into formulaic definition. Thus as stated (p. 47) my work is neither objective nor absolute nor true in any positivist sense, nor is it ironic or cynical as many postmodern works are (Anderson, 1996, p.11) – rather I offer work that flows from the principles with which I work and in which I believe: empathy, communication, enlightenment (Crotty, 1998, p. 109).

Providing definitions means allowing our thinking to structure the artistic being and knowing and the therapeutic being and knowing before it has unfolded its healing power (Kremer, 1997, p. 17).

My closing statement for this chapter is paradoxical because I perceive it to be the opening statement for a new inquiry. While I maintain absolutely that the perception of this stillness - indeed, the stillness itself - contains, and *is* the medium for profound psychological psycho-spiritual healing, yet it is also the case that, even then, *it is not enough*. For we are of the earth and we seek to fly:

Crying for life beyond life, for ecstasy not of the flesh... always struggling, always reaffirming, always resuming our way on the way that is lit by the light; Often halting, loitering, straying, delaying, returning, yet following no other way  
(Eliot, 1935, Choruses from the Rock, VII).

There is one constant; one element in common - through the struggling, the crying and reaffirming; through the training and 'tools', the working and re-working, the techniques, theories, interventions, insights and moments of sheer, wordless magic - there is this one element in common, one element inherent, integral and constant. This 'element' holds it all. Stillness. What engenders the passion to create, the choreography, the desire to live and the desire to be healed - is the communion, celebration, communication, and "deep authenticity of the soul" (Foster, 1986, p.42). These arise in the stillness.

Finally, I hold, and this most passionately, that communication of humanity and psychotherapy can be initiated and sustained in ways other than the written word. I propound an ontological, perceptive shift: that there is an alternative way of seeing, an alternative way of knowing, and an alternative way of receiving and then assimilating what has been seen. There is another way in which that which has been perceived may be received and then evidenced in a person's life. I hold that for both do-er and watcher or beholder, there is reception and interpretation occurring that is the response of body. I hold that understanding takes place at this level, and albeit embodied and inarticulate, is no less real. Not only is the essence of the experience of stillness held in the movement, but also the *meaning* of it.

Dance researchers (Foster, 1986, Langer, 1953, Sachs, 1963, Grove, 2003) speak about an innate sense of kinaesthetic empathy with moving bodies known as 'mimicry' (Foster, 1986, p. 230). Through mimicry it is possible to directly receive the dancer's message - in the process of which the dancer and her message are so inextricably bound together that one tells of the other, and vice versa (Foster, 1986, p.3). *This* then is the clarity I wish to impart. I seek to articulate and demonstrate this tensile connection between movement and the psyche - proposing in dance and word a theory of representation offering a singular approach to psychotherapeutic treatment.

# Chapter Seven

## Conclusion

### Drawing threads together

In this chapter I summarise what has occurred in the creating of this thesis – I restate the inquiry and summarise details of the research process, the data results and the choreographed dance. I offer some recommendations for psychotherapeutic practice, education, further research and limitations of this work. My closing statements are lyrical and reflective, mirroring the feeling of the end of the dance, and leaving us with a sense that there is always further to go.

#### The inquiry

The purpose of this exploratory, descriptive, hermeneutic phenomenological study was to address the question: *what is the lived experience of stillness, specifically, the stillness that occurs in the midst of movement, turbulence or chaos?* I wished to research what effect the experience of this particular stillness may have in the journey towards psychological healing, and its possible application to the practice of doing psychotherapy. I wished to know whether the experience of this particular stillness could be transformative, as in facilitating the journey towards healing of the soul.

I found that the question elicited more than what I suspected would be the answer to the original question and that the description of stillness in this study is bigger than the stated purpose in Chapter I.

#### Details of the research

I created an allegory expressing themes of the human condition. While the dance is sequential and the human condition is not, the dance yet captures the stages that humans live: at any place, at any time, and in no particular order. We all are at various places of the allegory and can also be at several different places near simultaneously.

Interviews with dancers and watchers produced data to do with their experiences of embodiment, awareness and engagement with the subject. The data was studied through reflection and sifted and selected for its relevance to my core questions.

From personal experience and client observation as a practising dancer and psychotherapist/dance therapist I believe engagement with this 'stillness within the turbulence' is vital to our survival. My research confirms this and suggests that the conscious practice of stillness results in empowerment to make choices and enhance the quality of living. I am not so partial as to claim that people *must* embrace the deliberate act of claiming and creating stillness in their lives. Because however, in my experience and as a consequence of this research I have found it a source of healing, creativity, emotional rest, spiritual growth, I venture that in our time now, there is urgency for us to heed well this source of human enhancement.

The study showed that participants experienced a sense of connection to something bigger than themselves, and that perception of the stillness made them feel more whole. Bond's (1990) study on solitude identified certain elements that are relevant and equally true to the experience of stillness. The elements are 1) a sense of connection with oneself and with others 2) a transpersonal sense of Something greater and beyond the dance, the dancers, and the audience 3) an ecstatic sense of aliveness imparting the ability to transcend 'fixedness' and supporting the capability to maintain integrity and a sense of self in the midst of turmoil.

Gleaned from this study has come a unity of meaning - the themes time, space, awareness of self / others / things, heightened perception, choice and willingness, inner and outer calm, self-esteem, engagement and connectedness with presence, or God - co-mingle, merge and dance together.

#### Recommendations for practice

In this stillness says Odajnyk (1988, p. 37)

The energy no longer leaks or reverts to its dispersal among inner and outer stimuli: in the psyche.. an alchemical container is established for the production of philosopher's gold.

This is surely a high goal for psychotherapeutic engagement! It may be argued that the same result can be achieved through many other psychotherapeutic techniques, and certainly meditation practice, yoga class, guided breath work and resting may do so too. This does not take away from the distinction of a stillness caught! – in the midst of. I suggest that if this experience of stillness-within-movement was practised in the therapeutic context it would enhance therapeutic progress greatly. While articulate professional-level dancing will be neither appropriate nor possible in every therapeutic encounter, there can still and always be acknowledgement of and participation with breathing, sitting, standing, walking and kinaesthetic awareness. Time and space can be given for organic and elementary movement patterns to emerge. I am, indeed, suggesting an actual, physical doing. For experience of the stillpoint, there must be the dance.

### Education

It is my experience in my roles as dancer, psychotherapist, student, that skill and proficiency are the product of education - not education alone, for other factors such as natural aptitude, environment, opportunity and location are also hugely contributive. Nevertheless I believe that without education a person is in many ways impoverished. I suggest therefore that instruction about dance elements: space, time, effort and shape, and the phenomenon of stillness within this movement, and any philosophical discussion that may arise, are all valuable aspects to education that could rightly and usefully take place regards this work. I suggest further that for any practice that is unfamiliar, comparatively new, or not 'mainstream,' education is essential. Juhan (1987) speaks of the unifying of the nervous system and *of knowing* about the self and the outside world - I recommend it is through education that we are able to understand the levels of what Juhan - and this work - means, and benefit from it.

Movement itself is the factor which unites the two halves of the central nervous into a unified relationship of continually mutual reciprocity... this is to say, that the extent to which I move, and the manner in which I move, have everything to do with what I know about myself and what I know about the outside world (Juhan, 1987, pp. 186 -187).

### Further research

Sjouke (dancer) spoke about a stillness within the movement that was contained, felt, and expressed in the relationship between a man and a woman (p. 73). I suggest material for ongoing study may be to investigate the stillness dynamic that surely exists for same-sex couples, and then for groupings of people such as families, classes, interest groups, congregations, demographic areas, countries...

There is ongoing research that can take place regarding the knowing of the body. It became apparent from this research that the bodily and embodied experience is a 'knowing': albeit not in the language of words (p. 20). If this is so then the experience of stillness within movement as understood by the mind and felt by the body may surely have dimensions and nuances unexplored in this work.

I have noted the oppositional dynamic between on one hand the value of stillness, and on the other, the shame of it (pp. 96-98). I suggest here is an area for ongoing research. Certainly in terms of psychotherapeutic practice: we who are psychotherapists will subtly (or plainly) promote the concept and practice of taking time to be still in the midst 'of it all' - are we truly cognizant of the consequences and do we know when to recommend which? The question remains unanswered.

Another possibility for research is a question I would place in the domain of philosophical wondering. My question is - do we create this experience, or are we products of the experience? (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). My research does not encompass such a broad philosophical exploration but it may hold intrigue for another researcher.

### Limitations of this thesis

A limitation may be perceived in that the thesis lacks 'hard data' or evidence. I do not disguise the fact that undergirding the work is my premise that there is no 'final' definition of this stillness experience about which we wonder and that I agree with such statements as

The world is not a static and closed order, a given reality which man must accept and to which he must adjust (Freire, 1970, p. 12).

and

There is no objective world (Maturana, 1987, p.41).

A second limitation is that because reality or experience is unique to each individual, the thesis does not and cannot encompass such a range. Had I enlisted more participants I would have gained a greater wealth of data. What is shared here is the experience of we who feel, dance and speak about it, and is therefore of a bounded perspective. Finally I believe the psychotherapist may seek for techniques and theoretical information that is not here. My stated intention (p. 10) is that this work will be of value to all those who are healing, creating, resting, and growing. But it may not be.

#### Just before the bow

The experience has been of dance that seeks the stillness and of stillness that contains the dance: these are not simply a metaphor for *Dasein*, for being-in-the-world (Grenz, 1996, pp. 104-105); these are *Dasein*.

This is a story about dance, stillness and healing. These three altogether are a pilgrimage; a prayer; a way of life. As a choreographer, psychotherapist, dance therapist, human on this earth - my desire is that my thesis might inspire others to recognise the steps of their own dance, perchance feel a rhythm behind the words that stirs them to dance on - and a stillness that enables them to rest and restore for whatever follows.

Throughout this work, and before it, and now, I ask myself, *Is it possible that the quintessential essence of dance and stillness are one and the same?*

I dare to say that it is in the stillness - or maybe in the dance - where lies, not answers, but a kind of reconciliation or peace to the existential questions I ask, questions that shape my reality and my being....

You have created me with the longing and the hunger - I must dance, or die.  
Is my art the ultimate distraction; the final cunning of the human soul which  
would rather do anything than face the gods? - or is my dance the most  
profound entrance into God's presence that I shall ever essay on this earth?  
(Paraphrased, Iris Murdoch, 1919-1999).

My response is this, if art is the ultimate idolatry that stands between the gods and me then God is also the ultimate tempter. God created the art within me and God created the hunger in me for to make the art.

It is in the stillness between (movements) that I am most aware of the torment that besets me because of these questions. I am driven to dance and *equally*, driven or impelled to find / create / choreograph stillness in which to dwell. These two are indivisible, the reflection of each other and yet not so neatly compartmentalised, for in the midst of movement there is stillness and the stillness contains all the movement.

Lastly, what if, just, what if, our bodies and their movement in space and time, and their stillness in space and time; what if this dance is the symbol, the gloriously animated earth-real symbol of the living fountain of divine healing, connecting and integrating us - audience, dancers, clients, self - with none other than the divine dance of the Ultimate Fact, the Creator, the One in whom all things have their source, their existence and their utterance?

It is not the only way. It is the way in the *dasein* - in the experience of my own and these participants' journeys, which we have found to be most real. I hold that this stillness stands for not the un-clothing but the re-clothing, revealing not the formless Everywhere / Nowhere but Location and Identification, some stillness which will be perfectly - as the present stillness is partially and intermittently - the instrument for the dance and the dialogue between God and all we who are engaged in healing, creating, resting, and growing.

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**Appendix A.**  
**Ethics Approval**

## **Appendix B (1)**

### **Participant Information Form (Watcher)**

Master of Health Science, AUT Psychotherapy Department, Auckland.

#### **Project Title**

A Study of the Experience of Stillness – as told and as beheld in movement.

#### **Invitation from Jennifer De Leon**

Dear (Name of participant),

You are invited to join me in my quest to understand more about the phenomenon of stillness, in particular, stillness that occurs in the midst of movement.

Dr Liz Smythe, Associate Professor at AUT, is my Primary Supervisor.

#### **How is a person chosen to be part of this study?**

For the movement aspect of this work I am inviting people known to me as dancers. The watchers are people who wish to be part of the audience.

Both dancers and watchers are persons who are able to conceive of this work as being efficacious in psychotherapeutic treatment and who may, at some stage of their lives, wish to engage in psychotherapy in this way.

#### **What happens in the study?**

You are being asked to voluntarily participate in a study examining how you perceive, feel, think about, and experience stillness.

There will be individual interviews, lasting up to one hour. The interviews will be transcribed. Each interview will be scheduled at a time convenient to you; at a location convenient to us both.

At the first interview you will be asked for your consent to participate in the research. You will be asked if you are comfortable to talk about stillness.

There are no formal interview questions, however, you may be asked questions like: What is your understanding of stillness? What is your perception of stillness as you watched this dance? What memories, if any, did this perception trigger? Would you take a pose, or draw a picture of yourself showing what you have experienced?

In order to facilitate your communication with me about stillness you will be offered opportunity to move in and out of movement stances and/or sequences, or draw a picture.

Data will be extracted from the interview and returned to you for confirmation that you are willing for it to be included in this work. Written work will also be sent to you for review prior to publication.

**What are the discomforts and risks?**

It is not anticipated that you will experience any discomfort from participation. If for any reason you become upset, or want to stop the interview any time, the interview will stop. If for some reason the interview causes you emotional distress, I will provide the names of counsellors whom you may wish to consult.

The assumption of this study is that any discomfort is worth the insight that it brings.

There is no funding for this study. You will not be paid for participation in this study. The only cost to you is your time.

**What are the benefits?**

To participate is to engage in a self-reflective process of the experience of stillness, offering heightened consciousness of what happens for you when you dance , and deepened insight into and appreciation of your personal experience of stillness. Such insights could be valuable in bringing fresh understanding to a phenomenon that could (a) support the psychotherapeutic process (b) support the artistic creative process (c) be life-enhancing.

**How is privacy protected?**

Your person will be regarded with the utmost respect and courtesy. As a watcher your identity need not be revealed. The audio-recorded interview with myself will be transcribed into written form. I will secure both the audio and video-tapes with my Supervisor at AUT. After 6 years all the tapes will be destroyed. The information in this study may be published in professional journals, but your name need not be used unless you wish it.

Conversely do you wish to be acknowledged as a participant who will contribute

to future publications in these two fields, psychotherapy and dance academia? This question will be asked of you and agreed to prior to publication.

**Opportunity to consider invitation**

I would appreciate feedback within two weeks of you receiving this invitation if you wish to participate.

Please ask any questions you may have now or later, by calling Jennifer De Leon at (09) 3761.671.

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

**Participant concerns:**

Any concerns regarding this project should be directed in the first instance to the Project supervisor, Ms Liz Smythe, 09.917.9999 ext. 7196. Concerns thereafter may be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Madeleine Banda, [madeleine.banda@aut.ac.nz](mailto:madeleine.banda@aut.ac.nz) 09.917.9999 ext. 8044.

Thankyou for considering this invitation.

**Jennifer De Leon**

Student 9039531

Appendix B (2)i

AUTHORIZATION: I HAVE READ THE ABOVE AND CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY. I AM AWARE THAT MY PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY AND THAT I CAN DISCONTINUE MY INVOLVEMENT AT ANY TIME.

I AGREE TO MY PARTICIPATION \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNED:\_\_\_\_\_

WITNESS:\_\_\_\_\_Date\_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B (2)**

### **Participant Information Form (Dancer)**

Master of Health Science, AUT Psychotherapy Department, Auckland.

#### **Project Title**

A Study of the Experience of Stillness – as told and as beheld in movement.

#### **Invitation from Jennifer De Leon**

Dear (Name of participant),

You are invited to join me in my quest to understand more about the phenomenon of stillness, in particular, stillness that occurs in the midst of movement.

Dr Liz Smythe, Associate Professor at AUT, is my Primary Supervisor.

#### **How is a person chosen to be part of this study?**

For the movement aspect of this work I am inviting people known to me as dancers. The watchers are people who wish to be part of the audience.

Both dancers and watchers are persons who are able to conceive of this work as being efficacious in psychotherapeutic treatment and who may, at some stage of their lives, wish to engage in psychotherapy in this way.

#### **What happens in the study?**

You are being asked to voluntarily participate in a study examining how you perceive, feel, think about, and experience stillness.

There will be individual interviews, lasting up to one hour. The interviews will be transcribed. Each interview will be scheduled at a time convenient to you; at a location convenient to us both.

At the first interview you will be asked for your consent to participate in the research. You will be asked if you are comfortable to talk about stillness.

There are no formal interview questions, however, you may be asked questions

like: What is your understanding of stillness? What is your perception of stillness as you danced in this work? What is it like to recognise this stillness in the midst of dancing? What memories, if any, did this perception trigger? Would you take a pose, or draw a picture of yourself showing what you have experienced?

In order to facilitate your communication with me about stillness you will be offered opportunity to move in and out of movement stances and/or sequences, or draw a picture.

Data will be extracted from the interview and returned to you for confirmation that you are willing for it to be included in this work. Written work will also be sent to you for review prior to publication.

### **What are the discomforts and risks?**

It is not anticipated that you will experience any discomfort from participation. If for any reason you become upset, or want to stop the interview any time, the interview will stop. If for some reason the interview causes you emotional distress, I will provide the names of counsellors whom you may wish to consult.

The assumption of this study is that any discomfort is worth the insight that it brings.

Funding secured for this study for artistic purposes will be paid to you; \$500.00 for your involvement The only cost to you is your time.

### **What are the benefits?**

To participate is to engage in a self-reflective process of the experience of stillness, offering heightened consciousness of what happens for you when you dance , and deepened insight into and appreciation of your personal experience of stillness. Such insights could be valuable in bringing fresh understanding to a phenomenon that could (a) support the psychotherapeutic process (b) support the artistic creative process (c) be life-enhancing.

### **How is privacy protected?**

Your person will be regarded with the utmost respect and courtesy. Because of the video-taping aspect it will not be possible to conceal your identity. If you do not

feel comfortable for your identity to be revealed then you will not be a suitable participant for this study. The audio-recorded interview with myself will be transcribed into written form. I will secure both the audio and video-tapes with my Supervisor at AUT. After 6 years all the tapes will be destroyed. The information in this study may be published in professional journals, but your name need not be used unless you wish it.

Conversely do you wish to be acknowledged as a participant who will contribute to future publications in these two fields, psychotherapy and dance academia? This question will be asked of you and agreed to prior to publication.

### **Opportunity to consider invitation**

I would appreciate feedback within two weeks of you receiving this invitation if you wish to participate.

Please ask any questions you may have now or later, by calling Jennifer De Leon at (09) 3761.671.

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

### **Participant concerns:**

Any concerns regarding this project should be directed in the first instance to the Project supervisor, Ms Liz Smythe, 09.917.9999 ext. 7196. Concerns thereafter may be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Madeleine Banda, [madeleine.banda@aut.ac.nz](mailto:madeleine.banda@aut.ac.nz) 09.917.9999 ext. 8044.

Thankyou for considering this invitation.

**Jennifer De Leon**

Student 9039531

## Appendix C.

### Consent to Participation in Research

Appendix B (2)i

AUTHORIZATION: I HAVE READ THE ABOVE AND CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY. I AM AWARE THAT MY PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY AND THAT I CAN DISCONTINUE MY INVOLVEMENT AT ANY TIME.

I AGREE TO MY PARTICIPATION \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_

WITNESS: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Still point

At the still point: there the dance is

*A dance work created for the fulfilment of requirements for the degree of  
Master of Health Science  
April 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>, 2005*

## **Thesis Topic**

A hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry into the experience of stillness – a unique stillness – that which occurs in the midst of movement, turbulence or chaos – found “*at the still point of the turning world*” (T.S. Eliot).

## **About this work**

It would be eminently possible to state my thesis through any number of stories. I have chosen *this* story. For this story holds for me the capacity wherein I can choreograph movement metaphors that ‘speak’ my work -

*Chaos: Turbulence: Hysteresis: Equipoise: Stillness: Healing: Transformation.*

The story is Biblically-inspired. It is an interpretation of the Christian creation story, beginning at the beginning of the Bible, Genesis, chapter 1, verse 1. The choreography is allegorical. It follows an imaginative sequence reflecting though not identical to the Bible story. This story could be seen to be telling about *one* time in the existence of the universe – whether actual or mythical is not relevant here - but I believe it is timeless, archetypal. And it seems to me also the story of the human condition we experience *now*.

## **(1) Dance of Lilith**

In The Beginning, movement wells as if from a priori darkness and chaos –

*In the beginning GOD created the world. Waste and void.*

*Waste and void. And darkness was upon the face of the deep.*

*And when there were men, in their various ways, they struggled in toment towards God  
Blindly and vainly, for man is a vain thing, and man without God is a seed upon the wind: driven  
this way and that, and finding no place of lodgement and germination  
(Eliot, Choruses VII, 1934).*

The allegorical figure who symbolises this chaos is Lilith. Lilith is a creature of Jewish mythology, coming before Eve, a creature of unrest, madness, lust and hunger. The Lilith energy is sensuous, passionate, irrepressible; she streaks through the night; entering our dreams, whispering of what may be...

*For there shall Lilith alight, but where findeth her a place to be still? (Isaiah 34:14).*

The story of stillness begins with its opposite, Chaos. Lilith expresses the mad hunger, the passions and desires within us. The movement expresses *disequilibrium*; it is also that which grounds us and reveals the keen pulsing energy through which we are most vividly alive. At the end the dancers shudder to a stillness. Finally: a moment when something new may emerge. Four dancers portray that Lilith is present in us all.

## **(2) Dance of Eve**

She is not the Botticelli Eve of reclining lustrous languor. This Eve is she who is made of, and emerges out of the earth:

*For out of the dust you were taken (Genesis 3:19).*

Lilith, metaphor of madness and chaos, has been exiled from Eden. Now arises the new creature - Eve.

*Then it seemed as if they must proceed from light to light...  
Through the Passion and Sacrifice saved in spite of their negative being;  
Bestial as always before, carnal, self-seeking as always before, Yet always struggling, always reaffirming, always resuming their march on the way that was lit by the light;  
Halting, loitering, straying, delaying, returning, yet following no other way  
(Eliot, Choruses VII, 1934).*

This Eve - a new creature - still has the earth about her. She is Woman: part-snake – femme – Lover – Mother - Birther of men – Creatress - forever emerging. She looks, reaches, tastes, touches, feels. She is ourselves. We reach for the energies that give life its meaning... the hunger, the lust, the sacred, exalted, and moments of stillness, when all things hang in balance.

## **(3) Dance of the Spirit**

*The Spirit was moving over the face of the water and God said Let there – Be  
(Genesis 1:2).*

From pre-creation chaos, and primal, snake-like energy, the human spirit seeks to go beyond...

*A moment not out of time but in time: transecting, bisecting this world of time, a moment in time  
but not like a moment of time,  
A moment in time but time was made through that moment:  
for without the meaning there is no time and that moment of time gave the meaning (Eliot,  
Choruses VII, 1934).*

The Spirit that moved upon the face of the water broods forever over us, in this moment falls and is forever present among us. “*It is the Spirit that gives life*” (John 6:63). We reach into realms of mind and thought, awareness, creativity, choice and spiritual mindfulness: that which animates the whole. In this suspended place we do not wish to disturb the stillness of the air as we move so stilly through it.

## **(4) Dance of Humanity**

We are HERE! Here is the paradox of the human condition – First we wonder, what does it mean to be alive? Then we are bold, assertive and we claim ‘This earth is MINE’. We stake our claim. Controlled sculptural movements suggest the rules and codes inside of which we encase ourselves in our attempt to give life order and direction. Control becomes desperation, as we -

*Struggle in torment towards God  
Blindly and vainly, for man is a vain thing, and man without God is a seed on the wind: driven  
this way and that, and finding no place of lodgement and germination  
Crying for life beyond life, for ecstasy not of the flesh (Eliot, Choruses VII, 1934).*

We cannot quench the yearning. We cannot be still, what we have is not enough, we must have MORE...

*I am no fugitive – escaped, escaping,  
No one has seen me stumble looking back. My fear  
is not behind me but beside me  
On either hand to make my course perhaps  
a crooked straightness yet no less a straightness.  
I run face forward. I am a pursuer.*

*I seek a seeker who in his turn seeks another still, lost far into the distance. Any who seek me  
seek in me the seeker.*

*My life is a pursuit of a pursuit forever. It is the future that creates the present; I am an  
interminable chain of longing (Frost, 1973).*

*Crying for life beyond life - for ecstasy not of the flesh, always struggling, always reaffirming,  
always resuming our way on the way that is lit by the light –  
halting, loitering, straying, delaying, returning - yet following no other way  
(Eliot, Choruses VII, 1934).*

### **(5) Dance of Being**

After the thrust and hunger and yearning, it is as if finally we glimpse the stillness at the heart of all things. There is now a peace – and a beginning.

*What we call the beginning is often the end  
And to make an end is to make a beginning  
The end is where we start from. (Eliot, Little Gidding, 1942)*

Here is again origin and birth - but a maturing has occurred. We are conscious: with simplicity rather than sophistry; with quiet acknowledgment that we are simply - ourselves. We have ourselves; we have each other.

*Build an altar to the invisible light (so) we may set thereon the little lights for which our bodily  
vision is made and thank Thess that darkness reminds us of light (Eliot, Choruses X, 1972).*

Now we are able to be still, until in the stillness we hear the still, small voice. It is not a stillness of cessation or stopped-ness though. It is the eye of the paradox: for as we are together – so are we alone. And in this aloneness there is another position. We do not know what comes in the stillness afterwards -

*Stand by, and look, and ask, ‘where is the good way’? - and walk in it, and findeth there stillness  
for your soul. (Jeremiah 6:16)*

*My soul breaks with longing for the courts of the Lord... O Lord my God, for a day spent in thy  
courts is better than a thousand elsewhere (Psalm 84:2,10).*

**May we be willing to partake in the communion in which we no longer remain the same.**

Choreography: Jennifer De Leon

Dancers: Catherine de Croy, Iris Wegmueller, Sjouke van Houten, Jennifer De Leon

Music: 1. Lilith: Gareth Farr, Lilith's dream of ecstasy

2. Eve: Trojan Women, Choruses

3. Spirit: Arvo Paart, Tears of the Angels

4. People: Arvo Paart, Tabulah Rasa

5. Final: Elias Thomas, Prayer Cycle, 11

Matt James, Earth Warrior

Voice: Warwick Broadhead

Lighting and Sound operation: Peter Dransfield

Lighting and sound equipment: Tony McMaster

CD Compilation: Joshua Brown

Scaffolding: Scott Anderson/Uni-rig

Front-of-house: Hector Cumming

Printing: Warkworth Printing Ltd.

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You are invited to send your comments, thoughts and feedback to [jennydancer@paradise.net.nz](mailto:jennydancer@paradise.net.nz)