

PUT YOUR MOTHER ON THE CEILING: FEMINIST
DANCE MAKING AS A WORLDMAKING PROCESS
OF THREE WOMEN CHOREOGRAPHERS

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ABSTRACT

COMPLETED RESEARCH IN DANCE

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Grover-Haskin, Kim *Put Your Mother on the Ceiling: Feminist Dance Making as a Worldmaking Process of Three Women Choreographers*. Ph.D. in Dance and Related Arts, 2001, (Dr. P. Hanstein).

Richard de Mille (1967) considers personal invention crucial in comprehending and shaping socially constructed realities. Intrigued by what a woman's reality brings to the creative process and how these experiences become movement and embody meaning, I imagined what the reality of choreographing a dance entitled "Put Your Mother on the Ceiling" would unveil. Dance making provided the opportunity to study a woman's lived reality. The purpose of this study was to investigate what a feminist perspective contributed to dance making as a social construction of reality and, subsequently, the development of theory.

Through the metaphor of worldmaking, premised on Nelson Goodman's (1978) idea of worlds and worldmaking originally applied to art criticism, dance making as a worldmaking endeavor illuminated the diversity of a woman's dance-making process and what that process revealed. Qualitative research methodology and a worldmaking taxonomy of three components, the 'world-in-the-making,' the 'world-in-view,' and 'performing the world,' provided for an in-depth investigation into three distinct dimensions related to the dance making process. The 'world-in-the-making' revealed the artist's creative process and how each woman perceived and created her work. The 'world-in-view' unveiled the dimensions of how the body, as a resource for worldmaking, shaped identity and influenced artistic invention. 'Performing the world' focused upon the performing experience revealing self, process, and transcendence.

A series of in-depth interviews with three selected women revealed a woman choreographer's world and work socially influenced and shaped by the world at large. A reverence for uncertainty, mobility in resistance, and a complexity of consciousness emerged as elements for the development of theory. Continually re-entering the dance making process the artist seeks complexity, transcending what is expected to construct, experience, and implement the possible, thus evolving for the future.

In their dance making, women are models of evolutionary praxis. Their created worlds of possibility and change speak a woman-centered agency,

activism, voice, and autonomy. Women's "voices" continually refine and re-define dance making as a feminist artistic practice with future visionary application for critical pedagogy and curriculum development. As a consequence, women worldmakers, making a difference in the classroom and curriculum, become educational strategists for the future.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---------------------------------------------|------|
| COPYRIGHT | iii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | iv |
| ABSTRACT | vii |
| LIST OF FIGURES | xiii |
| Chapter | |
| I. INTRODUCTION: WHAT IN THE WORLD..... | 1 |
| Worldmaking as Self-Constituting | 6 |
| Worldmaking as Framework | 8 |
| The World-in-the-Making | 11 |
| The World-in-View | 12 |
| Performing the World | 15 |
| Worldmaking Summary | 16 |
| Discovering Through Complexity | 17 |
| Summary | 22 |
| II. MAPPING THE WORLD: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY | 26 |
| Designing the Study | 27 |
| The Worldmaker's Voices | 29 |
| Kariamuwelsh Asante | 32 |
| Claire Porter | 33 |
| Jan Erkert | 35 |
| Methods of Discovery | 36 |
| Worldmaking Taxonomy | 40 |
| Entering the Hermeneutic Circle | 42 |
| Summary | 49 |

| | | |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| III. | THE WORLD-IN-THE-MAKING: PERCEIVING, CREATING, KNOWING | 51 |
| | Perceiving the World--Making Sense of Self and World | 53 |
| | Claire Porter: The World of the Everyday ... | 53 |
| | Kariamuwelsh Asante: Women's Lived Experiences and The Worlds They Reveal | 57 |
| | Jan Erkert: The Sense and Sensibility of a Woman | 63 |
| | Creating the World as Journey to Self | 70 |
| | Knowing the World and Making it Known | 78 |
| | Claire Porter: The Ordinary Everyday | 79 |
| | Jan Erkert: The Extraordinary Reality of the Everyday | 82 |
| | Kariamuwelsh Asante: Connecting the Extraordinary to the Everyday | 83 |
| | Perceiving, Creating, Knowing | 86 |
| III. | THE WORLD-IN-VIEW: THE BODY AS A RESOURCE FOR WORLDMAKING | 88 |
| | The Body as "Voice" | 89 |
| | The Body as Turning Point | 93 |
| | Physical Reality as Possibility | 93 |
| | The Social Reality of an Aging Body | 98 |
| | Embodied Accomplishments | 107 |
| | Narratives of the Body: Change, Resistance, Possibility | 110 |
| V. | PERFORMING THE WORLD: SELF, PROCESS, AND TRANSCENDENCE IN THE PERFORMING EXPERIENCE | 115 |
| | The Performing Experience | 115 |
| | Forgetting Self in the Performing Experience | 115 |
| | Feedback | 122 |
| | The Process of Change | 133 |
| | Transcendence in Performing | 137 |
| VI. | PUT YOUR MOTHER ON THE CEILING: FEMINIST DANCE MAKING AS EVOLUTIONARY PRAXIS | 140 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Women Dance Makers: Models of Evolutionary Praxis | 140 |
| Reverence for Uncertainty | 142 |
| Mobility in Resistance | 148 |
| Complexity of Consciousness | 156 |
| Worldmaking as Evolutionary Praxis | 161 |
| | |
| VII. MAKING A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS | 166 |
| | |
| Making a World of Difference in the Classroom: Choreography as Critical Pedagogy | 167 |
| | |
| Making a World of Difference in the Curriculum: Implementing an Evolutionary Design | 171 |
| | |
| Making a World of Difference: Developing Communities of Inquiry | 174 |
| | |
| Our Futures are Now | 177 |
| | |
| References | 180 |

LIST OF FIGURES

1. Women Dance Makers: Models of Evolutionary Praxis 162
2. Worlds of Possibility: Worlds of Change 165

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IN THE WORLD...

Household reality training often puts an exclusive emphasis on learning the rules and remembering the facts. It essentially discourages creative or inventive thinking and the practice of judgment. (de Mille, 1967, p. 15)

Richard de Mille (1967), in his book entitled *Put Your Mother on the Ceiling*, talks about the importance of imagination and its potential for what he calls, reality training, the socialization of thought and action we experience throughout our lives. Reality training based upon rules and facts, in his opinion, limits creative thinking. de Mille considers personal invention crucial in comprehending and shaping socially constructed realities. He develops imagination games as creative approaches to shaping reality. Through these games, taking liberties with reality, in essence, we become personally invested in forming a reality that is not mere memorization, rules or facts. It is personally meaningful. Put your mother on the ceiling, an imagination game, is but one way to play, creatively explore, and experiment with reality. Utilizing dance, as a creative venue to express that reality, is another possibility.

de Mille, in one of his imagination games, imagines the possibility of putting mother on the ceiling. I imagine choreographing a dance entitled "Put Your Mother on the Ceiling." How I construct this dance depends on my life experiences and my world view, both of which inform me of who I am in and of

the world. As a woman, dancer, and choreographer, as well as daughter, sister, wife and mother of three small children, I am intrigued by what a woman's reality brings to the creative process and how these experiences become movement and embody meaning. Dance making provides the opportunity to study a woman's lived reality and what that reality renders.

The creative process is a unique, individual phenomenon where relationships between self and world become prominent in perceiving and making the dance work. Feminism, focusing on the lived experiences of women in and of the world, is one particular lens through which self and world are scrutinized. By looking at the intersection of gender, race, class, and the socio-political milieu, we can deepen and multiply our vantage points and lenses from which to view dance making. I ask what a feminist perspective contributes to the investigation of dance making as a dynamic revelation of self and world and as a social construction of reality.

Many dance scholars are utilizing feminist analysis as a lens to focus on the experiences of women in the dance world and how these experiences have impacted the development of dance as an art form and cultural phenomenon. Through the efforts of dance researchers and practitioners, new theories emerge explaining dance beyond mere presentation and visual spectacle. As a consequence, the world of dance is a world of possibility, evolving from a multitude of experiences, and a plethora of realities. Fawcett and Downs (1986)

elaborate that a theory describes, explains, or predicts limited properties of reality (p. 3). My question is, what theory emerges from the realities of women choreographers and artists? What is possible from knowing their realities?

Berger and Luckmann (1967) define reality "as a quality appertaining to phenomena that we recognize as having a being independent of our own volition ..." (p. 1). The everyday world is a socially created reality. Women's realities are diverse and unique interactions with the everyday. Feminism, as a critique of the social world, values the dimensions of the everyday and how women interact within the everyday world. The intersection between self and world is the result of a social construction of reality. As women choreographers and artists describe their realities, they reveal the social construction of those realities.

Thus, the study of self, artistry, and world is the focus for the study of dance making. Veta Goler (1994), in her writings on Black women choreographers, unveils how choreography defines and affirms Black womanhood through the idea of autobiography and the self. "Through the search for self and an increase in her self-knowledge, the autobiographer counters negative assessments of her life and validates her own existence" (Goler, 1994, p. 17). The autobiographer writes herself. Writing is a self-constituting activity which produces meaning and self-definition. In her analysis of three Black women choreographers, Goler reveals how these women

dance their selves. I propose to take this further. As we dance ourselves, we define and embody our realities.

What unfolds is how a theory of women and dance evolves from the idea that choreographing, like Goler's example of writing, is a self-constituting activity. Women choreographers have unique world views from which their dance works evolve. Placing their choreographic experiences at the center or forefront for analysis brings forth the realization that the act of choreographing is a meaning-producing endeavor which helps women make sense not only of the world, but of their lived realities as well (Bruner, 1990). Through the art of choreographing, we come to know how and why women in dance create. We also come to know a social construction of reality because as women in dance speak, they reveal how they are shaped by the very world in which they live.

Gender informs this endeavor. How a woman choreographer sees herself as a woman, dancer, choreographer, performer, and artist reveals the social realities which shape her in and of the world. As she addresses what it means to be a woman, dancer, choreographer, performer, and artist, she interprets her life, finding voice. This voice of self articulates relationships, connections, and understandings of what it means to be in the world. Voice becomes an important element. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) state,

We found that women repeatedly used the metaphor of voice to depict their intellectual and ethical development; and that the development of a sense of voice, mind, and self were intricately intertwined. (p. 18)

When women choreographers address how they make sense of their world through the dance work, their voices represent an informed and privileged world view. These voices direct the dance work in its inception, creation, and performance, building and constituting a world from which the voice is heard. Thus, the dance work becomes an embodiment of self and world. As Lorraine (1990) states: "Our views both of ourselves and of the world will be interpretations rather than essential truths, and these interpretations will be the creations of an activity that constitutes self and world simultaneously" (p. 12).

Through the act of choreographing, self and world simultaneously merge to generate the phenomenon of dance making. A feminist perspective privileges the role gender identity plays in examining women's relationships between self and world. By examining the creative processes of women in dance, personal ingenuity becomes central to developing theory.

Women's lived experiences are rich resources for understanding the social construction of reality. Focusing on women, the world is viewed through a different lens. Through dance making, women's world views illuminate a unique perspective. We start by asking what in the world is the world. The world is socially known. Women choreographers, through their dance making, make their own worlds known.

I began this research journey, as de Mille proposes, seeking how women's imaginative, personal inventions shape socially constructed realities. Doing so shaped theory. I made sense of this research journey through the metaphor of worldmaking.

Worldmaking as Self-Constituting

Worldmaking is premised on Nelson Goodman's (1978) idea of worlds and worldmaking, originally applied to art criticism. Worldmaking implies the creation of worlds and the embodiment of world views. He states:

But made from what? Not from nothing, after all, but from other worlds. Worldmaking as we know it always starts from worlds already on hand; the making is a remaking. (Goodman, 1978, p. 6)

For women worldmakers, the "worlds already on hand" are social, cultural, political, and personal worlds. These worlds become prominent in making, perceiving, and experiencing dance as a feminist artistic practice. When performing the dance work, artist and medium come together to create a world for audiences to enter and experience. If the dance work is a symbolic world and each symbolic world is created from a particular perspective or world view, what kind of symbolic world emerges from a woman choreographer's world view? (Goodman, 1978, p. 1) What does it embody? How is it created? How is worldmaking related to knowing in a feminist context?

These questions probe the possibilities that might emerge from using worldmaking as a model for an in-depth analysis of the dance experience. By

focusing on a woman choreographer's life experiences, and the making and performing of her dance, key elements emerge which are important to her as an individual, dancer, and choreographer. These elements arise from her voices of self. As she narrates her experiences, she reveals meaningful components of those experiences and her world view. This dialogue is reflective of herself.

Not only am I the subject of my experiences as I have them, but I can also remember my past experiences as mine and respond to current situations as "me." This "me" somehow represents the sum total of who I am and who I have been--the self to which I refer all my experiences over the greater part of my life span. (Lorraine, 1990, p. 1)

The self exists in the private realm of experiences from both past and present, for as Taylor (1989) points out, "A self can never be described without reference to those who surround it" (p. 35). Social, cultural, and political forces shape our experiences of being in and of the world. Focusing on the relation between self and world, social realities of being-in-the-world emerge. Actively engaging with the world, the interrelatedness between self and culture becomes evident. This relating/orienting activity is, "a stance vis-à-vis the world, a perspective that interprets" (Lorraine, 1990, p. 16). As a consequence, negotiation and mediation between self and world are constant.

The self is in a constant process of becoming because self and world are inextricably linked, one interpreting the other and vice versa. One way to examine this notion of self, as a fluid reciprocity between being and world, is through self-constituting activity. Through self-constituting activity, the self is

made, re-made, and revealed. It represents a worldmaking process because the self is engaging in an activity in which the endeavor of self and world simultaneously merge, being negotiated, and positioned to create new realities. Worldmaking is meaning-producing, revealing “the nature and cultural shaping of meaning-making, and the central place it plays in human action” (Bruner, 1990, p. xii).

With this in mind, I define choreographing as a self-constituting activity. Women choreographers create symbolic worlds, dance works, for experiencing. In essence, they are worldmakers. Questioning them about their created worlds through their dance making and how their dance making, in turn, impacts their world views, I discover how women choreographers reveal their world views. Dance making becomes a meaning-making activity which reveals the complexity of women choreographer’s lived realities. Understanding those realities becomes possible through a worldmaking framework.

Worldmaking as Framework

Worldmaking as a self-constituting activity, is a multi-faceted, and idiosyncratic experience. The dance work is created from world views, constructed from interrelations between self and world. The choreographer engages in a worldmaking process, revealing thoughts, feelings, actions, and responses, building a symbolic world, the dance work. Worldmaking is thus composed of a diversity of experiences, facilitating the creation of the symbolic

world. The artist engages with the medium of movement, exploring ideas for expression, sensing, perceiving, creating, and knowing through this exploration. The dance work becomes the mode for the manifestation of idea. The dance is danced by the body, socially and culturally constructed of multiple meanings and layers of meaning. Performing the dance, the experience of dancing the created world reveals how self and world merge for expression.

I call these components the 'world-in-the-making,' the 'world-in-view,' and 'performing the world.' The 'world-in-the-making,' the 'world-in-view,' and 'performing the world' provide a worldmaking framework from which women choreographer's experiences of dance making are revelatory, emerging as dynamic interactions between self and world.

My method for entering into the worldmaking experiences of women, and implementing a worldmaking framework, was accomplished by focusing on three women choreographers. These three women, Claire Porter, Kariamuwelsh Asante, and Jan Erkert, are primary sources of knowledge in examining and understanding dance as a worldmaking endeavor. Their processes and artistic works are expressions of knowing and, as such, reveal public and personal accounts of their lived experiences. These lived experiences of making and performing possess specific characteristics (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 1), and when these phenomenon are closely examined, they provide a foundation from which descriptive theories of dance making emerge.

Women choreographers create symbolic worlds or dances which emerge to construct and shape meaning, grounded in both personal and public experiences. In essence, the worldmaking framework--the 'world-in-the-making,' the 'world-in-view,' and 'performing the world,' provide the structure for exploring the lived experiences of Jan's, Claire's, and Kariam's, dancing, choreographing, and being. And this might tell us something about dance making as a feminist endeavor.

Meaning in creating, dancing, and performing emerged from each woman's narrative of how the ideas for her dances came about, who performed these dances, and how it felt to perform them, but, in talking about their dancing experiences, each woman talked about more than the dance. Through these narratives, each woman revealed how she viewed herself in the world as a woman, dancer, choreographer, and artist. From my perspective, as a choreographer and dancer, choreographing defines the relationship between self and world through a worldmaking endeavor where dance is a historical, social, cultural, and political manifestation. The 'world-in-the-making,' the 'world-in-view' and 'performing the world' allow for the exploration of the personal and public manifestation of a dance work as an intricate exchange of connections and interrelations between self and world.

The World-in-the-Making

In the 'world-in-the-making,' the choreographer's creative process is central for analysis. Personal creativity brings forth a "changing vision of oneself" (Apostolos-Cappadona and Ebersole, 1995, p. 5). How does the choreographer transform an idea into movement? Where did the idea for the dance work come from? How was it developed? As Claire, Jan, and Kariamun described the origins and inspirations for their works, their narratives reflected a discourse between self, dance work, and being-in-the-world. What they said about their dancing and choreographing, and how they attributed meaning to these processes, revealed deeper understanding of the negotiation and mediation of self and world, self and work and the inextricable link between their personal identity and their dance making.

I also looked at creating as knowledge producing. "Knowledge bears the mark of its producer" (Lennon and Whitford, 1994, p. 2). In creating the dance work, the choreographer becomes aware of self and the forces acting on herself. She gains self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is informative of personal, political, and social realms of being-in-the-world. The dance work becomes the embodiment of the personal and political production of knowledge. The creative process reveals the complexities of what the knower knows, choreographing. How the knower comes to know, is achieved by dancing the choreography.

The creative process represents how artist and world unite idea and medium in a dynamic relationship. The result is a work of art which represents both artist and world. Jan, Kariam, and Claire create from multiple and diverse vantage points or world views which result from their engagements with the world. World views represent the choreographer's voice from which she makes sense of herself and world. The dance work, the symbolic world created, is the embodiment of that voice.

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) writes, "...creativity also leaves an outcome that adds to the richness and complexity of the future" (p. 2). Each artist creates from the desire to do nothing else. The act of creating is rewarding and life directing. Evolutionary in its essence, creativity represents the desire to grow and encounter change. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) believes that "for better or for worse, our future is now closely tied to human creativity" (p. 6). Women choreographers perpetuate new realities through their creative endeavors. The symbolic world becomes representative of the social construction of reality and, as a consequence, it is informative, evolutionary, and potentially revolutionary.

The World-in-View

As the dance is being enacted, what is in view becomes a question of who is in view and what it means. The choreographer's experience of dancing the dance work reveals the relationship between medium and artist which creates the world-in-view. Focusing on the body as a source of self, Kariam, Jan, and

Claire describe their experiences of dancing from a physical, essential place, detailing how their physical bodies have privileged movement experiences. They discuss ways of embodying those experiences while at the same time, revealing an awareness that the body is scrutinized via cultural and social lenses. The body is a dynamic link between self and world. Bordo (1990) describes the body as “the vehicle of the human making and re-making of the world, constantly shifting location, capable of revealing endlessly new ‘points of view’ on things” (p. 144).

Focusing on the body in search of new points of view illuminates an interesting progression in the development of dance research and feminist inquiry. The body, as a site of representation, reveals physical and social conventions which determine how the body is seen and expected to move. Historically, dance has its own conventions rooted in the ballet tradition. In ballet the female dancer is framed as an object. Ann Daly (1987) presents a feminist perspective on this tradition. In her analysis of George Balanchine’s *The Four Temperaments*, she states:

In the third theme, that objectified, impassive style renders the woman a prop in perversely exquisite imagery. She is a bell to be swung to and fro, a figurine to be shown left and right, or an instrument to be strummed. (p. 14)

Ann Cooper Albright (1991) examines the interconnection between representation and experience via feminist theory and the dancing body. Her

exploration encompasses a comprehensive focus on how we, as dancers and women, articulate our experiences of dancing by writing the experience. To Cooper Albright, writing and dancing are significant partners in shaping and creating the lived body. As feminist literary critics sought to 'write the body,' so dance and feminism seek "...to create a way of shaping written language in order to write the body to include kinesthetic experience of the female body within the rhythm and texture of the words themselves" (p. 9).

Cooper Albright (1997) also investigates the body as a source of cultural identity. The body's physicality constructs gendered, racial, and social meaning:

It is my contention that contemporary dance foregrounds a responsive dancing body, one that engages with and challenges static representations of gender, race, sexuality, and physical ability, all the while acknowledging how deeply these ideologies influence our daily experience. (Cooper Albright, 1997, p. xiii)

Rachel Vigier (1994) seeking to understand the history of the body in dance, focused on the practical, philosophical, and anthropological dimensions in which women inhabit their bodies. She investigates biological and maternal influences, as well as socio-political and economic influences on the shaping of women's physical selves:

Thinking through the body and providing a historical record of ways in which this has been done is, I believe, one of the most significant contributions dance can make to feminism. (Vigier, 1994, p. 15)

As evidenced from these studies, the dancing body represents a voice of possibility for new "points of view," and articulates beyond social and political

construction. The dancing body articulates subjective lived moments by writing a new body for experiencing. Jan, Kariam, and Claire speak of an expressive body, not divorced from a physically, informing body, but informed from the practice of moving to know and not moving to simply present. Their experiences contribute another dimension to how the body is a site of knowing and revelation.

Performing the World

The 'world-in-the-making' and the 'world-in-view' focus on creating and embodiment. The third component in this triad for analysis is 'performing the world.' 'Performing the world' illumines the experience of what it means to dance the created work. Claire, Jan, and Kariam describe their experiences of performing. Since sometimes they are not in subsequent performances, they also describe how others have interpreted the dancing of their works. Through performing, personal and public awareness is heightened amidst a multitude of interactions and feedback. Fraleigh (1987) explains that the dancer's goal is to become the dance (p. 39). She elaborates:

As the dance is fully realized, it ceases to be an object of consciousness; it dissolves in perfected action...When the dance has become so thoroughly me that I no longer think about it, it becomes my consciousness...I am spontaneously present in it. (p. 40)

Dancer and dance unite to become one. The dancer constantly seeks to become the dance in the dance's performance. As the dance is performed again

and again, the dancer re-enters the created world, experiencing anew the created world and its verities. As a consequence, influenced by a multitude of factors, no two performances will be alike. Every performance is different, rendering new meanings and insights. Thus, performing is evolutionary, for with each performance of the created world, dancer and dance work in unison forge new paths of discovery which evolve into new realities. The dance work, in its performing, re-shapes and re-produces itself. As a consequence, the created world may not change in context, but it will change in its experiencing.

Performing the created world reveals diversity in the world's changing dynamic nature. The world is not complete. It is continually on the verge of change. With an emphasis on change rather than a definitive end, there is a fluidity of ideas, feelings, and actions. The worldmaking process repeats itself in an endless cycle to explore further dimensions of being-in-the-world.

Worldmaking Summary

In worldmaking, dance embodies world views and illuminates the ways of knowing in these world views. Since worldmaking provides an avenue for understanding dance making, it provides a framework for understanding and theorizing the dance making phenomenon as a social construction of reality. Through a study of the artistic processes and products of Kariam, Claire, and Jan, theory emerges. The 'world-in-the-making,' the 'world-in-view,' and 'performing the world' provide shifting, diverse perspectives, evolving from

women's lived experiences. These components frame the study of dance making. Integral to the investigation of these components and their dynamic interactions, providing energy and direction for questioning, inquiry, and discovery, is the idea of complexity.

Discovering Through Complexity

Worldmaking is a self-constituting activity by which self and world are sources for analysis. Dance making is described and theorized from worldmaking as both vantage point, a social construction of reality, and a framework of self-constituting activities, choreographing, dancing, and performing. The fundamental driving force, representative of inquiring, questioning, and discovering what worldmaking renders, is the idea complexity.

The study of complexity arises from systems theory:

...the word refers to systems with many different parts which, by a rather mysterious process of self-organization, become more ordered and more informed than systems which operate in approximate thermodynamic equilibrium with their surroundings. (Cowan, 1994, p. 1)

Originally applied to living organisms, the scientific world embraces complexity as a study of the relationship between parts and wholes in the effort to understand an organism's function. Some organisms are more complicated than others. The dynamic nature of the organism, and how it evolves, conveys its complexity. Cowan (1994) differentiates between simple and complex systems, stating that complex systems "are forever dynamic and can be

considered dead and of little interest when they come to thermodynamic equilibrium." (p. 3). When analyzing complex systems, emphasis is placed upon the growing, evolving, and changing nature of the parts of the system. The system, as a whole, is in a constant and continual state of change, yet the system has a fundamental order which perpetuates and allows it to evolve.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1993, 1996), in his studies on creative individuals and enjoyment, found complexity to be an inherent part of his findings. The creative individual is complex, operating in what Csikszentmihalyi calls the "flow" experience. When in "flow," the individual experiences a purity of attention which leads to a highly focused state of consciousness. The result is enjoyment and continual pursuit of further creative endeavors. Essentially, the creative individual seeks more complexity between self and world in order to grow and evolve.

Complexity is the study of possibility. Through complexity, we question, re-view, and re-produce to find new ways of doing things and/or experience life. "...the operations of a complex system tend by their very nature to make for yet further complexity" (Rescher, 1998, p. 3). Complexity, applied to social and historical inquiries, reveals a unique understanding of the social construction of reality from a historical point of view.

Historically, feminist theorists began with a critical awareness of a woman's possibility to contribute to the world. In 1792, Mary Wollstencraft

wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Donovan (1992) writes, in her analysis of Wollstencraft's work:

Imbued with revolutionary passion, its rhetoric still rings today in stirring and convincing tones. Its central argument is that women remain enslaved because of a corrupt process of socialization which stunts their intellect and teaches them that their proper purpose in life is to serve men. (p. 8)

Abigail Adams, writing amidst the American Revolution, suggested to her husband, John Adams, "that women should have some 'voice, or Representation'" (Adams cited in Donovan, 1992, p. 1) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote *Herland*, a novel depicting what the possibility of a woman's world would render. Sarah Grimke, Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Mary Church Terrell, Virginia Woolf, and many more women throughout history embraced the possibility of what a world of and for women would be all about. Their writings, lectures, and activist lives are representative of their desire to unveil a woman's world, traditionally defined by patriarchal values, to a new level of understanding, free from the strictures of oppression, revealing how the pursuit of complexity stimulated the evolution of new realities.

Primarily, all of these women, political activists, novelists, writers, wives, and daughters recognized the value of a woman's sphere of experience. They realized that this sphere of experience would teach, reveal, and perpetuate the possibility of a new world. In the dance world, Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, Ruth St. Denis, Doris Humphrey, and Katherine Dunham, to name a

few, may not have called themselves feminists, but they were very aware of the challenges they presented to and through their art form. From a feminist perspective, their legacies, in dance and as dancers, evolved from their spheres of experiences as women, becoming a catalyst for developing a new language and conception of the dance experience and the dance world. Not only was the dance different, it spoke a different language, and it created a different reality.

Through complexity an individual evolves, learns, and changes, seeking new perspectives. Csikszentmihalyi (1993) describes this complex individual as

...someone who is curious about the meaning of life, who is not convinced that any of the existing explanations are exhaustive enough, who is concerned about the state of the world, and who would also like to do something about it. (p. 9)

Feminists are included in this definition, revealing a fundamental feminist tenet. Feminists seek to re-view and re-construct the social field as more encompassing and integrative. Csikszentmihalyi's definition also includes Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, Ruth St. Denis, Doris Humphrey, and Katherine Dunham. These women dance revolutionaries are complex individuals who sought to pursue and create new dance worlds.

This definition also describes me as researcher. I am conducting an exploration into a phenomenon based upon the lived experiences of women choreographers. As I pursue the possibility of what those experiences yield, I am engaging in an evolutionary process, discovering ideas to formulate a

theoretical basis for the phenomenon in question. I want to know more about this phenomenon, its social construction, and what this phenomenon means.

Stanley and Wise (1993) acknowledge that,

the kind of person that we are, and how we experience the research, all have a crucial impact on what we see, what we do, and how we interpret and construct what is going on. (p. 60)

I see opportunity in discovering meaning from the experiences of women choreographers, in and of the world. Their experiences choreographing, dancing, and performing, are sources of knowledge, derived from subjective and interpretive realms. I see lived experiences as valid sources of data. The goal of this epistemological stance is to give credence to experience as insightful, capable of formulating theory. Complexity leads the way, inspiring me to seek and pursue deeper meanings and connections to what is said, heard, and felt. I encounter a complexity of thoughts, feelings, and actions which lead to more complexity.

Worldmaking becomes the framework for examining the performance phenomenon, a way to discover theory through women's lived experiences. I utilize the concept of worldmaking as a metaphor for the research journey, as well as for framing the study. The two are interwoven, driven by the notion that as complexity is engaged, possibility emerges.

As Stanley and Wise (1993) write,

...there must be a relationship between theory and practice which not only sees these as inextricably interwoven, but which sees experience and practice as the basis of theory, and theory as the means of changing practice. (p. 58)

Complexity belies a potential for change, evolving toward the future. Self and world in the worldmaking process are integral to discovering this future. We can understand how the social construction of the everyday influences the building of a 'life.' Women artists engage in dancing and choreographing as a means of making sense of that 'life.'

Choreographing and dancing are meaning-making, self-constituting activities bringing self and world together, connecting meaning with practice. Worldmaking, the process of creating, discovering, and embodying the dance work, becomes the means for understanding the social construction of a woman choreographer's lived reality. Through complexity, evolving toward the future, worldmaking becomes praxis, building a new future.

Summary

We realize that people will come to think differently about things from the way we do--even when thoroughly familiar things are at issue.... The complications arising in the characterization of reality are fathomless. (Rescher, 1998. p. 39)

Nicholas Rescher (1998) gives us the simple understanding that reality is a complexity of possibilities. The world is complex. As Rescher elaborates, "Whatever the known character of a series of phenomena that we examine may

be, we can never rule out the possibility that yet further patterns of relationship exist" (p. 45). Driven by the need to go deeper, seeking layers of relationships, and pursuing the dimensions of realities as lived and practiced, this study unfolds. Inherent within it are the complexities of finding the dimensions of women's personal and public selves. Donna Haraway states that the self is

...partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is always constructed and stretched together imperfectly and therefore able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another. (Haraway quoted in Coffey, 1999, p. 36)

A woman's lived reality is complex; a self socially constructed and shaped by the world at large. What is interesting is how women choreographers navigate within this social realm, conscious of self and world, to create a symbolic world.

Thus, a theory of dance making should be a theory about self-constituting activity rather than about a fixed entity, the dance work. The choreographer, in all of her complexity, engages in choreographing as a self-constituting activity. This self-constituting activity is informed by gender, race, sexual orientation, class, and the political milieu and, as Stanley and Wise (1993), reinforce, "...all such categories, including class and 'race'/ethnicity, are treated as constructions and not as essences" (p. 11).

With these premises established, I focus on three women choreographers, and their experiences choreographing and performing, examining how these

women are shaped and informed by the world. I ask how these women bring their lives to a public place, a performance of self. As Berger and Luckmann (1966) comment, "To be given an identity involves being assigned a specific place in the world" (p. 132). What Jan, Kariam, and Claire unveil is who they are in and of the world, a complexity of identities, dancers, artists, choreographers, and women. I enter into a socially constructed reality and shape theory from the investigation of these identities.

Choreographing is meaning-producing illuminating meaning of self and other. The process of producing meaning is examined through creating and performing the dance work in a process of worldmaking. The 'world-in-the-making,' the 'world-in-view,' and 'performing the world' provide the framework for this analysis. Complexity is fundamental to discovering what the 'world-in-the-making,' the 'world-in-view,' and 'performing the world' reveal.

What in the world is the world? The world is the self engaged in worldmaking. The perspective is feminist, in order to privilege women's experiences in and of the world, and to contemplate the social construction of their realities. The goal is a descriptive feminist theory of dance making which accounts for and captures the complexity of the experience. The goal is not for an end but a continual beginning. "...our knowledge of reality is incomplete.... The real has an inner complexity that is humanly inexhaustible..." (Rescher, 1998, p. 35-36). The key is to be aware that no knowledge is complete. It is

constantly formulating. Through women's dance and dancing, we stand at the threshold of discovery. Let us begin to discover. For as Claire Porter states,

And
This is the end
But this is the beginning
This is the start

Are you ready? (Claire Porter, *Green Dress Circle*)

CHAPTER II

MAPPING THE WORLD: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The beginning of any research journey is a jumble of thoughts and concerns as we make our way into the unknown. Traversing and mapping this unknown emerges through an interpretive research process. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) state that all research is “guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied.” (p. 26) The world is always questioned, revealing how we socially construct our worlds.

For me, mapping the world, establishing a research journey into dance, begins with the idea of worldmaking. Inspired by Nelson Goodman’s (1978) *Ways of Worldmaking*, the dance experience is explained as a worldmaking process. This dissertation, which integrates Western theatrical dance with feminist theory, focuses on how women experience dance as dancers, choreographers, performers, and artists. Dancing, choreographing, and performing, women construct worlds, symbolizing a worldmaking process. The question is, what does the world’s performance reveal?

Designing the Study

In order to theorize dance making as worldmaking, I selected Stake's (1995) suggestion that, "The first criterion should be to maximize what we can learn" (p. 4). To do so, I chose a grounded theory approach which allows the researcher to discover theory as process, a good fit with the process orientation I adopted originally (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). I limited the query to women and contemporary Western modern dance because of time, resources, availability of appropriate dancers, and a desire for in-depth understanding.

The study, guided by the following questions, unfolded:

- 1) What is the relationship between these women and their dance? How do life experiences shape them and their work in and of the world?
- 2) Why do they choreograph? Where do their symbolic worlds or dances begin? Where do they come from? How are they created?
- 3) What is the relationship between the women selected and their dance on stage? Who are they in the symbolic world? What is their experience of performance?
- 4) What is the relationship between this sample of women, their dance on stage, and their audience? Who are they after the performance? What do women's worlds render?

These questions sought to access the intuitive and perceptual dimensions of dancing, performing, and choreographing, as they are integral to the everyday

world of women and dance. Personal meaning and experience become sources of data for insight and analysis into socially constructed realities enabling women's voices to be more clearly heard, a goal consistent with a naturalistic paradigm and a feminist perspective. Through a naturalistic, constructivist paradigm, theory emerges as a construction of multiple realities (Guba, 1990).

Through a naturalistic, constructivist paradigm, the approach to discovery is rooted in how individuals construct their realities in their natural setting or context. Premised on the idea that socially constructed realities reveal the diversity of personal vantage point, the goal of this research is to access the lived realities of women in dance, to grasp their meaning, and to construct theory. A naturalistic paradigm enhances a researcher's ability to find meaning in experience as it is experienced. I chose a naturalistic approach to explore experience, "rather than impose externally defined structures on women's lives" (Maynard, 1994, p. 12).

In the desire to limit the study to a reasonable scope, and to focus on information richness (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen, 1993), I chose three women for in-depth study and analysis. These women were selected based upon input from others and my desire to provide three distinct voices reflecting different life experiences. One of my criteria for selection was to include a woman of color. Another dimension to the selection of these women was

awareness of the choreographer's artistry. And finally, I based my selection upon the recommendation of noted dance scholars in the field.

The three women I selected, Claire Porter, Jan Erkert, and Kariamuwelsh Asante are primary sources of knowledge in examining and understanding dance as a worldmaking endeavor. Their stories illuminate informative insights about their work and their lives. As Susan Lee (1997) comments:

A study of women in professional dance reveals many of the conflicts and identity formation struggles of other professional women, but such inquiry also takes us into the realm of the special life course challenges for performing artists. (p. 230)

How Kariamuwelsh, Claire, and Jan engage in worldmaking and as worldmakers is the research adventure. The realms of their "life course" challenges provide the focal point for data gathering. Their stories not only detail a personal view but illuminate a public view of political and social ramifications. These factors contribute to the development of a knowledge base that is woman-centered and woman-generated.

The Worldmaker's Voices

For this research, I focused on Jan, Kariamuwelsh, and Claire's worldmaking voices as they described dancing, choreographing, and artistry. Jan, Kariamuwelsh, and Claire speak from a multitude of perspectives, as artists, dancers, choreographers, performers, teachers, mentors, and much more. Their lived experiences reveal the complexities and multiplicities of these roles. They talk

about their creative process, including their sources of inspiration in making the dance work. They speak of challenges revolving around a socially, politically, and culturally defined body. They are women engaged with the world. The research is mapped from this rich, descriptive terrain.

In planning a course of action, I took a case study approach that is developmental and evolutionary. Kariam, Jan, and Claire represent complexities of feelings, thoughts, and actions that evolve over time. Each of these women comes from a distinct place in the dance world but represent a diversity of experiences and histories. By utilizing a case study approach, their diverse lived experiences become revealed. Kariam, Claire, and Jan's voices represent unique and idiosyncratic worlds. "The real business of case study is particularization, not generalization" (Stake, 1995, p. 8). Case studies allow for a specific focus on each woman, to draw out her own realities and personal self.

In seeking greater complexity, pursuing more detail and information, I selected two specific dance works from each woman. By limiting the focus to two dance works, I gained deeper understanding and meaning in the dancers' lived realities. The two works I chose emerged from preliminary conversations with each woman, during which time each woman would speak about her dance works. I sought to establish shared constructions with the women through these preliminary conversations.

Shared constructions provide the basis for communication between people, and shared experiences and communication about them generate additional shared constructions. (Erlandson et al, 1990, p. 24)

My experiences as dancer, choreographer, and performer, instrumental in establishing a shared foundation of experience with each woman, influenced the selection of the two works. I purposely chose two dance works that were not representative of a body of work. I chose the dance works, based upon my own curiosity with the work as well as the apparent, interpreted, personal meaning it held for each of the women.

Shared constructions, based upon mutual fields of interest and experience between myself and the women, established a shared reality. As Maynard (1994) states:

Research becomes a means of sharing information and, rather than being seen as a source of bias, the personal involvement of the interviewer is an important element in establishing trust and thus obtaining good quality information. (p. 16)

Purposely limiting the study to three women and two specific dance works from each artist, allowed for an information-rich research design. My experiences in the dance world enhanced a connection to the women and their worlds. We also all share a similar "life" space in that we are mature, older women artists. Sharing our lived realities as dancers, choreographers, and performers, and women constituted a dynamic web of interrelationships; the essence of the naturalistic paradigm. "The naturalistic paradigm affirms the

mutual influence researcher and respondents have on each other” (Erlandson et al., 1990, p. 15). Let us meet these worldmakers.

Kariamum Welsh Asante

At the time of the interview, Kariamum was a Professor of African and African American dance and aesthetics in the Department of African and African American studies at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She has since moved to the Department of Dance at Temple University. She founded *Kariamum and Company: Traditions* in 1971, graduating from the State University of New York at Buffalo with a B.A. in English in 1972, and a M.A. in Humanities: Choreography in 1975. When Zimbabwe gained independence in 1981, President Robert Mugabe requested Welsh Asante come to create the *National Dance Company of Zimbabwe*. She took the company on its first international tour and remained as artistic director until 1983. Kariamum taught at the University of Zimbabwe, Swarthmore, and the University of the Arts before joining Temple University in 1987. She received her doctorate in Dance History from New York University in 1993.

Kariamum has written numerous books, most notably *The Umfundalai Dance Technique: The Shape of Rhythm* (in press) and *Rhythmic Forces: An African Dance Aesthetic* (in press). Edited works include *The African Aesthetic: Keeper of the Traditions* (1993), *Dictionary of African Dance* (in press), and *African Dance: An Artistic, Historical, and Philosophical Inquiry* (1996). She has

published a number of articles in a variety of scholarly journals including SAGE: A Scholarly Journal on Black Women, and Journal of Black Studies. She is the founding editor of the International Journal of African Dance.

Kariamam served as a consultant to the National Endowment for the Arts, 1980-1983, the New York State Council on the Arts, 1982-1984, and the Pennsylvania Council of the Arts from 1990 to present. She received a National Endowment for the Arts Choreography Award in 1974 and the New York State Council on the Arts Minority Choreographers Fellowship in 1981. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania State Council on the Arts Dance Research Fellowship was awarded to Kariamam in 1989 and 1994.

Noted scholar in African and African American studies in dance, Kariamam brings a rich diversity to this study. Her book, Textured Women, Cowrie Shells and Beetle Sticks, published in 1979, is a book of poetry. This book, as well as all of her other professional and artistic accomplishments, belies how she seeks the artistic in word, movement, and culture.

Claire Porter

Claire Porter is a solo performer from New Jersey, often combining humorous script with movement. After receiving her Bachelor's Degree in Mathematics, she became a computer programmer for GE Analytical Engineering in Schenectady, New York. She returned to dancing, picking up her studies at Sonoma State University in California where she also taught Family

Dance, Exercise, and Children's Dance. Moving to Ohio, she earned her Master's Degree at the Ohio State University in 1977. Shortly thereafter, she became a Certified Laban Movement Analyst, receiving her certificate from the Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Study (LIMS) in New York City.

Claire has taught at Grand Valley College in Michigan and at Columbia University Teacher's College in New York City, and conducted workshops at universities across the country. The recipient of six choreography fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, Claire's work also received the New Jersey State Council on the Arts in Choreography Fellowship. Ohio State likewise awarded Claire the College of Arts and Sciences Creative Achievement Award.

Claire's work has been produced by the Dance Theater Workshop, Warren Street Performance Loft, The New Theater of Brooklyn, Gowanus Arts Exchange, The World's Fair in Tennessee, BACA Downtown, Jacob's Pillow, and PS-122. She has also traveled internationally, appearing at the Holland Festival in the Netherlands, the Tour of Comedy in Germany, the Korea International Festival in Seoul, and the Pusan Festival in Korea. With support from a NEA InterArts Program, Claire created a dance work for the TWA Terminal at Kennedy Airport. Domino's Pizza has commissioned her work as well as Art Matters, DTW's FIRST LIGHT Project (funding provided by Jerome Foundation, St. Paul, MN), and the American Dance Festival. Based in New York City, she performs,

teaches, writes, sings, and choreographs throughout the United States. She is frequently an artist in residence in college theater and dance programs across the country.

Jan Erkert

Jan Erkert has been a professional dancer in Chicago for over twenty years. She studied ballet and modern dance in Detroit, Illinois, and Salt Lake City, Utah, graduating from the University of Utah with her B.F.A. in 1973.

Her teachers included June Finch, Margaret Jenkins, Annabelle Gamson, Susanne Linke, Shirley Mordine, Trisha Brown, Eiko & Komo, Lucinda Childs, Bill Evans, and Laura Dean, to name a few. She was the Assistant Director for the Chicago-based Mordine & Company from 1974-1979, dancing with the company throughout this period. In 1979, Jan created her own company *Jan Erkert & Dancers*, or *JE&D*.

Jan taught at the MoMing Dance & Arts Center (1979-1990), the University of Chicago (1980-1990), and the Dance Center of Columbia College where she presently teaches. Erkert piloted the Dancer-in-Residence program for the Illinois Arts Council in 1980. She was also director of the School of Jan Erkert & Dancers from 1985-1989 on the campus of the University of Chicago. The recipient of numerous awards including National Endowment for the Arts Choreographic Fellowships, 1979, 1983-1986, and 1990, Jan's dance making received the Seven States Choreography Award in 1989, and the Ruth Page Award for Choreographer of the Year in 1991. She has been nominated

for many other awards and honors and her company has toured nationally and internationally in Europe and Mexico. Choreographic commissions of Jan's work include the National Theatre of Taiwan, MoMing Dance & Arts Center, The Dance Center of Columbia College, and the Colorado Repertory Dance Company. In her press packet, she describes herself:

Through her work, she entertains, educates, challenges and brings together peoples of diverse ages and backgrounds to explore current archetypal images, tell stories of experience and provoke awareness of social and political issues that affect our spiritual, emotional and physical existence. (Erkert, 1993, p. 1)

Methods of Discovery

Jan, Kariam, and Claire's artistry, reveal diversity. Investigating and realizing their lived experiences was possible through open-ended interviews. Open-ended interviews, access the personal meaning and lived experiences of Claire, Jan, and Kariam, unveiling their experiences as worldmakers. The choice of interviewing as a data collection method was critical to accessing, first and foremost, Kariam, Jan, and Claire's experiences with dancing, choreographing, and performing. As Reinharz states, "open-ended interview research explores people's views of reality and allows the researcher to generate theory" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 18). Dynamic first-person accounts of these three women dancers, choreographers, and artists reveal both personal and public realities. The objective, to understand Claire, Jan, and Kariam's worlds as women in dance as dancers and artists.

Perceiving the interview as dynamic conversation guided my desire for each interview session. As dynamic conversation, the interview serves in the capacity to be information gathering. "interviewing is conversation between two people in which one person tries to direct the conversation to obtain information for some specific purpose" (Gorden, 1992, p. 2). My goal within these interviews was to allow for the emergence of ideas through "a continuous ebb and flow of information" (Collins, 1992, p. 184), using broad questions to explore responses of what being a dancer, choreographer, and artist meant to each woman. These questions enhanced free association and the ability to talk freely. According to Gorden (1992), the use of broad questioning:

...allows respondents to follow their own path of free association without being interrupted by specific questions in an arbitrary order...it encourages the respondent to talk freely because the interviewer is implicitly recognizing that the respondent has much to contribute if given the opportunity to talk.... (p. 35)

Conducting the interviews depended on each woman's schedule, needs, finances--in essence their lives. Coordinating the specifics of interviews and meetings, plus requests for videos of their work, taxed their already busy, everyday existence. In order to minimize the impact on their everyday life, I made arrangements with each woman to maximize convenience. These arrangements included meeting the women at their homes or coordinating with them when they were in my area of residence for workshops or residencies.

I developed interview questions to collect biographical information on each woman and to discover how each woman views herself in the world as a woman, dancer, and choreographer, and performer. I sought to illuminate how all of these intersect in their everyday personal and public arenas. The questions developed were open-ended, encouraging Jan, Claire, and Kariamtu to reflect on their experiences and articulate what was meaningful to them.

The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations. (Kvale, 1996, p. 1)

Broad questions encouraged the women to discuss their past and their future, plus, their feelings and experiences of where they had been and where they were going. In essence, these questions targeted the evolutionary essence of each woman's life as she elaborated upon her dance and choreographic self.

Autobiographical in nature, the interviews also served as a way to introduce myself to each woman, creating a shared vocabulary, and establishing rapport. Marrarik (1981) described this as a rapport interview where "the interviewer is 'a human-being-in-a-role'" (Massarik cited in Lincoln and Guba, p. 269). My role as researcher/graduate student and dancer was understood, a role that enhanced rapport between myself and each woman. As a consequence, establishing clear expectations and connections between researcher and artist was possible and positive.

When exploring the women's lived experiences with dancing, choreographing, and performing, both broad and specific questions encouraged the women to speak as experts in their field, focusing on how the dance work, or symbolic world, was created, embodied, and performed. Broad questions invited the women to enter into a dialogue about how they choreographed the specific dance work and why they made the choices they did in developing, embodying, and performing the work. These questions explored the concepts and ideas utilized in creating the world, what the performing body rendered in the world created, and how the created dance became the dance they performed. Each woman detailed how the idea for the dance came about, who performed it, and how they experienced its performance. My use of probing with specific questions throughout the interview articulated greater detail in their worldmaking process.

Permission to record the interviews was gained from all of the women. As part of the Human Subjects Review procedure at Texas Woman's University, each woman was given a written description of the study, its purpose, and direction so they would have a sense of what their contribution would be in light of time and demands and also about their rights, risks, and benefits. Participation in the study was voluntary. All of the women could withdraw from the study at any time. Interviews were conducted at each woman's

convenience. All transcribed interviews were forwarded to the women for their perusal. I also honored the women's requests during the interviews not to utilize portions of our conversations that were taped.

My first meeting with Jan was in 1994 at her home in Chicago, Illinois. I finished interviewing her in 1997, while she was in residence at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas. I interviewed Claire during the summer of 1996 in Denton, Texas. The following summer of 1997, I met with Kariamuu in Denton, Texas, where she was teaching a workshop at Texas Woman's University.

These interviews unveiled how Jan, Claire, and Kariamuu felt about their work, as well as how they conceived ideas, and perceived themselves and others in the performance experience. Rich, insightful data were generated.

Interviewing is the tool from which constructing knowledge becomes reality because it is a segue into the lived realities of individuals. For this study, interviewing and dedication to the sharing of experiences, generated new knowledge and provided a fruitful method for accessing the value of personal experiences.

Worldmaking Taxonomy

With the interview data collected, I desired to make sense of the findings from a logical coding framework. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) encourage researchers to begin exploring the literature while in the field. My previous study of women and dance in 1993, guided me to the metaphor of worldmaking,

and subsequently the categories of the 'world-in-the-making,' the 'world-in-view,' and 'performing the world.' I utilized the 'world-in-the-making,' the 'world-in-view,' and the 'performing the world' as pre-assigned categories in order to comprise what I call a worldmaking taxonomy (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992).

Spradley (1980) defines a taxonomy; "like a cultural domain, a taxonomy is a set of categories organized on the basis of a single semantic relationship" (p. 112). Worldmaking provides the framework for understanding a woman-generated dance making phenomenon. I framed the concept of worldmaking into three components, how the dance work was created, who performed it, and how it was received/perceived in order to analyze dance making as worldmaking. These categories, the 'world-in-the-making,' the 'world-in-view,' and the 'performing the world,' are subsets of the performance phenomenon. All together, they comprise the whole.

In the 'world-in-the-making,' the creative process was the focal point. The narratives regarding how each woman felt about being a dancer and choreographer illuminated how they came to know, interpret, and experience the world. Through the concept of the 'world-in-view,' Jan, Kariam, and Claire experienced their dancing bodies. How they experienced their lived bodies as artists on stage, and as an instrument for creating, were seminal avenues of investigation. 'Performing the world' unveiled the experience of performing and

how the artist comes to realize the created work in performance. The artist sees the world view embodied and manifested in public presentation. What does it mean? What are their expectations of the created work?

A worldmaking taxonomy provided the conceptual organization for data analysis. I entered the hermeneutic circle, coding and analyzing the data to shape and discover theory.

Entering the Hermeneutic Circle

From a feminist perspective, this study is based upon the validity of women's experiences (Driscoll and McFarland, 1987), i.e., in this case, the validity of Jan, Kariam, and Claire's lived experiences. Theory emerges from their socially constructed realities. But there is more to women's lived experiences, than mere personal recollection. Lorraine Code (1995) writes:

...experience rarely "speaks for itself,"Even the most forceful and private of experiences often needs careful interpretation, especially to reveal its embeddedness within larger social patterns, hence to make it possible to see how, indeed, it is mediated by the circumstances of an experiencer's biographical and social-cultural location. (p. 36)

Women's experiences are valid indicators of knowledge. How Jan, Kariam, and Claire feel about their work as well as how they conceive ideas, and perceive themselves and others in the performance experience serves as a basis for constructing knowledge. Interviews with Kariam, Claire, and Jan provided me with data. Through a worldmaking taxonomic analysis, I realize and comprehend the complexity of Kariam, Claire, and Jan's lived experiences

as part of a larger whole. The study of these women, as complex, evolving individuals, living in complex, evolving worlds, guide the research design as an inductive adventure. But as Strauss (1987) writes: "the basic question facing us is how to capture the complexity of reality (phenomena) we study, and how to make convincing sense of it" (p. 10). I enter the hermeneutic circle in order to interpret the data, examine my interaction with the data, and achieve a shared construction.

The hermeneutic circle "refers to the relation of parts of a text to the whole text. The interpretation of each part depends on the interpretation of the whole and vice-versa" (Schwandt, 1997, p. 63). When I enter the circle, I am aware of my journey toward greater detail. Details emerge that reveal the complexity of meanings "of what lies in, behind, and beyond" the data (Strauss, 1987, p. 10). As a way of knowing, the research process includes my own experiences. I seek understanding as a cycle of sensing self, sensing data, and constructing theory.

Elaine Collins (1992) states:

Each researcher brings certain frames of reference, goals, biases, and abilities to the research. Each type of inquiry is guided by the researcher's own view of the world... such values and experiences will influence the questions chosen by the researcher, the language of the research, and what can be learned from/about the phenomenon. (p. 182)

Erlandson, et. al. (1993), like Collins (1992), believes the primary instrument in the research endeavor is the individual (p. 82). The dynamics of the relationship between researcher and participant are important and influential

in entering into the study. Like the explorer who traverses varied terrain, I experience a variety of feelings, intuitions, and thoughts during my exploration. In order to maintain a record of emergent developments, I kept a journal of my experiences and recorded these feelings to gain perspective and insight.

Through a conscious recognition of myself as choreographer, dancer, and artist, I established a shared ground with the artists.

As I engaged in self-reflexivity, I acted in a constant self-questioning capacity, conscious of my own life experiences and frame of reference.

Ellsworth states:

Working out of self-reflexivity as a basis for knowing operates out of what Hutcheon calls 'a very feminist awareness of the value of experience and the importance of its representation in the form of "life-writing."
(Ellsworth cited in Lather, 1991, p. 46)

Transcribing the audio-taped interviews, the phenomenon of worldmaking emerged through Jan, Kariam, and Claire's voices. Making sense of these women's articulations became possible through what I define in three distinct journeys. The first journey I undertook was descriptive (Daly, 1995).

What did Jan, Claire, and Kariam say about themselves, their dance, and their world? How did they describe their work? What were other's perceptions?

Through the descriptive realm, I became aware of what was in the data. Marshall and Rossman (1989) write that the purpose of descriptive data "is to display the daily events of the phenomenon under study" (p. 114). Through

transcribing the interviews and reviewing my personal journal entries, adding more entries and notes, I became familiar with the data, uncovering each woman's perception of the everyday and her subsequent construction of it.

The second journey was interpretive. It was here that the question of meaning emerged. What does dancing and choreographing mean to them? How is it important in who they are and are becoming? The interpretive realm required a rigor for identifying detail and connections by being fully aware of and engaged with the data. I focused my attention on recurring themes or ideas which illuminated how each woman defined herself creating, dancing, choreographing, and performing. This required constant reflection on the data, re-reading the interview transcriptions, hearing each woman's voice describe her own reality. Marshall and Rossman (1989) relate that it is in this realm where intellectual rigor is at its height. Categories of meaning emerge with interrelations and interconnections.

Here the researcher does not search for the exhaustive and mutually exclusive categories of the statistician, but instead to identify the salient, grounded categories of meaning held by participants in the setting. (Marshall and Rossman, p. 116)

The third journey was critical. What does the worldmaking process reveal for theory? The critical realm pushed me to greater complexity as I examined alternative explanations of the phenomenon to develop plausible and credible analyses against the data. I continued to review literature in dance, women, and

creativity. I constantly re-viewed the interview transcriptions. It is here I must “determine whether or not the data are useful in illuminating the questions being explored and whether or not they are central to the story that is unfolding about the social phenomenon” (Marshall and Rossman, 1989, p. 119).

These journeys or modes of inquiry did not occur in any linear fashion. Lofland and Lofland (1995) describe the analysis process as “significantly open ended in character. In this way, analysis is also very much a creative act” (p. 181). I worked inductively, diving into a sea of words, discriminating meaning, reflecting, and often talking to myself. As Coffey (1999) states: “The ethnographic self actually engages in complex and delicate processes of investigation, exploration, and negotiation” (p. 22).

What I am describing in my experiencing of these modes of inquiry is a hermeneutic phenomenological sensibility where interpretation is a circular endeavor “that may be entered at any point since one always, already brings one’s own biographically situated context to the situation” (McNamara, 1999, p. 166). I activated a dialectic between self and other, research and participants, data and theory. As an interpreter, I bracketed out preconceptions and presuppositions of the social world in order to describe the experience as it is experienced. Writing served as the vehicle for interpretation to emerge. Initial surface analyses were written describing each woman’s everyday experience of creating, dancing, and performing. Subsequent reviews of literature enhanced

descriptive richness. I diagrammed many visual models in order to track the study's thematic development from broad to specific findings.

I sought the verities of the experience to "...try to grasp the meaning of the phenomenon as it is lived through by the people involved" (Morris, 1977, p. 11). Through descriptive/analytical, interpretive, and critical modes of inquiry I discovered theory as process; conscious of 'other,' conscious of self, and conscious of the ensuing relationships.

What emerged was a depth and complexity from the data that needed ordering. Creating, embodying, and performing emerged as organizational components for a performance theory generation. Characteristics of each of these components were based upon the experiences of Kariam, Claire, and Jan. Dance making thus represents, not just elements of space, time, and movement but a social construction of reality.

I know that my natural attitude to this world corresponds to the natural attitude of others, that they also comprehend the objectifications by which this world is ordered, that they also organize this world around the "here and now" of their being in it and have projects for working in it. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 23)

I reveal how women bring their lives to a public place, a performance of self as a personal experience and a public realization.

Throughout the research process, successively evolving interpretations occurred. Claire's philosophy about choreographing, inspired me in the research process. She stated, "Don't limit your material, for heaven's sake, go deeper"

(Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 6, 1996). What Claire emphasized to me, metaphorically in the research process, is the necessity for thick description. Thick description was accomplished through triangulation.

In triangulation "the researcher seeks out several different types of sources that can provide insights about the same events or relationships" (Erlandson et. al., 1990, p. 115). I collected reviews, publications, and newsletters on each woman's work and concerts over a ten year period. These materials added depth and richness to the interviews and enhanced credibility and trustworthiness of the data I collected.

In addition to collected reviews and publications, I requested a press packet from each woman which included selected reviews and biographies of each artist. I also asked for videotaped copies of the dance works. Utilizing triangulation, all sources of data provided saturation and exhaustive investigation into the complexity of the artist's lives. These commercial media accounts are also examples of unobtrusive measures.

Unobtrusive measures include the collection and review of brochures, catalogs, newspapers, yearbooks, photographs, memos, and information in teachers' boxes, all of which are usually obtainable and were originally produced without reference to the researcher. (Erlandson et. al., 1990, p. 139)

The supplementary materials I collected were publicly produced for mass consumption. I collected the materials to examine world view. The videotapes of the dance works were important in that they illumined to me the dance work

in question. I was not able to attend live performances of any of Jan and Kariamú's works, but I was able to see Claire perform both of her works.

Physical evidence, such as the videotapes and reviews, provided a non-reactive measure to data analysis. "physical evidence is, for the most part, free of reactive measurement effects...most of the time, physical evidence is more appropriate for indexing the extent to which an activity has taken place...." (Webb et al., 1981, pp. 31,33). These materials provided descriptive background data for the study but became less and less important as the study progressed. The strength of the women's voices became a driving feature of the study. I used the selected materials as support for probing questions during the interview process, and, occasionally, these materials substantiated an artist's comment or intent.

Summary

The wealth of material I collected on Jan, Claire, and Kariamú reflected personal meaning and value. Interviews accessed the voices of the three women. Supporting data, such as reviews, videos, and other literature, provided a background for elaborating upon the concept of a worldmaking taxonomy, which included the 'world-in-the-making' through a sequential process to the 'world-in-view' and 'performing the world.'

Lofland and Lofland (1995) describe analysis as a "creative act." Analysis requires rigor, creativity, and flexibility.

analysis is conceived as an emergent product of gradual induction. Guided by the data being gathered...and the topics, questions, and evaluative criteria that provide focus...analysis is the fieldworker's derivative ordering of the data. (Lofland and Lofland, 1995, p. 181)

Throughout the data collection and analysis phase of the research, I looked for connections, relations, repetitions, uniqueness, and detail in order to experience what Strauss (1987) describes in the following: "...sometimes a phenomenon just forces itself on you from the nature of what you are seeing or hearing, day in and day out" (p. 4). In the hermeneutic circle, I am still entering and exiting, striving to seek, uncover, and make sense of increasing complexity in the phenomenon under question.

Jan, Kariam, and Claire's women's voices speak dynamically in the complexities, relationships, and interconnections of their choreographic and performance work. My researcher acts of describing, interpreting, analyzing, and creating more complexity, lead me to an understanding of what dancing means to them. Their voices illuminated creating, shaping, and experiencing dance; as I found order in that complexity I discovered feminist dance making.

Now, let us proceed through a worldmaking taxonomy, discovering what the 'world-in-the-making,' the 'world-in-view,' and 'performing the world' reveal to produce a feminist dance making theory.

CHAPTER III

THE WORLD-IN-THE-MAKING: PERCEIVING, CREATING, KNOWING

When one reads or listens to the introspective accounts of choreographers describing their creative workings it becomes apparent that the dance making process is in no way a sequential ordering of creative activities or known solutions...In actuality, the actions of choreographers are circuitous in nature guided by the artistic conceptions they seek to embody in the work. (Hanstein, 1986, p. 29)

Hanstein's research into the artistic process in dance provides an explanation as to how the choreographer engages with her medium, dance, and creates a work of art, the dance work. Choreography is an art-making activity guided by a plethora of ideas, insights, and imaginations, as well as socio-cultural and political influences. The 'world-in-the-making' represents this art-making activity; artist and object become engaged in a dialogue. This dialogue becomes revelatory because it uncovers the interactive relationship between self, artistic work, and world. Jan Erkert elaborates:

Art is a process and it's taught me how to process rather than be so determined on product. It's a way of being. It's a way of looking. It's a way of being in the world in many ways and in that way, I can say I'm an artist because I like to live in that curious sensibility. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Jan describes creating as a way of life. She is constantly engaged with a sensibility to the world that seeks to discover the intricate relationships between

self and world. She is aware of the need for curiosity in order to discover. As a consequence, she orients herself to engage that curiosity for the purpose of creating. Gruber (1989) determines that "...creating is purposeful work" (p. 10). When one is purposeful and committed, one is not so easily deflected from that path. Jan's sense of self and being is directed to creating. It is the essence of her being-in-the-world that reveals relationships between self and world. Hall (1990) believes that "we empower ourselves by knowing and realizing these connections between the whole and the part, between society and ourselves" (p. 73). Creating is the venue where these connections become evident.

Jan, Claire, and Kariamou are women artists. Their choreographic process reflects purpose and uncovers personal and political dimensions to creating. As dance makers, they are world builders, building symbolic worlds of imaginings, thoughts, ideas, and reflections. Jerome Bruner (1986) states, "What we call the world is a product of some mind whose symbolic procedures construct a world" (p. 95). From Jan, Claire, and Kariamou, worldmaking constructions emerge as concepts toward understanding choreographing as a meaning-producing activity. This is premised on the idea that choreographing helps one make sense not only of the world but of oneself as well (Bruner, 1990).

I propose that as the dance is always a work in progress, so is the self. As Claire, Jan, and Kariamou describe how each of their works develop, they reveal a dialectic between self and world. This dialectic uncovers how the work is a

product of the self, unveiling who they are and are becoming. Self-perception, self-cultivation, and self-knowledge are all components in understanding and analyzing who we are and are becoming. Benzel and De la Vars (1990) discuss what it means to “have an adequate sense of self” (p. 6):

It means to know what one desires on the basis of one’s own experience; to know which of one’s talents brings the deepest satisfaction; to know what makes one’s life meaningful and to exercise that sense of meaning within an ethical frame; to imagine one’s life for oneself and to give shape and voice to that vision. (p. 6)

Creating and building worlds, Claire, Kariam, and Jan reveal how they see themselves in the world, thus unveiling their world view. Each creative venture enriches them personally as they draw on their own experiences. Claire states, “It’s almost like I shape something I step into. I shape something I become” (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 6, 1996). They gain self-knowledge by transforming an idea into movement. “Knowledge is the product of ideas and activities” (Tweney, 1989, p. 101). As they shape their ideas into dance, their world views become evident. These world views reveal perspective and the relationship between self and world. It begins with perceiving the world.

Perceiving the World--Making Sense of Self and World

Claire Porter: The World of the Everyday

Claire Porter’s work is often humorous, combining spoken text and movement. In *Green Dress Circle*, Claire walks onto the stage wearing a green

dress, high black heels, and green earrings. She begins by welcoming everyone to the performance. Her speech is that of a theatre director pointing out the aisles, exits, and stage lighting fixtures. When she names the color of the curtains, she points out the green of her earrings, the dress she is wearing, and the circle movement she creates. As the piece progresses, so do the directions. You can venture beyond the theatre to the streets. Claire takes you out of the theatre, out of the building, and to the outside world. She gives clear directions to streets. She details north, south, east, and west, the equator, the continental divide, the moon, stars, and the universe. Yet, after each excursion, she always returns us to the green of her earrings, the dress she is wearing, and the circle movement she creates. At the end she asks us if there is anything else we need to know. We have moved from the mere space of the theatre to the world, the universe, and back. In her words, we have come “full circle. ”

Green Dress develops from a concept of place to an embodiment of place. Claire takes the idea of place and makes it unique to every performance of *Green Dress*. She acquires maps of the areas in which she plans to perform and memorizes specific attributes of the area from local streets, markets, etc., to regional cities and idiosyncrasies. Claire creates the work through the idea of familiarity. Through an everyday routine, giving directions, she creates a shared reality that is based on common sense. She brings that reality into conscious presence. She describes the work as unique. “I think it’s about place and that

kind of magnifying, stepping back, seeing where we are, this tiny, tiny thing in this place that's unique, special and insignificant" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 7, 1996).

Claire builds a world where she connects us to the world. The irony behind this world is that "we're just tiny and kind of insignificant" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 7, 1996). Claire's world view reveals a perspective that is based on a sensibility to everyday life. This perspective gives Claire an understanding of her being-in-the-world. She is aware of the everyday as a source of ideas, insights, and realities. "That really interests me, just what people are doing" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 6, 1996). Claire sees the everyday as undiscovered reality. She brings it into discovery through the use of humor.

Humor is a way of experiencing life. By attending to the incongruities of life, contrast is heightened, and inevitably a new view is stimulated. Claire utilizes the art of humor to create new perspectives. She also realizes how much humor is a part of her being. "I'm thinking it's sort of natural instead of out of your character" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 6, 1996). This natural attitude emerges as she talks about some of her works. She describes one work entitled *Dining Out* as a theme and variation, "A and B with water" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 6, 1996). In her making of *Weather* she

elaborates on how the work developed from the concept of change to menopause.

Okay, I'll make it about menopause. Time, change, no, change, no, okay. It's about the big change. And then I thought if I make it about menopause and call it menopause and make a bunch of menopausal dances, who's going to come? I wouldn't go. (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 6, 1996)

Fitness Digest is another example of Claire's insight into the everyday.

Fitness Digest emerged from Claire's experience as an aerobic instructor. Claire sits on a stool in the middle of a gymnasium wearing an exaggerated garb, lycra leotard, head band and wrist weights. She begins to talk, introducing the class to breathing and stretching. She then encourages her students to blink at her prompting. She never leaves the stool, utilizing minimum gestures, turns of the head, and poses to establish her authority as the diva of fitness. As the piece progresses, it is soon realized that this is no ordinary aerobic class. It is not about raising the heart rate; it is about the heart rate and the gastrointestinal system.

Claire relies on shared experiences with others in order to become recognizable and apprehended as a fitness instructor. Instead of leading the usual fitness aerobic class in sit-ups and leg lifts, she convincingly leads the audience to blink, smell, and breathe. She narrates a perfect example of how she can blur the lines of truth and fiction, stepping in and out of the obvious. It even surprises her:

I did it in this hotel and before I went on there was a fitness center. I was all dolled up with the earrings. I wear a wig now, to make it easy. I have to do all this stuff to my hair and I would have to take it out fast. So a wig is faster. I went into the fitness center looking the way I did. And they said "May I help you?" Like I was a normal person and that blew my mind. (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 7, 1996)

Claire Porter knows how to use the everyday as a rich place for revealing new perspectives. She realizes how discovery in creating is very stimulating.

I know there are moments of discovery when I find something that I like that is so fabulous. As a choreographer, on myself or writing, when things click, I say, oh, that's great, that's right. It's really some delight...that's great, dear. (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 7, 1996)

Claire's focus on the obvious reveals the unusual and reinforces her sense of self-perception. By discovering the everyday, she becomes aware of how she exists in it, sees it, and engages with it. She explores the possible which leads her to cultivate new learning experiences and engagements with the world.

Kariamu Welsh Asante: Women's Lived Experiences and the Worlds They Reveal

Kariamu Welsh Asante focuses on the everyday lived experiences of women. African American poet, scholar, and creative writer, Kariamu fell in love with dance. "It was modern dance that captured my imagination" (Kariamu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997). Raised to love the arts, Kariamu embraced dance but it was a particular experience that turned her to focus on choreographing. She studied dance at school, taking classes

from Ida Warrenhol, one of Martha Graham's students. The Modern Dance Club held auditions and Kariamum participated. She elaborates:

They were auditioning for a dance and I didn't make it and I was very upset. I went to Mrs. Warrenhol and I wanted to know why.... She basically told me that if I wanted to dance I should choreograph and therefore I would always be in the dance. That was a turning point for me. (Kariamum Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997)

Kariamum believes Mrs. Warrenhol was truly an influence in shaping her choreographic career.

In essence, she was saying you best know your body, your skills, your capabilities. So therefore, the dance that you choreograph will highlight you, highlight your gift as opposed to being in someone else's dance. And it's true, it's true. (Kariamum Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997)

The realization that Kariamum could dance her own dance gave her the means to achieve self-definition. She extended her experiences to writing. From historical analysis to contemporary studies, Kariamum immersed herself into the world of African and African American dance via a writing self that informs the world of a perspective rooted in Black womanhood. Her writings address how the western world has defined and misinterpreted African dance. She states,

If we are able to re-contextualize culture, art, and dance from an African-centered perspective, we are then closer to understanding the inclusive aspects of traditional African dance and the image of women in those dances. (Welsh Asante, 1997, p. 276)

This perspective is central to understanding how African women live in and experience the world. Activism is the foundation which Kariamtu utilizes to express women's lived experiences in dance.

So, I'm an activist. As I grow older, I use my choreography. I use my pen more to express my feelings about the society in which I live.... I would rather let my art do my talking for me, do my consciousness raising for me. People see a piece and know that I'm talking about oppression. (Kariamtu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997)

As an activist, Kariamtu is sensitive to a world of women. She chooses to focus on how women live in other worlds, questioning their being-in-the-world:

Other women's lives fascinate me in terms of other traditions and religions because I know at the heart of it all we're all women and we share some basic characteristics. (Kariamtu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997)

Nubian Caravan was the result of Kariamtu's observant nature. She found that Muslim women, although always together in a group, maintained distinct individualities within the group:

I was intrigued because they were individual and yet they acted as one and so they protect each other too. There was a sense of community with women and yet they still express their individuality. (Kariamtu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 12, 1997)

This individuality was expressed regardless of what appears to be a restriction of dress. The women wear Chadors which cover their faces and their dresses fall below the ankles. When in public, the women are completely covered yet they still negotiate around what appears to be a restriction.

I mean the point is the Chadors really don't hide that much. If that's the object then it's not really that they hide that much. And that fascinated me. And it fascinated me that the women were able to negotiate around this apparel, to still be sensuous, much like any other woman in the world.... They're all covered up right to the ankle and yet it's extremely sensual. (Kariamuu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 12, 1997)

The recognition of an apparent restriction in these women's everyday reality reveals a seminal ingredient to the demise of that restriction. This ingredient is resistance. The Muslim women resisted a convention of dress as oppressive to make it vitally expressive of who they are and are becoming. As the women navigated through their world with the dress, the dress was also subversive in that it freed their bodies. Kariamuu sought to embody that resistance and freedom and give it credence. Resistance becomes a way of knowing and, as such, creates a knowledge base that critiques cultural, social, and political strictures. This critique is rooted in the striving for autonomy and self-definition. Andree Nicola Mclaughlin (1993) illuminates how a Black political-class consciousness seeks to achieve this autonomy and self-definition:

In global perspective, Black political-class exhibits no particular geographic, racial, ethnic, religious, sexual, phenotypical, or ideological reference point outside of a uniform political opposition to imperialism, namely monopoly capitalism, colonialism, and racism, which relegates Black people to a life-threatening condition. (Mclaughlin, 1993, p. 277)

The emphasis is on wholeness and humanhood. To focus on struggle as universal reveals human solidarity and the quest for a new vision of community. In *Nubian Caravan*, Kariamuu noted how these Muslim women lived. She captured the way

the Muslim women navigated their world. They achieved autonomy and self-definition through this navigation. Kariamum states,

I'm very fascinated with the juxtaposition of them [sic] being very traditional and controlled and yet knowing that they themselves have found ways in which to have agency, to have power, to have freedom. I'd like to know more about their daily lives. (Kariamum Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997)

Nubian Caravan emerged from Kariamum's curiosity and fascination with women's worlds. She did not focus on literal interpretations of her observations. She sought to discover the essence of her "views."

You know, there are millions of Muslims in the world and I'm not going to change that nor do I want to change that. And I don't make a political statement on the religion or the polygamy nor do I present the women as oppressed. I present them as doing the only thing they know how to do.... This is their life. This is how they do it. (Kariamum Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 12, 1997)

Raaahmona was inspired from an event that occurred in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1985. The city bombed a house that was the residence of the MOVE group. Ramona Africa was one of two survivors of this group. Kariamum watched the initial turn of events from her home. From that point, Kariamum was drawn to the character and strength of Ramona Africa:

I was struck by Ramona herself, not at all the ideology that she espoused and still espouses but I was struck by the strength, the commitment of someone who would go through an experience like that. I thought of her courage, also her sense of integrity. (Kariamum Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 12, 1997)

Kariamum focused on building the dance from her perception of Ramona Africa.

"I did the piece before she got out of jail and it was based on my perception of her

without talking to her" (Kariamum Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 12, 1997). She describes how she represents the event but does not literally address it. "I don't go into the history of MOVE or anything like that. It really is about Ramona, Ramona as she is in my eyes" (Kariamum Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 12, 1997). Even though the work is inspired from a historical event, Kariamum's intention was not to re-create it as a documentary. She reveals the essence of what Ramona represents:

It made her one of a long lineage of women in America that, in a sense, would give their lives for what they believed in, regardless of what that belief was. It's hard to translate that into movement...If you didn't know who Ramona Africa was and you came to see the work, you'd just know this is a very strong woman. (Kariamum Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 12, 1997)

Kariamum connects to an attribute of women, namely strength, and activates its voice for dialogue. "I think this piece probably more so than any other work connects me with women, period. It just has all of the ingredients that I know most women go through: sacrifice, commitment, dedication, integrity, strength" (Kariamum Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 12, 1997). *Raaahmona* is built on this foundation. Kariamum seeks to express a "special sensitivity" to life she defines as a woman's world view. "I think being a woman is something that is very internal. It's not external...I think it's the way that we see the world. It means having a special sensitivity to life, to things around her, to other people that's unique" (Kariamum Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 12, 1997).

Choreographing for Kariamuu is the creative venue for the expression of that sensibility to being-in-the-world. "I think when you see my work you see through my work, the world as I see it, as I lament it" (Kariamuu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 12, 1997). Kariamuu emulates McLaughlin's (1993) analysis of African American women. "Black women's realities, concerns, and analysis are being brought to world attention today by their political activism globally and by their artistic and written expression" (p. 272). As she stated earlier, Kariamuu relies more and more on her art to "do my talking for me, do my consciousness raising for me" (Kariamuu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997). Combined with her activist sensibility as a woman and an African American, she is building worlds to re-shape perspective, illuminating insight on what resistance reveals about being-in-the-world and how it affects it for future change. She accomplishes this by watching and learning from the lived experiences of women.

Jan Erkert: The Sense and Sensibility of a Woman

Jan Erkert is also sensitive to the lived experiences of women. She emulates a sense and sensibility to the world through a woman's voice. Like Kariamuu, Jan Erkert is also an activist. She believes in extending dance to her community through a woman's voice. As one of her critics comments:

Count on Jan Erkert to create dance about the lives of real people. For years Erkert has been creating socially relevant dances that blend stories, movement, and humor. She has examined women's relationships, the brotherhood of men, and the links between feminism and ecology. (Voedish, 1993, p. 23)

Jan has accomplished this public presence by connecting to the community through her dance. She utilizes dance performances as public forums. These forums focus on specific issues her dances tackle, like gender or relationships. Local organizations are invited to set up information tables and conduct lectures. Jan presents dances in conjunction with the event. She elaborates:

It is another way to build a community to the arts. I was just kind of an artist in my studio and expected people to come because they like art. I realized that's not how it works anymore. You have to figure out a way to interact. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, July 8, 1994)

Jan is conscious of the world around her and she is adamant about speaking from a woman's voice. She came to the realization that it was this voice she needed to express. "I feel strongly in my art that it's really important for me to make statements that come from a woman's voice.... I want my work to speak from women's voices" (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997). Jan's interest in building worlds between community and artist is fortified by a distinct valuing of a woman's world view. It is this woman's sense of being-in-the-world she is committed to understanding, evaluating, and expressing. *Turn Her White With Stones* is one piece where Jan's sensitivity to her community inspired the artistic rendering of Cambodian women's lived experiences.

Turn Her White With Stones is a solo dance work. A dancer lies prone, surrounded by a large circle of white stones. Stones cover her eyes and her mouth. She delicately and deliberately removes them, placing them by her side.

She begins moving, squatting, standing, and sitting until she reaches the periphery of the circle. Lying on her stomach, she begins to move the stones to open an entranceway or an exit. In the background, a film of the dancer shows her image amidst rocks and cliffs. She moves in and out of the circle, eventually moving into the filmed image. Her silhouette watches the filmed dancer move across a beach with an orange sunset behind her. The soloist dives under the screen, hitting it as the image of her body lying on the floor is covered with stones, outlining her body to look like a skeleton. She runs back to the circle and throws a stone at the screen. She destroys a part of the circle and then re-designs the stones. The filmed image shows the dancer moving amongst the design. She throws rocks at the screen again, moving toward it and standing before it as her voice transforms into a high pitched hawking sound. She wraps herself into the screen and watches as another film begins to play.

Turn Her White With Stones evolved out of Jan's work at the Kovler Center for the Survivors of Torture in Chicago, Illinois. Everyday, Jan walked by the Kovler Center which was next door to the Dance center where she danced, performed, and taught. Her curious sensibility led her to investigate the possibility of volunteering at the Center.

I wondered what do they do there, what's going on there? And then a friend of a friend had worked there and started giving me some literature on survivors and the different things they found out. And the most important core of information was that survivors and people with post traumatic stress syndrome literally do

not store things in long term memory. They don't store it in the brain. They store it in their senses. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

The sense nature, especially the senses of touch and sight, is where Jan started with the Cambodian women. She was intrigued by the Center's description of the Cambodian women. These women were described as being closed physically. Jan's reaction was

Good, that's where I'll go. I've literally spent my life pulling stories out of dancers and pulling things out of the body because I know there are stories that are written in the body and I felt like I can really be of service here because I know how to do that. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Over the course of two years Jan observed and worked with the Cambodian women, incorporating her dancer, Suet May Ho, and various movement activities into therapy sessions. She had no intention upon her initial volunteering of even creating a piece. Jan became aware of the possibility for a dance through a particular poem written by one of the women:

She wrote this poem about wanting to become a stone because a stone had no feeling and it was her feelings that almost killed her. She believes in reincarnation; she would like to become a stone because that to her was peace. And she talked about how she loved the rocks because of that sense of peace to her. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

The stones connected self to world, artist to work. Jan created and filmed a session in which women used rocks to create images. During this session, the Cambodian women decided, in order to have closure for the loss of their loved ones, that they needed to bury May (Suet May Ho) with the stones. Carefully, and in a measured manner, they put stones on each part of May's body. In Cambodia, white is

the color one wears to a funeral. During the session, one of the women said, "Well, we'll turn her white with stones" (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997). As they finished, Jan commented,

I took a look at the video camera from above and it was like they had created this gorgeous skeleton. It was so beautiful. It was literally a skeleton out of stones. It was really mind blowing that they had created it. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997).

The dance begins with May removing the stones from her body. Originally the piece was supposed to end with May placing the stones on her body. But one of the women spoke with Jan:

She said, it must start with the rocks coming off, because the journey is, "I can't speak now but I want to speak." So we built a circle of stones. It was this whole journey of this woman, moving out of the center of the circle of stones. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

The Cambodian women helped Jan build the dance by collaborating with her through the imagery they created in their art work and their sense of movement. Jan's sensitivity to the body and its 'stories' helped her access the Cambodian women's worlds. She relied on what the body unveiled to create a voice for dialogue. In *Turn Her White With Stones*, the body activated that dialogue. *Forgotten Sensations* is another one of Jan's works where the body is central to its inspiration and discovery.

Forgotten Sensations emerged from a phenomenological experience. In a mind centering workshop, Jan found herself focusing on elemental reflexes. "What are the first instincts that make us move?" (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997). The primary reflex under study was the rooting reflex. The rooting reflex is that

movement noted in infants. When stroked on one side of an infant's cheek, she or he turns her or his heads to that side. It is a reflex, rather than a learned motor control.

Jan describes her experimentation with this concept.

So we're lying on the floor and I had all this doubt about it and we did it forever. We did it for four hours and I was just thinking this is really stupid. And then, at a certain point, I smelled baby powder. I literally started smelling baby powder. And I thought, "Oh, my God, there is something underneath here." (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

This phenomenological experience was purely of the body. By paring down all outside layers which were acting upon Jan's sensibility to being-in-the-world, her body became the subject of reflexes. "Reflexes, apparently, are natural processes....'A jump can not be explained in terms of reflexes, it is not a process, but a genuine function'"(Buytendijk cited in Langer, 1967, p. 13).

Reflexes are genuine functions of the body connecting the sense nature of the body to a conscious self, aware of their presence. Jan tapped into a sense that was not intellectually defined or motivated; it was purely felt:

I found that really fascinating and I think what was most fascinating is that it had gone past my intellect and all my doubts and all of those things and hooked in, right there deep. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Jan also experimented with breathing.

We had to start breathing opposite the movement.... So when I started improvising with this I got totally lost in this improvisation. It felt like the root of fear. All this kind of breathing opposite your movement is so inorganic. It felt like this is a primal sense of fear. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Through these experiences of the body, Jan felt “a whole base of language was being developed” (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997). Her body provided her with a vocabulary from which the dance emerged. Jan’s exploration of ecofeminism complemented her experiencing of the body with an intellectual vantage point:

What I took from ecofeminism was that what we are doing to our land, which is to dominate it, rape it, abuse it, is what we have been doing to women. The two go hand in hand and that a new world model has to be for both women and nature. We have to learn to partner with nature. We have to learn how to work with it, not against it. We have to learn to not dominate nature. All those things made sense to me as a metaphor for both women and ecology. (Jan Erkert, personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Jan’s commitment to enacting a conscious awareness of a woman’s perspective is evident in her development and conceptualization of *Forgotten Sensations*. “To me, it’s about the forgotten, the things that we might forget if we don’t truly remember them and keep them holy right now” (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997).

Imagine a stage covered with pieces of fresh sod and the pervasive aroma of fresh grass. Jan peels and eats an orange during the dance. She explains:

The smell puts you in a place. It just reminds you of all your childhood because you know everybody has rolled in the grass as a child and you go into this reverie. The smell itself is really, really important. (Jan Erkert, personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

One reviewer described *Forgotten Sensations* as a “sensual reconnection” (Deli Quadri, 1991, p. 63).

The intellectual development, sense nature, and its kinesthetic roots make *Forgotten Sensations* rich in its inception and creation. Jan strives to build a world that is meaning-producing. Unite this with a commitment to voice, and, as Jan states, it will help one go to that place of reverie, another world for experiencing.

As she comments on *Turn Her White With Stones*:

People don't want to hear about torture... We all want to close our eyes to it. We all want to not know it exists and to really look at it takes some courage.... I feel like there's a responsibility again in some ways to put it out there. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Jan believes in taking action to unite her self and world. Creating is the venue for that action to become fulfilling. Hall (1990) elaborates, “When women have a clear idea of who they are, they structure commitments in their own interests and to enhance their lives and others' lives” (p. 78). Jan's sensibility to being-in-the-world as a responsible agent seeks to stimulate discourse and ultimately change:

I feel very responsible in a way towards the world and towards what our society is and what it's doing and I feel like it's really important for me to speak. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Creating the World as Journey to Self

For Claire, Kariamou, and Jan, creating reveals unique world views from which their worlds are built. It is also life in action for them. “Action is essential

for a more complete expression of life" (Hall, 1990, p. 78). The act of creating is fulfilling in that it enhances their ability to express their world views and raise their voices. In essence, creating the world is a journey to self. It is self-cultivating, self-defining, and self-fulfilling, teaching and illuminating dimensions to their selves.

Claire Porter creates to learn. As she elaborates, "I like to create, work on a piece, sort of give myself a problem, to either learn about weather, to grow into sitting in a chair, facing the audience" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 6, 1996). Claire's interest in weather led her to create the piece entitled, *Weather*. She joined the North Jersey Weather Club and "considered becoming a meteorologist. It's very interesting" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 6, 1996). For *Fund Raiser*, where Claire portrays a woman soliciting donations for a worthy cause, she must be a strong and convincing sales person. She acknowledges an interesting self-reflection with *Fund Raiser*. "With *Fund Raiser* and getting strong, I think I became stronger" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 6, 1996). She transcends portrayal and embraces what she learns. She is "learning along the way" as she actively participates in the world (Bateson, 1994). Claire is learning about herself, as well as building a new world for entering.

In *Green Dress Circle*, Claire acquires maps from the area in which she plans to perform. She studies these maps and brings the reality of location to

fruition when she performs. Acquiring the maps, learning the area, and performing the directions places Claire in a learning mode. She deliberately challenges herself. It enriches her sense of self:

In all learning, one is changed, becoming someone slightly-or profoundly-different; but learning is welcome when it affirms a continuing sense of self. What is learned then becomes a part of that system of self-definition that filters all future perception and possibilities of learning. (Bateson, 1994, p. 79)

Kariamuu finds that her work *Raaahmona* informs and teaches her about herself, her way of choreographing, and the world. It has become self-defining because she continually changes it. The work reflects how she is learning more about herself and her world:

The whole experience of doing *Raaahmona*, and re-setting and re-setting it, probably parallels my choreographic experience in general. I think that the way Ramona touched me is the way that I'm moved in general by something to create a piece. And so I think it's a good example of the way I work and how I work and the things that move me. (Kariamuu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 12, 1997)

Kariamuu has learned how this work represents a journey toward self-definition. As Goler (1994) comments, "The self is not knowable by the author or others as a finite arrangement of qualities or experiences but exists in response to individuals and events in the world" (p. 18). The experience of Ramona Africa became symbolic to Kariamuu:

I continue to work on it because it does symbolize for me who women are in terms of their essence. In terms of their internal strength, internal commitment. And in that sense, although inspired by a historical event, transcends history, transcends time, so she could really be anybody, any

female you know. (Kariamum Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 12, 1997)

In essence, Kariamum defines herself in *Raaahmona*. Building and re-building *Raaahmona* increases Kariamum's insight and awareness to growth and change. It allows Kariamum to direct herself toward that change. Patricia Hill Collins (1990) elaborates:

Because our actions change the world from one in which we merely exist to one over which we have some control, they enable us to see everyday life as being in process and therefore amenable to change. By persisting in the journey toward self-definition we are changed, and this change empowers us. (p. 113)

Raaahmona empowers Kariamum toward self-definition. She describes it as autobiographical. It reflects who Kariamum is becoming.

I think that the reason why I change it is because although it's about Ramona, as my life changes, as I go through different experiences that toughen me, that strengthen me in a sense, it informs dance...it leaves room for me to grow and to change. (Kariamum Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 12, 1997)

Jan reveals a seminal facet of herself as she discusses the development of

Forgotten Sensations:

I feel like one of the things I desperately need, as a teacher, is to be a learner and that's really important and that's what I'm going to do all this sabbatical--take classes and learn. That curiosity to do more; I've got to get something new going on in my brain. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

From this drive to learn and become engaged with the world, Jan experienced the mind body centering workshop from which *Forgotten Sensations* evolved.

Her work also informs herself. It keeps her thinking, analyzing, and questioning herself.

In *Forgotten Sensations*, she uses sod on the stage to connect to the idea of environment and ecology. The sod was a necessity for the piece. It also created its own unique set of problems. Not only was it difficult to acquire at times but once acquired she encountered dilemmas as to how to dispose of it after a performance. "I actually re-sodded my front lawn with the stuff we used because I want to recycle. I feel stupid taking the sod and throwing it in the garbage can when I'm doing a piece about recycling" (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997). In Germany, they didn't have sod. So when it came time to get sod, the first alternative was astroturf. When proposed with this alternative, her reply was, "I can't do this piece, about natural things, on astroturf" (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997).

The dance work itself constantly placed Jan in an ethical dilemma. She built the world of *Forgotten Sensations* on the idea of possible loss:

To me, it's about the forgotten, the things that we might forget if we don't truly remember them and keep them holy right now. We'll forget what it's like to have grass and we'll forget what it tastes like to have real fruit. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

When working with the Cambodian women in *Turn Her White With Stones*, Jan constantly questioned her motives:

I just wanted to make sure that it didn't feel exploitive to them and that it honored them in a way that was honest.... to make sure that their privacy

was intact. At the same time, we were trying to share what the bigger horror was because I think people need to hear that. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, July 8, 1994)

Jan experienced a strong connection to the Cambodian women. It was a relationship that developed over a period of time. She describes her feelings during this period: "It never felt like anything was accomplished at all so for awhile it was like trying to figure out how to exist in this very different world" (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997). This time was chaotic for Jan as she sought to know their world. She developed an emotional relationship with the women as she became consciously aware of their realities and struggles. This awareness heightened her sensibility to her artistic interests and goals for the women. Dance was the venue to give the Cambodian women voice. They gave Jan direction in its development and became collaborators in its realization:

I feel that it's one of the most hopeful dances I've done.... By them telling me I had to turn around that ending, they were telling me they saw some hope there. They wanted to end up with the women getting out of the circle. She gets to the place where she can speak and that to me is hopeful, so I feel like it's really a joyous piece in many ways. I don't feel like it's a dark piece and I feel like that's reaffirming life. That says that the Kmher Rhouge did not win, that these women really won and I think that's really important. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Jan struggled between affirming the women's experiences and the fear of exploiting them. Dance was her way to give credence to their experiences and to keep them centralized:

I had a lot of very conflicting feelings that were very scary to me. What was exploitation? What was important for art and what was important for them. Always balancing an agenda there that their therapy was really what was supposed to be first. I wanted to make sure that the women came first. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

These inner struggles enhanced Jan's sensitivity to herself and to others.

As Mary Catherine Bateson (1994) comments, "whether negative or positive, the presence of the other leads to self-consciousness and puts familiar ways of being in question" (p. 21). Experiencing the Cambodian women's lives gave Jan insight and a new perspective:

It's a very important part of me. It was a very important place in my life because it was important just spiritually working with those women. It pushed me into a new place in art.... That was a very special moment in my life. That was something very beautiful. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

The experience of creating *Turn Her White With Stones* became self-fulfilling. Jan engaged with a different culture and emerged with a new awareness. Bateson (1994) describes this experiencing as learning from strangers:

Arriving in a new place, you start from an acknowledgement of strangeness, a disciplined use of discomfort and surprise. Later, as observations accumulate, the awareness of contrast dwindles and must be replaced with a growing understanding of how observations fit together within a system unique to the other culture. Having made as much use as possible of the sense that everything is totally alien, you begin to experience, through increasing familiarity, the way in which everything makes sense within a new logic. (p. 27)

Jan arrives at this new logic in the world she created. She recognizes that it came out of a new place.

It didn't come out of a place of "me" that's just a dance. It forced me into finding a different way to speak with more elements. The dance taught me about going into non-dance places. I'm not a performance artist. I'm working with these people that are video people. They are all performance artists and they all come out of a certain kind of genre that has a whole philosophy. I don't know what they're talking about half the time. I don't know that world. But it came out of its own world and it taught me something. It feels like it lives in a place that's very privately its own. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Jan looks to *Turn Her White With Stones* as self-rewarding, finding it to be a unique experience for her; yet she questions how it impacted the Cambodian women:

The thing that troubles me about it is I think I got out of it a lot more than maybe they did because their lives are still in real chaos and I don't think they're healed by any means...the immensity of what they went through and the immensity of work that needs to be done to make their lives better at this point. It's overwhelming. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Sensitivity to the Cambodian women's lives and lived experiences is important for Jan. She honors them for what they have taught her:

It often feels selfish in some ways because I feel like I was more profoundly affected than I think any of them were and you felt very privileged to be in the same room with them, sometimes just to be a witness to what they had to say. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Jan's reality was touched through her connection and bonding with the Cambodian women. It enriched her personally and gave her satisfaction. She was conscious of self and other, artist and voice. She sought to unite her artistic sensibility with the voices of the Cambodian women. She gave them voice.

They inspired her to scrutinize self and world. As a consequence, she experienced something that would not have been possible unless she entered into the world of the Cambodian women. Her desire to seek the complexity of their lives and their experiences led her to discover the dance.

Creating is integral to Kariamou, Claire, and Jan's personal growth and development. All three women actively seek to create. Jan, Kariamou, and Claire discussed creating their symbolic worlds, the dance work, from personal experiences, values, and insights. They are world-builders building worlds from distinct world views and vantage points. As a learning endeavor, choreographing is self-cultivating. Choreographing is a meaning-producing activity that each woman actively pursues to expand her own understanding of self and world. Subsequently, the worlds they build are also knowledge-producing. Claire, Jan, and Kariamou have unique ways of knowing which reveal knowledge bases for the production of meaning in their worlds. Through these knowledge bases, they know the world and make it known.

Knowing the World and Making it Known

Mary F. Belenky et. Al. (1986) conducted research on how "women's self concepts and ways of knowing are intertwined" (p. 3). They questioned how women came to know themselves, how they viewed reality, and how they came to know that reality. The research focused on the premise that the "nature of truth and reality and the origins of knowledge shape the way we see the world

and ourselves as participants in it" (p. 31). We all know and come to know through our interactions between self and world. The key is to determine how women tap into that capacity to know and make knowledge. Jan, Kariam, and Claire utilize unique ways of knowing to produce knowledge through the worlds they build. For Claire, it is the ordinary everyday; for Jan, it is the extraordinary reality of the everyday; and for Kariam it is to connect the extraordinary to the everyday. They each tap into that capacity as knower of the everyday, differently and diversely.

Claire Porter: The Ordinary Everyday

Claire brings an everyday reality into conscious presence. Becoming familiar with the everyday reality of others is how Claire immerses herself into knowing the unknown. The everyday provides a social construction of reality, "...what people 'know' as 'reality' in their everyday, non- or pre-theoretical lives" (Berger and Luckman, 1966, p. 15). This is the premise for a sociology of knowledge, to "...concern itself with the social construction of reality" (p. 15). We are all active participants in the world. It is how we come to live in the world and know the world that is the foundation for knowledge. This is commonsense knowledge. "Commonsense knowledge is the knowledge I share with others in the normal, self-evident routines of everyday life" (p. 23). Through commonsense knowledge, Claire creates a new perspective on what is known.

The significant elements in creating this perspective with *Green Dress Circle* are text and movement. The textual accompaniment establishes a shared sense of reality. Because *Green Dress* is performed in a variety of places, the text embraces the locality of that performance; thus the text remains in a constant state of re-ordering. The text creates a dialogue between knower and known, bringing an everyday reality into question for play.

The combination of text and movement in *Green Dress Circle* is evident of Claire's ability to tap into a heightened sense to the everyday, or what Berger and Luckman (1966) call the state of being wide-awake. "This wide-awake state of existing in and apprehending the reality of the everyday life is taken by me to be normal and self-evident, that is, it constitutes my natural attitude" (Berger and Luckman, 1966, p. 21). *Green Dress Circle* enables a wide-awakeness to self and world. No matter where it is performed, it is unique to place and space. For an outdoor concert Claire acclimatized herself to a space of gates, fences, and trees. "There was a fence they could go to, a gate that they could go through and a park they could go into which was green. It was just faster" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 7, 1996). Claire capitalizes on how there is more to the everyday than meets the eye. There is no hidden context in the words *green* and *dress*. The dress is green and that is all there is to it. Simply speaking, she focused on the obvious and rendered it unique.

Fitness Digest also focuses on the obvious. It is premised on the importance of people meeting and interacting with each other in everyday life. "The reality of everyday life is shared with others" (Berger and Luckman, 1966, p. 28). In *Green Dress*, Claire joins us in a conversation with herself, regarding routine directions. In *Fitness Digest* Claire is an individual any of us may have encountered in the experience of the fitness realm. She is relying on a shared experience of the everyday with other in order to become recognizable and apprehended as a fitness instructor.

Oh, who is she? I don't have a name for her. Oh, it's funny. She's cheerful, like overly cheerful and she's concerned about things happening to her body. Oh, ooh, aaaa, aaaaa, yeah, that part in particular. Yeah, she's definitely taken with herself. That's all I know about her. (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 7, 1996)

Claire, as the aerobics instructor of *Fitness Digest* creates a shared reality that relies on the social construction of identity. Her wide-awakeness to her own construction as an aerobic instructor in the everyday led her to develop and perform that construction. She brought others to a face-to-face encounter. "In the face-to-face situation the other is fully real. This reality is part of the overall reality of everyday life, and as such massive and compelling" (Berger and Luckman, 1966, p. 29).

Commonsense knowledge is generated through Claire's world view of the everyday. This knowledge, based upon the obvious, transcends the obvious and explores the possibility of being-in-the-world that is socially known and socially

constructed. She explores the possible, which leads her to cultivate new learning experiences and engagements with the world. Claire Porter knows how to use the everyday as a rich place for revealing new perspectives.

Jan Erkert: The Extraordinary Reality of the Everyday

Jan Erkert is committed to a sensibility of the body. This sensibility creates a knowledge base from the connection of self to world through the senses. The senses process not only immediate responses but connect us to a deeper meaning of being-in-the-world and experiencing the everyday as extraordinary:

Behind the surface of the face in the mirror is blood and bone and tissue but also friends, cities, grandmothers, novels, gods, numbers, and jokes; and it is likely to be the second group (the socialization of sentience) rather than the first (the privacy of sentience) that she at that moment 'senses' as the washcloth in the mirror moves back and forth over the illuminated surface of the skin. (Scarry, 1985, p. 256)

The socialization of sentience is where Jan's knowing resides. By revealing a distinct perception or conscious awareness of the power of the body and its sense nature, connection between body and world, feeling and thought, is immediately felt. The body is where the felt experience resides. Jan is clearly committed to a sensibility of the body. This sensibility creates a knowledge base derived from the connection of self to world through the senses. When Jan volunteered with the Cambodian women at the Kovler Center for the Survivors of Torture in Chicago, she realized how she could reach these women through

her dance. "I was watching these women and it was really clear that they spoke through the senses" (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 1, 1997).

Reaching and collaborating with the Cambodian women through their sense nature became Jan's focus. Guided by imagery and their sense of movement, they helped Jan build the dance. There is a way of knowing through the senses that enlightens an understanding of being-in-the-world. Although the Cambodian women were not comfortable with movement, as Jan stated, "They were definitely guiding me to the images they wanted" (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997). By entering into the sense nature of the body, self and world connect to experience a being-in-the-world that is illuminated as "felt" living. This "felt" living became an extraordinary reality of the everyday, a way of knowing, through which Jan developed a powerful narrative.

Kariamum Welsh Asante: Connecting the Extraordinary to the Everyday

Kariamum choreographs worlds about the lived experiences of women. She states, "I know there's a price to pay for being female, without a doubt" (Kariamum Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997). Her sensibility and sensitivity to women's lives seeks to unveil the parameters around which they are shaped. "All over the world women continue to struggle for their own self actualization in spite of male dominance and male dominance is everywhere" (Kariamum Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997).

This stance enhances her commitment to focus on creating dances which address these lived experiences. She seeks to cross cultures, building connections from the extraordinary to the everyday in order to make the experiencing of the everyday enlightening. She describes this connection in her fascination with the Muslim women:

In terms of world wide we have a large population of Muslim women. I am very intrigued with their lives.... the paths they have carved for themselves within those confines to be free. I'm fascinated by the juxtaposition of them being very traditional and controlled and yet knowing that they themselves have found ways in which to have agency, to have power, to have freedom. I'd like to know more about their daily lives. (Kariamum Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997)

Kariamum's dances produce knowledge that reveals resistance. Patricia Hill Collins (1990) comments, "Because Black women's ideas have been suppressed, this suppression has stimulated African-American women to create knowledge that empowers people to resist domination" (p. 234). Kariamum's knowledge is produced to reveal resistance as empowering. She accomplishes this through her ability to be distinctly conscious of her subjectivity as an African American woman, shaped by the world at large, yet navigating fluidly throughout the world, changing, and evolving as a consequence. Kathy Ferguson describes this type of consciousness as "mobile subjectivities" (Ferguson cited in Pratt, 1998, p. 15). "This is a subjectivity that is in process, unstable and interpellated by diverse and sometimes contradictory subject positions" (Pratt, p. 15).

Kariamuu moves between cultures and, in that moving, finds resistance. Her ability to move in and out of cultures, seeking to experience the culture, is indicative of her sensibility to resist the conventions of socio-political boundaries. Kariamuu has noted that she is not interested in literal interpretations of what she creates. She is interested in different dimensions to viewing, perceiving, and learning. Her artistry is strengthened by her position of resistance from which alternative realities of everyday living can be viewed. She desires to seek the complexity behind women's lives and culture and she will not be intimidated or silenced. "I'm not afraid to say what I want to say even if it's controversial" (Kariamuu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997).

What Kariamuu also contributes to knowledge production is the historical grounding of that knowledge. She recognizes her heritage as an African American woman and reflects upon how "the African American woman's role isn't recognized enough in all of the battles that we've had to fight" (Kariamuu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997). She elaborates on how the Civil Rights Movement would not have been possible without the women in the background, organizing and supporting the movement.

We, like so many other women in the world, remain anonymous because we don't necessarily need to be in the limelight. We don't have to be constantly saying our names everyday. (Kariamuu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997)

Kariamam generates a knowledge base that affirms women's resistance. Resistance becomes a process through which her dances give voice to liberation in living. She is able to distinguish that voice as artistically hers. "It really is my world" (Kariamam Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997). Through her knowledge, the world is re-defined, re-shaped, and re-constituted. The borders are blurred and boundaries are subjective. She moves fluidly between continents and builds new worlds for entering.

Perceiving, Creating, Knowing

Kariamam, Jan, and Claire produce knowledge as a part of their creative selves. Their creating provides a framework for the production and generation of knowledge. They come to know through choreographing, building worlds for experiencing. The worlds they build inform themselves and others. The dances are reflective of self and world.

In analysis of Wendy Wasserstein's writings, Jane Thompkins writes, "I see [texts] as doing a certain kind of cultured work within a specific historical situation and as providing society as a means of thinking about itself" (Thompkins cited in Ciociola, 1998, p. 131). The dances of Kariamam, Jan, and Claire emulate this analysis. World views direct and guide perceptual and conceptual beginnings of the dance work. Creating the work is self-cultivating. There is meaning in personal growth, learning new worlds through the work's realization. Knowledge is eminent as thoughts and action converge to formulate

a new view, or perspective. The artistic goal is to encourage reflection and change, to learn from another world, and to construct new realities. The artist perceives, creates, and knows, becoming a knower of the world and making it known.

CHAPTER IV

THE WORLD-IN-VIEW:

THE BODY AS A RESOURCE FOR WORLDMAKING

We do not simply exist as bodies, but we also have bodies. We have bodies not just because we are born into bodies but because we learn our bodies, that is, we are taught how to think about our bodies and how to experience our bodies. And in a similar fashion our bodies invent us through the discourses they embody. (McLaren, 1991, p. 156)

Fundamentally, the body serves as a common denominator which reveals meaning. As McLaren (1991) states, there are a multitude of dimensions to help us in understanding the body. There is the physical reality of pain as well as ability, coordination, and function. There is also an embodied reality, "a cultural process by which the physical body becomes a site of culturally ascribed and disputed meanings, experiences, feelings. Here 'the body' is positioned within culturally specific--sometimes competing--discourses of meaning, authority, and control" (Stanley and Wise, 1993, p. 196).

As we question how we learn and think about our bodies, as well as experience our bodies, we unveil personal and social dimensions which shape and define our physical realities. Claire, Jan, and Kariamun describe themselves by describing their experiences as dancers and women. Through these

narratives, the body is articulated as a physical reality reflective of self. What they reveal is how the body is a resource for worldmaking.

The Body as "Voice"

Questioning what it means to dance and choreograph frames how Claire, Jan, and Kariamuu value the experiencing of their bodies and how this has shaped their being-in-the-world. The body renders an understanding of identity that is important to the realization of worldmaking. "There's nothing that happens or that I see that cannot be translated into movement and so in that sense my plate is always full" (Kariamuu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997). Through the body, we come to understand the way Jan, Claire, and Kariamuu see and interpret the world.

Dancing and choreographing are symbolic of a commitment to engage with the world, because they are ways through which these women see and experience the world. As a consequence, the commitment to dancing and choreographing is integral to the shaping of Claire, Jan, and Kariamuu's connection between self and world. The body gives them "voice."

Feminist scholarship on autobiography defines voice "as a metaphor for the act of inscribing one's self in the world" (Cooper cited in Desmond, p. 185). Dance connects self to world. Claire, Jan, and Kariamuu find creating to be a way of life. Their bodies are resources for creating. They describe the perception and

experiencing of their bodies as embodied and physical realities. These realities give them a “voice” in and for the world.

For Kariamuu, dancing is a lifeline. “Dance has saved my life when at times I was not able to express myself at all other than dance” (Kariamuu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997). Dancing provides an important embodied voice for expression that is important. Through dance, Kariamuu inscribes herself in the world. Her “voice” is a means of self-definition:

You can get to know me better if you see me dance. I am much more complex than my words or my normal persona would allow. Peeping into my world as a dancer and as a choreographer, you are able to see me in that complexity. I can be bold. I can be outrageous. I can be controversial. I can be gentle. I can be needy. I can be outraged. I can be so many different things. It would take you a lifetime to know if you were just dealing with me without ever seeing me dance or choreograph. (Kariamuu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997)

Kariamuu recognizes the strength of “voice” through this narrative. She is aware that dance allows her to speak uniquely and idiosyncratically. “I can say things in dance that I can’t say in words” (Kariamuu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997). Kariamuu’s being-in-the-world is fuller with dance. She states, “Dance just multiplies the possibilities for me in life” (Kariamuu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997).

Jan Erkert corroborates this as she talks about what it means to choreograph:

There is this very personal sense of being able to realize from the world of the imagination or the world of unknowns that you can take that and

shape that into something that is tangible and real. That process of doing to me is the most exciting in life. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Like Kariam, Jan sees dance as a unique medium of expression which connects her self to world. "When I tap into something that is going on in me and can use that to make a more profound or worldly statement, that's when it feels like it's really good and rich" (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997). Dance gives Jan the ability to become fulfilled and connected to the world. Hall (1990) states, "In order to live fully we need purpose and direction in our activities" (p. 71). Dance serves to give purpose and direction to self. Purpose solidifies commitment. "Commitments imply a conscious and deliberate selection of goals and an expression of values.... It is through our commitments that we discover who we are, who we have been, and who we can be" (Hall, 1990, p. 73). Claire affirms this process of discovery:

I remember discovering modern dance. It was everything I'd always wanted. It was exciting, aesthetic. It captured my mind, physically, my heart, my body. And power. It's powerful.... Awakened me to my power, to do what I say. I wanted to be expressive. It's wonderful. (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 6, 1996)

Claire's engagement with modern dance connects meaning to moving. It becomes an empowering experience. Hall (1990) states, "Empowerment begins with identity clarification and includes making commitments for action" (p. 196). When Claire spoke about what choreographing meant to her, she stated, "I find that I have to be working on something or I'm not happy" (Claire Porter,

Personal Communication, July 6, 1996). Her comment is insightful in that she realizes she is not fulfilled unless she is choreographing or immersed in the process of choreographing. "Fulfillment brings with it a sense of completion-- that one is doing what one is meant to do" (Hall, 1990, p. 165).

Jan, Claire, and Kariamuu achieve identity clarification by dancing and choreographing. Moving and the shaping of movement into dances for performance is the medium through which identity is realized. They describe their relationship between moving and shaping as valuable and meaningful.

Dancing and choreographing serve a distinct purpose. They are meaning-making acts which give each woman a particular "voice" and personal fulfillment. Their bodies are the medium for that "voice" to be experienced and projected. As a physical and embodied experiencing, the body impacts how that "voice" becomes a driving force.

As the body physically changes, through injury and aging, the women find themselves changing their perception of self and ultimately their relationship between self and world. They adapt to the body's possibility for movement. This adaptation is empowering as it extends their possibility to voice new perspectives through their dance. It also informs them of what interests them when they see and experiment with movement. The body becomes a turning point which stimulates re-direction, reflection, and self-revelation.

The Body as Turning Point

Physical Reality as Possibility

Kariam, Claire, and Jan experienced new directions and self-revelations through their bodies. Their bodies became informative. This surfaces in the women's narratives of how they experienced injuries and what the injuries revealed to them. They also discuss the experiencing of ability and what effect age and gender has had on their dancing and their perception of movement.

Kariam experienced a ruptured achilles heel which had to be re-built. She describes the surgery as painful and acknowledges that there was nothing she could have done to avoid it. "There was nothing I did to make it happen. It just happened" (Kariam Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997). Kariam had no control over this injury. She had no physical warning signs that it was going to happen. In her words, "It was very unexpected" (Kariam Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997).

The injury took a great deal of time to heal, leaving Kariam out of dancing for a year. "That gave me a great deal of time to think and reflect and to wonder if I would be able to dance at all or teach at all" (Kariam Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997). In her experience, her body became a turning point for change. It caused her to look at her relationship between self and world. "I really was terrified that I would not be able to be mobile and I couldn't imagine what that would do to my life. So that was really a frightening

moment for me” (Kariamuu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997).

Kariamuu’s narrative reflects how her body, in changing its capacity to move, brought her to question her relationship between self and world. It not only affected her identity as a dancer and choreographer but also her identity as defined by ability. Her body is a source of being-in-the-world. It is the physical experiencing of being. When that experiencing changes, it stimulates self-awareness, which leads to self-definition. As Veta Goler (1994) describes, “The search for self is in essence a process through which the individual achieves self-definition through self-awareness” (p. 17). Kariamuu’s body lost some of its mobility as a result of the injury. The injury heightened her awareness of what moving meant to her.

When I asked Jan Erkert to describe turning points in her life and how these turning points had impacted her, she referred to her body. “I think a big one was when my back went out a couple of years ago” (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997). Suffering from a very debilitating back injury, she was bedridden for a month and gradually started walking for exercise. “My friends would come over and take me for a walk. I felt like a dog. And I’d kind of hold my hand at their hand and I’d go around one block. It would take an hour to go around the block” (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997).

The injury gave Jan a lot of time to reflect upon her body. Her rehabilitation became an insightful time for her to focus on her body and its connection to herself.

My Alexander teacher said to me, “when you’re healing, your body goes back to its original blueprint, it’s original kind of organic makeup, and when it heals it doesn’t know or understand the negative ways you’ve treated your body. It goes back to the blueprint.” (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Jan’s conception of her body as blueprint was revelatory for her. She states, “Here’s an opportunity to let it heal in a way that will change something for the better rather than just glob onto the old. I think it was just an exciting time in a way because I felt I had the opportunity for change” (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997). Jan’s body became emblematic of change. The challenge her body presented through limited physical capability became an opportunity for Jan to reflect on how her body was a source of self-awareness.

Self-awareness is also realized in how Jan sees her work as a product of herself. She describes a psychological, physical, and emotional self in tandem with each other, which informs her of herself:

It feels like my psychological, my emotional, and my physical self is here. And sometimes I would make tremendous jumps physically and therefore my mind would be pulled along and other times I would make real breakthroughs psychologically and emotionally but my dancing wouldn’t progress until I had made that jump. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Jan describes a connection between physical, psychological, and emotional dimensions of self that is informing. With this back injury, Jan believes that her physical body took on the characteristics of too much stress in her life. She states,

The pressure was getting too great, there were too many things going on.... And I felt at some point that I was going to go crazy...but I couldn't go crazy so it had to go somewhere else and it went to my back. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

As Jan describes it, the body took on the psychological and emotional dimensions of her way of being-in-the-world. As a consequence, the body became a signal for Jan:

When it's too much and I know the warning signs, I have to back off at a certain point. It was interesting because right before Christmas I could feel like I was starting to get that craziness with just too many things going on and my back started to go out and I had a vacation the next day. I felt like this just saved me. I could tell all the signs were there. I have to keep myself in check right now. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Jan's physical self, experienced through her body, is a barometer for change or re-direction toward maintaining or returning to her state of well-being.

Both Kariamtu and Jan experienced injuries that stimulated change and caused self-reflection. They became aware of what moving meant to them through these injuries because it presented a strong contrast to what they knew and had experienced. With injury, the body informed them of difference, possibility, and change.

Claire also experienced injury but her injury led her to create. Unable to dance because of a foot injury, Claire decided to experiment with what movement potential the injury afforded her. It provided her the opportunity to create a variety of works:

I made *Planted Feet* and.... I thought of *Dining Out*, the restaurant piece at a table.... And I thought of the sign language piece.... So it was like swoosh!, Wonderful Oh, I can do this, I can do this, I can do this. (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 6, 1996)

Claire became aware of her body's power to empower through movement. She embraced a physical reality which presented her with a challenge and it directed her to create a moving experience which informed her thinking and subsequent making of the dances. She was excited with the results. It informed her of possibility.

The nature of Claire's injury was not as debilitating as Jan and Kariamú's but the experiencing of that injury was revelatory. It led her to evaluate what she was capable of doing through movement. Her identity, like Jan and Kariamú, is strongly rooted in a physical experiencing of being-in-the-world. There is a purpose in this physical experiencing. It gives meaning to Kariamú, Jan, and Claire. Identity clarification emerges from physically experiencing the body.

Hall (1990) states, "Identity allows us to transcend everyday realities, however harsh those realities may be. Identity oriented towards our strongest ideals and values focuses our attention on possibilities rather than on problems"

(p. 139). The physical experiencing of being-in-the-world as evidenced through injury or physical challenges illuminates identity. Jan, Claire, and Kariamuu achieve self-awareness through physical capability but not in an idealized sense. For them, reality is experienced as possibility rather than limitation. The body in its physicality is a turning point which illuminates this relationship. It shapes identity. Kariamuu, Jan, and Claire experience the body in its possibility to re-direct and stimulate change.

The Social Reality of An Aging Body

Another dimension to the body as turning point emerges through the women's narratives of physically experiencing the body as a socially constructed entity. This was revealed primarily through the women's narratives regarding aging and gender. Kariamuu connects her ruptured achilles injury to the realization that her body is aging:

It also made me realize the process of aging for a dancer. You know you're going to get older but you don't really think of what that means to your life and then as you get older and there are little things that creep in or a big thing like what happened to me, rupturing my achilles, you begin to realize, oh, my goodness I'm getting older. I have to be careful with my body because you know something else may pop or snap. (Kariamuu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997)

The reality of aging for Kariamuu becomes evident through her body's moving capability. This is biological or physical aging. The body develops and matures over time. But there is also another dimension to aging:

Although the impact that biological and physical factors have on the aging process is undeniable, the social relevance of people's biological characteristics is, in large part, socially determined. That is, age is largely socially constructed. (Hendricks quoted in Turner and Troll, 1994, p. 16)

Aging, experienced biologically, is also experienced phenomenologically and socially. "Phenomenological age perceptions are of the self, while social age perceptions are of others" (Turner and Troll, 1994, p. 17). Personal narratives about the body of Jan, Claire, and Kariamü reveal what age means to them. They also indicate the perceptions of others and how these perceptions are experienced. Aging is an insightful lens through which Claire, Jan, and Kariamü reveal themselves changing with time. Through the experiencing of their bodies, they describe how aging is revelatory, bringing perspective to their past, present, and future. It heightens awareness to social and cultural dimensions of their being-in-the-world.

"I look at pictures of me performing and I look at how tiny I was but I also remember even then not being happy with my size, wanting to be even thinner" (Kariamü Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997). Kariamü remembers her youthful body but she also remembers how it was not satisfactory. Susan Stinson, Donald Blumenfield-Jones, and Jan Van Dyke (1990) found this same sentiment in their research on young women dancers. They found that many of the individuals, ages 16-18, believed "only certain kinds of bodies are desirable in dance" (p. 17). Kariamü sees this struggle in her students:

Every single day I see at least one female dancer grappling with her self image. You know she can be as talented as all get out. Now, I'm talking white, black, yellow, and green. This transcends race but I see them grappling with their self image and it's all behind the body. That's a terrible burden that's placed on women generally, and, of course, on the female dancer it becomes even more of a problem. (Kariamuw Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997)

In realizing how the body shapes identity, Kariamuw elaborates on how her identity has changed over the years. When she was a teenager she stated that her generation focused on specific measurements. "Your waist should be ten inches, smaller than your bust. Hips should be ten inches over your waist.... Today they're more interested in body building" (Kariamuw Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997). Susan Bordo (1993) corroborates this observation with her study of the body in society:

Until the 1980s, excess weight was the target of most ads for diet products; today, one is much more likely to find the enemy constructed as bulge, fat, or flab...Simply to be slim is not enough--the flesh must not "wobble." (p. 189-191)

The pressure to conform to body images which are ascribed meaning and value is constant. To be slender means one is in control of urges and desires or impulses to eat. "The slender body codes the tantalizing ideal of a well-managed self in which all is kept in order despite the contradictions of consumer culture" (Bordo, 1993, p. 201). In body building, a well toned, muscled image symbolizes a "glamorized yuppie icon"...it means that one 'cares' about oneself and how

one appears to others, suggesting willpower, energy, control over infantile impulse, the ability to 'shape your life'" (Bordo, p. 195).

The ability to shape one's life becomes influenced by the body. There is always the pressure to compare oneself to the images evident all around us. Kariamuu reveals she still struggles with this aspect of comparison. It has taken on new dimensions not always regimented to specific body measurements:

I try not to compare myself to another person, another woman my age. I have some colleagues who are in incredible condition, just incredible, but they've made that their life's pursuit.... It seems to be a never ending battle, maybe even more so for a female dancer/teacher/choreographer. It is one battle I didn't think I would have to deal with in my middle years but it is certainly a battle...(Kariamuu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997)

The pursuit of the perfect image as projected by society is a futile one. As Kariamuu notes, she carries the battle with her as she ages. She continues to compare herself to other women within similar age brackets and life spaces. She still struggles with her body and how her life choices have impacted her body when compared to others. The question becomes, "How am I doing for my age?" (Helson and McCabe, 1994, p. 68).

Kariamuu has a heightened sense of the battle between world and self because it impacts how one experiences being-in-the-world. She questions herself and what she feels. She questions what it means to her:

So what do you do with the process of gravity? You know that takes place, there's no getting around it. What do you do with graying hair? These are not things we want to see on stage. Those are things that one doesn't

think about when they are a twenty--something year old dancer.
(Kariamum Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997)

Kariamum speaks from a place of maturity. Because of her age, she can make this distinction and voice this reality of experience. "Sure you can dye your hair. Sure you can have plastic surgery but even still, there's no way of denying that these things are happening to you" (Kariamum Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997). Kariamum articulately voices an inevitable reality of the body:

You can't be wishing for this other perfect moment that may never come and, of course, we know there's no such thing as perfection anyway so that even when you get to whatever magical weight or whatever magical stamina or whatever, you won't be happy. (Kariamum Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997)

The search for happiness comes from a physicality that is valued and empowering. As she speaks from the vantage point of being an older mature dancer, Kariamum identifies how this search is limiting:

Speaking of just simply being female and growing older, we don't have, for the most part, very mature dancers on our stages in America. I mean we don't have them in their fifties and sixties, for the most part. There's a company out of D.C. that deals with senior citizens moving and there are some people who are doing some experimentation but, for the most part, and even then with those companies, it's definitely dealing with the senior citizens in that context. (Kariamum Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997)

Kariamum reveals a definite desire toward validating a difference that an older dancer can contribute to the dance world. Jan Erkert concurs:

I think dance needs to be re-defined because I personally feel that essentially what ends up on stage in dance is this small group of people that are twenty to twenty-five years old. Can you imagine a theatre company of people that were all in one age category? (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, July 8, 1994)

Jan voices a desire for diversity where dancers of all ages give her a “palette that’s bigger to speak with” (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, July 8, 1994). She speaks from a stance based primarily on how others experience and perceive their physicality. With this stance, she is not limited to the experiences of young bodies. She is committed to the physical experiences of all ages.

I love beautifully-trained dancers that can move. That just really excites me, but I also love seeing them against other people and I also love how somebody that’s eighty-five touches their chin. It is a whole different experience than somebody that’s trained to do that and has all the aesthetics of it but not the emotion of it. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, July 8, 1994)

Jan recognizes how the uniqueness of individuals is fundamentally connected to their physicality. She elaborates: “An audience comes in and sees these beautifully-trained people that do amazing things that they could never do and so they say, ‘well, that’s pretty but it doesn’t relate to me at all’” (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, July 8, 1994). Jan communicates the idea that the spectator is physically connected to the performance based upon a physical language and it is through that language that everyone becomes understood.

"I believe that physicality has a language and that we all know it and whether you're a trained dancer or not you should be able to recognize something like that" (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, July 8, 1994)

The idea of diversity in physicality is a motivating force for Jan and Kariam. As Jan and Kariam have articulated, they recognize how the body is perceived and received from cultural and social forces. Their narratives emulate how "...the body that we experience and conceptualize is always mediated by constructs, associations, images of a cultural nature" (Bordo, 1993, p. 35). These women recognize aging's impact on them as women and artists. "That's the stereotype of women. It's like you're not worth anything after this age and men get more important and women get less important during that age and I think that's hard" (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, July 8, 1994). Jan questions the experience of being an older woman. She also relates it to her professional artistic experience when she discusses how the Illinois Arts Council gave six fellowships out one year, five of which went to men. Two of these six were given to her company members who were much younger. While Jan was pleased for her company members, she was also discouraged:

I look at the field and it's ninety-five percent women and why were five out of six grants given to men? That should be the ratio that is common for women. Here I am as an older artist and I know the work that I've submitted was really quality work and has gotten all kinds of major praise and gotten grants. So I know the work was good that I turned in. It wasn't just like, "oh, I turned in a bad dance this time" which can happen, but it was just like, it's been really hard up to this point to be a woman

and now am I going to be penalized for being an older woman? Let's give the young things a chance and I think that's important but there was a certain point where I went, "oh, God, do you get de-valued now as a woman? I mean as an older person too?" You know, it just feels like a second de-value because it's always been as the woman you get less and now older, too? (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 7, 1997)

Jan voices the debate of the double standard of aging for women. Susan Sontag (1972) introduced the double standard of aging. "Women are viewed as aging sooner and as being less attractive than men at older ages" (Gee and Kimball, 1987, p. 99). Women become of less value as they age, due to their appearance, while men are less affected by the aging process. Browne (1998) elaborates that "...women experience different societal norms, and while they are perhaps advantaged in their social relations, they live in a society that values their contributions and worth less than those of older men" (p. 46).

Jan questions whether she must now have to deal with discrimination based upon her age, 7 as well as the fact that she is a woman. She is identifying her fear of sexism and ageism. "Negative attitudes toward the aged as a group have been labeled ageism" (Unger and Crawford, 1992, p. 489). Sexism is the "behavior, policy, language, or other action of men or women which express the institutionalized, systematic, comprehensive, or consistent view that women are inferior" (Kramaral and Treichler, 1985, p. 411). Together, ageism and sexism embrace beliefs and values that perpetuate prejudice. Along with prejudices

follow discriminatory practices and the inevitable loss of opportunity and subsequent status (Unger and Crawford, 1992).

Healey (1986) elaborates that ageism is linked to sexism from the perspective that “women are only valuable when they are attractive and useful to men” (p. 59). The body is acceptable in appearance and attractiveness as defined by social and cultural forces. Bell (1989) determines that:

A man’s wrinkles will not define him as sexually undesirable until he reaches his late fifties. For him, sexual value is defined much more in terms of personality, intelligence, and earning power than physical appearance. Women, however, must rest their case largely on their bodies. Their ability to attain status in other than physical ways and to translate that status into sexual attractiveness is severely limited by culture. (p. 236)

Bell (1989) illuminates the discrepancy between values on aging attributed to men and women. When women are valued for their bodies, as they age they become of lesser value. “Conversely, men are ‘allowed’ to appear their age, and in fact, signs of aging may even enhance a man’s attractiveness” (Wilcox, 1997, p. 550). Kariamuu voices this reality as she discusses how the aging process is much more of a detriment for a female dancer than a male dancer. She states:

If he’s bald, if he has white hair, that is not a problem. But if we are balding, which we can do, or have gray or white hair, that automatically pegs us as being older and somehow less valuable as a dancer or whatever. For the men, they just seem to be aging gracefully so I think that in that sense we become acutely aware of the double standard that exists in society. It exists in the larger society but it’s double fold in the dance world and so it effects a lot of us. (Kariamuu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997)

Jan and Kariamú's narratives reveal a consciousness of social and cultural forces at work in their world. Although Jan does not articulate an experience of discrimination, she voices the reality of its possibility. While both are aware of these outside influences, they also voice a personal experience which is positive and empowering. I define these revelations as embodied accomplishments.

Embodied Accomplishments

Kariamú speaks of how she couldn't relevé or jump off of her right foot anymore but she revels in what she accomplishes, regardless:

I'm proud of my muscle memory. I'm proud of my stamina. It astounds me sometimes that all this is in my head. I think you go to your grave with that, for the most part, like I said, muscle memory. You can do some things that you really shouldn't be able to do anymore because you haven't worked on it. It's just plain muscle memory. (Kariamú Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997)

Claire spoke of performing her works when she was 80 if she could "physically do them" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 6, 1996). She sees herself as a stronger performer today as opposed to ten years ago. Jan illuminates:

I just feel more connected and more alive and more everything right now. I feel like as a forty-five year old women, I'm dancing better than I ever did when I was in my twenties. I was stuck in all kinds of ways. So I feel more confident in my body. I feel stronger. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Claire, Jan, and Kariamú voice how they feel stronger in their bodies as they have aged. They see more value in their moving selves because they see their movement as possibility and maturity. They articulate the concept of

making more sense out of what they know because of who they are. They know their bodies and they know the world. Conscious of how the world affects them and defines them as older, they defy it as an identifying force. In Jan's words:

It's kind of this wonderful perverse joy of saying, "I've been dancing for forty years, watch this." Cause the kids were asking at this women's college, "how long have you been dancing?" Forty years. And there's something really lovely about that to me that I feel like I don't feel old. I don't feel like I'm less than. I feel like I'm more than and that's a nice feeling. I can take the stage still and really feel like it's not embarrassing. It's a good thing and also I feel like it's really important to change people's images. I think part of the reason I am dancing is that I want an older voice on stage. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Jan, Claire, and Kariamuu validate their experiences as women dancers by transcending "the boundaries of their everyday lives" (Hall, 1990, p. 158). They move beyond the boundaries of ascribed meanings and seek to implement their own experience of the immediate as valuable and meaningful. There is determination to resist anyone or anything devaluing that experience:

There's never a moment where you can let up. Do I want to do that? And the other side is that it feels like a real failure in some ways to stop now because of this kind of pressure of, well, you're old. You're past your prime and you're a woman and you've never made it that way, so just quit. Give it up. And so I feel this dichotomy right now where there is a part of me that wants to keep going just because I feel like it's really important to have an older woman's voice in this field. I'm going to keep it going. I feel really strongly that that's important. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

In this narrative Jan articulates struggle, commitment, and purpose, committed to an older woman's voice of reality. She is dedicated to that voice as purposeful and meaningful, strong in her sense of knowing who she is and is

becoming. Physicality is the tool for this articulation with the body as “voice” for the articulation of perspective. As the body’s physical ability changes, Jan, Claire, and Kariammu adapt to the body’s possibility for movement. What is interesting is how this also emerges in their articulations of what interests them as artists and movers:

Last night I saw someone running and running, leaping and falling and stuff like that. That doesn’t interest me. Maybe a couple of gallops, but leaps, forget it. But I think you just become interested in what you can do. (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 6, 1996)

Claire illuminates that she is looking for different meaning in movement.

That meaning is related to what is possible for her physically. Jan also relates her feelings toward what is of interest to her in a physical sense:

There’s certain things that I can’t do. I would never do four pieces in a row that had fourteen thousand jumps in them. I’m just not interested in that and it would be too hard on my body. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

The heightened sensibility to their body’s movement possibilities is transferred to what is actually interesting to them as artists and movers. They have adapted to their bodies as tools for visualizing new movement experiences, allowing for fresh perspectives on their lives and on their art. They accept change and embrace it as empowering. As Kariammu stated, “You can still do whatever it is that you want to do but on your own terms” (Kariammu Welsh Asante, June 8, 1997).

Narratives of the Body: Change, Resistance, Possibility

Jan, Kariam, and Claire's narratives reflect how each woman's self perception of aging revolves around the reality of what her body renders as possible. As a consequence, these women are confident in their bodies. Hall (1990) comments that when women "act from a self that is centered in their own being, women become freer to act in their own interests" (p. 64). They are able to adapt more effectively to broader forces of change.

The body is the pivot point from which Claire, Jan, and Kariam gauge change. Change becomes empowering, revealing growth and stimulating different perspectives. It becomes a driving force for Kariam, Jan, and Claire. Through their narratives of the body, they describe being in the here and now, reflect on the past, and anticipate the future. Hall (1990) elaborates that the extent to which we are able to transcend the here and now of our lives and see the broader picture of life affects the extent to which we are free of social conditioning and restrictive roles (p. 144). As their narratives reveal, these women strive to be agents of change. They are knowledgeable of the social and cultural forces which seek to define them yet they are self-defining, regardless of those restrictions. They have found how their bodies truly reveal self. Claire describes a moment of this revelation:

I remember thinking when I was at the Laban Institute that one couldn't hide. We were standing up front at one point and our movement was being criticized or being analyzed and I thought, "you can't hide." Everything is there to be seen. All your movement, your histories are in your body. Your movement speaks about how you think. And I thought, "what a relief. Ah!" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 6, 1996)

This narrative illumines the body as a source of the self. Claire experienced a phenomenological moment of transcendence. "Transcendence is contemplation and reflection that enable us to see beyond immediate appearances" (Hall, 1990, p. 137). Claire became aware that her body is a vital link to others and herself. Through her body, the past, present, and future are revealed as liberating. Claire's expression, quoted earlier, 'Ah! What a relief!' signifies greater autonomy: "The liberty to develop one's own values and to live accordingly to one's own integrity" (Hall, p. 196). Claire's expression is symbolic of how the body is self-revealing.

Narratives of the body unveiled the reality of lived experiences. Claire, Jan, and Kariamtu talked about what dancing, choreographing, and moving meant to them. Through these dialogues they articulated experiences of being-in-the-world through the experiencing of their bodies. The physical pain and challenge of injury led each woman to evaluate how her identity and her body were intricately linked. As a consequence, the injury was not limiting; it was the stimulus for possibility. As these women discussed what was possible, they illuminated the social construction of aging for women and its subsequent

oppression. They also discussed the anti-thesis to this oppression by defying its strictures, expressing how they feel so much stronger as dancers now, and taking pride in their possibility and their history.

Claire, Kariam, and Jan, reflecting their concern for older women's voices and places on stage, seek to perpetuate a maturity in their art. They desire to see diversity in physicality become more prominent in the world. The body becomes the turning point for this actualization. The body can stimulate a discourse that "can be both an instrument and an effect of power, a hindrance, a point of resistance, and a starting point for an oppositional strategy" (Foucault cited in Hennessy, 1993, p. 43).

Kariam, Claire, and Jan see this potential in their work. Kariam articulates:

Each time I put the dance on a company something about it changes because that's the way choreography is and when you get a new set of bodies, someone in that group inspires or brings about an idea of change. (Kariam Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997)

Claire elaborates that in *Green Dress Circle* the costume, a dress, is instrumental for the piece, yet, two men, over six feet tall, have asked Claire if they can perform it. She states, "It would change it totally.... I think it might be interesting" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 7, 1996).

What Claire and Kariam describe is an awareness to the potential the body and its discourses of physicality and gender can bring to their dance. In

Raaahmona, Kariamuu has always focused on the appearance of the soloist representing the key figure Ramona Africa, yet now she has come to question what is behind that appearance:

The real Ramona has a certain dramatic look to her. She was very ebony colored. She had these thick-like ropes and locks. I found that there were dancers that were really capable but they would be too fair and that's a challenge coming up for me. Initially, I've had three Ramonas, now, four, and they just happen to be either dark brown to ebony colored. However, on the horizon is a dancer who is definitely suited to be Ramona but she does not physically look the part. So, I have to move past that. I now have to move past the physical look of Ramona and make it even in a sense more abstract in my mind.... My challenge is that there will be fairer skinned women who will be dancing the part and I just have to let go of the image of the real Ramona. (Kariamuu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 12, 1997)

Kariamuu, conscious of how she is moving into a new reality, states, "Now I'm conscious that other dancers have the skill and should be given the opportunity" (Kariamuu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 12, 1997).

Jan discusses how her work *Turn Her White With Stones* was so important to unveiling the lived experiences of Cambodian women who endured the atrocities of the regime of the Khmer Rouge:

We have a responsibility to witness those things and say "hey, yeah, this went on." In a way I'm asking the audience to understand that we have a responsibility here to look at this stuff. There was this woman that was really having a problem with that piece. She said, "I don't want to hear about torture. I mean I'm going to art to look at something beautiful. I don't want to hear about this." I was like, "yeah, but those things exist in the world and I can make a whole lot of beautiful dances but there's a whole other side of life that I think I'm denying if I'm just going to do all beautiful dances.... Don't come see me. This piece is going to be about torture, come at your own expense." (Jan Erkert, February 4, 1997)

Dance enlivens a discourse of resistance through the body. Jan, Claire, and Kariammu are ready for that resistance because they are confident in their bodies and the reality of their physicality. They challenge expectations and take a stand for change. Dance for them is empowering in this possibility. "It's a safe place because it's yours and nobody can take that away from you" (Kariammu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997).

The body, as a source of "voice" and turning point, reveals a self negotiated by social and cultural forces. Jan, Claire, and Kariammu also describe a strong identity attributed to their bodies as *possibility not limitation*. As Hall (1990) elaborates, "When we strengthen the idealistic component of identity, we transcend other's perceptions and seize our own destinies" (p. 139). The body shapes a discourse of possibility and resistance which allows these women to seize their own destinies, grow toward the future, and stimulate change, becoming a resource for worldmaking.

CHAPTER V

PERFORMING THE WORLD: SELF, PROCESS, AND TRANSCENDENCE IN THE PERFORMING EXPERIENCE

When Claire, Jan, and Kariamou perform, they experience unique insights. When they discuss their dance works, they describe what occurs during their performing of that work. They each unveil the challenges that they encountered as the dances they created became, at once, the dances they performed. From the actual physical experiencing of the dance to the finer dimensions of feedback and artistic intention, these women uncover what the act of performing renders. They discuss the dance from their own performing experience and, since they do not always dance their works, they illuminate the experiences of their dancers. How do they experience the performance of their work as dancers, performers, choreographers, artists? What does this mean to worldmaking?

Forgetting Self in the Performing Experience

Throughout the interviews with Jan, Claire, and Kariamou, the performing experiences of both artists and dancers supported Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) findings of self-consciousness in creativity. Csikszentmihalyi, intrigued by the connection he saw between creativity and enjoyment, theorized that

creativity resulted from a phenomenon he called “flow.” According to Csikszentmihalyi, when a person is in “flow,” she or he experiences a loss of self-consciousness. In essence, they forget themselves. He elaborates: “In everyday life, we are always monitoring how we appear to other people; we are on the alert to defend ourselves from potential slights and anxious to make a favorable impression” (p. 112). In his studies of creativity, he discovered that individuals experience a time during their work when they lose sense of their surroundings or time. “...we are too involved in what we are doing to care about protecting the ego” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p. 112). There is a sense of time and space in which self-consciousness disappears and the ordinary sense of self is “forgotten.” Jan Erkert describes this phenomenon in the performance of *Forgotten Sensations*.

Although Jan Erkert and two other dancers premiered *Forgotten Sensations*, in subsequent performances she did not perform the dance. When I interviewed her, she had just stepped back into performing it. She discusses the relationship that developed with the first cast of the piece:

I feel like the three of us created that piece. Sometimes, before we performed, they would tell me, “We changed the beginning.” They really owned that piece. They were very much invested in it and I loved their input. Every performance was a journey. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Jan describes the performing of *Forgotten Sensations* as a journey, going to a place of reverie. “It absolutely takes me somewhere. I don’t know if it’s the music, the grass; it’s all of those things.... I was totally lost in the reverie” (Jan

Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997). Like Csikszentmihalyi (1996) suggests, she seems to forget herself by becoming immersed in the world of the dance as it unfolds in performance as a journey. During her recent performing of the piece with new dancers, she relates the difficulty experienced by one of the dancers as she sought to find her own way into the dance:

Carrie is very analytical, much more of a Western-kind of performer and it was funny because she had a hard time with that piece. She's a very classical dancer and it was hard for her to tap into that place of raw emotion. This piece was not about detail and refinement at all. It was a hard piece for her to perform.... We did it for a year and now she's got it. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

What stands out about this particular performing experience is that in order to perform *Forgotten Sensations*, the dancer had to discover the experience of the dance, and, in a sense, forget herself in order to find herself in the dance.

Jan talks about how she helped facilitate this highly personal process:

We had some talks about it because I kept pushing her. You've got to go to this place.... When we get the real grass there, you'll see. The smell puts you in a place. It just reminds you of your childhood because everybody has rolled in the grass as a child. You get into that and you go into this reverie. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

The dancer realized what Jan was talking about after many performances of *Forgotten Sensations*. She told Jan, "It feels really embarrassing if you don't go to that place" (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997). When she lost herself during the performing of *Forgotten Sensations*, the dancer found the intention Jan was directing her toward.

Turn Her White With Stones is a work that developed spontaneously and carefully with the help of one of Jan's company members. With the introduction of the dancer to the Cambodian women, Jan was able to connect to them through movement. The dancer's experiences with the Cambodian women allowed her to develop what Jan calls "layers of knowing" (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997). These "layers of knowing" provided the dancer with the ability to perform *Stones*. "She has all those layers of knowing" (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997). Jan describes one of the dancer's experiences performing the work:

I made her do it one day. She just needed to run it and I hadn't given her the proper preparation time. So she had to just do it and she didn't really have the time to focus and get her mind there so she just did it and she was all over the place. She couldn't get her balance and she said, "Jan, it's like unless I have the right preparation time, I can't do this because it becomes about lifting my leg and then I'm all about technique and I'm doing all the shapes and I'm doing all the forms but it means nothing." She said, "I literally can't get my balance when it's about getting my balance. It's got to be about the thickness of my leg and the weight of life at that point or else it's no good" (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997).

This suggests that the dancer needed time to acquaint herself with the memory of what happened during the inception and development of the dance. As detailed earlier, Jan and her dancer worked very closely with the Cambodian women. The dancer, instrumental in creating the dance, created her own world from her experience of making the dance. In order to perform *Turn Her White With Stones*, she had to access the memory of that world while in the dance. Her

understanding of how to perform the dance work resides in that history. Jan elaborates: "It takes a tremendous amount of concentration in just getting herself there" (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997). Being in the dance as a dancer is a process of suspending knowledge of the self in the ordinary world and seeking a place in the extraordinary world of the dance. For Jan and her dancers, this is the intersection of personal experience, the choreography, and the "reverie" of being in the performance moment.

Kariamuu discusses a performing experience of her dancers in *Nubian Caravan*, which illuminates another instance of forgetting self. In *Nubian Caravan*, the dancers wear Chadors, which are veils concealing their faces. The wearing of the Chadors by Muslim women intrigues Kariamuu because attention is drawn to the ways women communicate with their eyes:

The women are able to use their eyes and their hands in such a way that it is clear when they have locked onto someone that they are attracted to, or want to make contact with. And the male, clearly understands the eye and hand movement. (Kariamuu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 12, 1997)

According to Kariamuu, the Chadors were an integral part of the dance and the dancers enjoyed performing *Nubian Caravan* for this reason. "I think they liked being covered. In one sense there's a mystique but they liked being covered up because I think for a lot of them, they can be bolder" (Kariamuu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 12, 1997).

The dancers experienced a loss of self-consciousness. As a consequence, they could be bolder without being identified. The experience of anonymity was empowering. As Kariamum elaborates, "People are not sure who's who. People would say-- 'I wasn't sure, which one were you?'.... The dancers feel they're more anonymous. They liked that dance for that reason" (Kariamum Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 12, 1997).

In *Nubian Caravan*, the experience of anonymity unites groups of younger and older women who dance this work together. They find themselves on common ground:

I know that as dancers get older and they start dancing with very young dancers, the twenty-year-old body is not the thirty-five-year-old body. They are actually aware of that. This is a dance that makes them, in a sense, all the same thing.... It doesn't highlight any one person. (Kariamum Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 12, 1997)

Finding strength in anonymity, the dancers move beyond themselves and become a part of the world of the dance as it is being created by them in performance. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) writes, "We might even feel that we have stepped out of the boundaries of the ego and have become part, at least temporarily, of a larger entity" (p. 112).

Claire performs *Green Dress Circle* in a variety of places. As discussed earlier, in her combination of text and movement she customizes the dance to the area, noting local streets as well as surrounding cities and states. For an outdoor concert she adjusted her observations to include fences, gates and parks. She

states, "I was trying to figure it out and once I figured it out I went, 'oh, this works.' You have to let go of it each time" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 7, 1996). Claire realizes that in order for her to accomplish the spontaneity of the work, she must also have this experience of losing herself in the dance. The personal challenge for Claire is for her to recall the specifics of the new area in which she is to perform, and, at the same time, allow herself to be in the world of the dance. The difficult part of this performing experience is giving herself over to the dance, while maintaining control of the details of location. In this way, she both forgets herself and remembers herself.

By forgetting self in the performing experience, the performance becomes the fulfillment of the artist's intentions. Jan knew her dancer had not fully experienced *Forgotten Sensations* until she lost herself in its reverie. During the performance of *Turn Her White With Stones*, the dancer knew that she needed to forget herself in order to transmit the weight of the world rather than the technical achievement of a movement. Kariamou noted how her dancers embraced losing self to anonymity. When they achieved this realization, it fortified Kariamou's intent of the strength of individuality that she believed Muslim women exhibited in their culture. And Claire, in an attempt to create a new locale recognizable to audience members, experiences herself in *Green Dress Circle* in a new "physical location," both figuratively and literally. With each

performance in a new venue, she forgets and recalls location, discovering a new world.

These recollections of dance performing, each unique, share the experiencing of forgetting self in performance. In so doing, a new reality or world is created in performance; one that is lived out in the time that the dancer dancing shares with the audience. The context of the dance remains the same but the world is different with every performance.

Feedback

Feedback is an important element to the performing experience. From the outside critic to the internal voice of the artist, feedback helps develop artistic intent. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) states that feedback is integral in determining how well one is doing (p. 115). In our everyday lives, we often receive immediate feedback. Claire, Kariamu, and Jan cannot rely solely on the everyday for feedback. They must balance feedback over time as they engage with movement, create dance, and realize the dance work in performance. This process requires artists to be their own sources of feedback. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) elaborates: "...those individuals who keep doing creative work are those who succeed in internalizing the field's criteria of judgement to the extent that they can give feedback to themselves without having to hear from experts" (p. 16). Artists balance the ability to be their own experts, as well as draw from the world around them.

Claire carries a notebook with her in which she records feedback. "I collect related pictures or feedback on each piece. And when it's time I just pull out the text and go" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 7, 1996).

Claire writes detailed scripts of her work in which she makes notes of the textual and movement development. Her notebook provides her with personal insights and feedback for the continual development of her work. "I put everything down that I might use" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 7, 1996).

Claire, sensitive to the feedback she gains from her audiences, recalls a particular performance where she was performing *Green Dress Circle* for a group of high school students:

I started off with *Green Dress Circle* and I slipped my hand in the dress and I do this A scale. They flipped out. They flipped out. They went AAAGH! And I did this circle of the hips, anything sensual, and I thought they were going to implode or something. (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 6, 1996)

Claire distinctly senses an experience of sensuality as a pervasive feedback for her during the performance. "I felt like I was performing for hormones" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 6, 1996).

During a performance of *Fund Raiser*, where Claire's character is soliciting for donations, she noticed one audience member not paying attention to her. She states:

There was a woman; it was a tiny little space and you could see everybody's faces, and this woman wasn't paying any attention. She was rolling up her sleeve, so I started doing things toward her and the rest of

the audience started laughing because she was pulling my attention. I was doing it for her and she missed the whole point. (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 6, 1996)

The experiences Claire discusses with the high school students and the woman in the audience highlight how aware we are of our audiences. Claire likes the feedback they give. "I like audiences close... I like to feel them" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 6, 1996). During a performance of *Fitness Digest*, Claire recalls this interaction: "I could hear them breathing and I would say, 'now smell, smell again, smell better' and they were doing it. It was really funny" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 6, 1996).

Through notes and related materials, as well as the immediate sensing of her audience, Claire assesses "how she is doing." She also takes the opportunity to gather feedback directly. One time after a performance of *Green Dress Circle*, she had the opportunity to speak with an astronomer who had been in the audience. *Green Dress Circle* involves the identification of stars and the universe. The opportunity to speak with an astronomer provided her with another avenue of feedback:

I knew that in astronomy there's such a thing as a red shift. I performed this piece in Virginia and this dancer in Virginia came back and she said, "My dad loved your piece-he's an astronomer." I wanted to talk to him. He did speak with me. He said, 'I'll send you some stuff because M32 is not in a red shift. You can't even see it and M31 is not in a red shift either.'" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 7, 1996)

After this interchange, Claire changed her text to be more accurate.

Claire gathers feedback from a variety of venues. Conscious of a world from which she can draw inspiration; she gathers bits and pieces of conversations, things observed, and a variety of perceptions of her own experiences and actions. She keeps these on hand and they become materials for refining her performances. Her audiences help her sense her work and, consequently, inform subsequent performances:

I was performing in a church on a rug in a gold leaf alcove.... The audience felt so quiet, even during *Fitness*. I thought, "they hate it." And afterwards they were so enthusiastic and one of them said, "I could have burst out laughing".... It was a lot of hard work for me. I thought during the performance, "well, I'll just rehearse. I'll just work the piece." (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 6, 1997)

Feedback helps Claire assess her performing experience. As a consequence, she grows and learns from it. Feedback represents a part of Claire that seeks constant self-evaluation and questioning. When I spoke with Claire about art making, she described how she loved to solve problems, to learn about something like weather. I said, "It's like a part of you that constantly needs to be worked" (Kim Grover-Haskin, Personal Communication, July 7, 1996). Claire replied, "Oh, that's interesting. It's like a muscle" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 7, 1996). For Claire, feedback is essential. Through feedback, she constantly works and re-works an idea to gain new meaning in her performing experiences.

Personally inspired by how women live their lives, endure hardship, and triumph over incredible challenges, Kariamuu gains feedback from the lived experiences of women. Ramona Africa is such a woman, inspiring Kariamuu's work *Raaahmona*. Dancers ask Kariamuu if they can perform the lead role because "it's very female centered. For a female dancer it's a role that she wants to do because it is something that's woman-centered " (Kariamuu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 12, 1997). This woman-centered focus is a source of feedback for Kariamuu. She elaborates:

The dancers have told me what it feels like to do that dance. And even though sometimes they're quite young, early twenties, it has been a consciousness-raising dance for them. They have yet to live some of the depths of things, sacrifice, commitment. They haven't had children but it does open their eyes. They begin to understand a bit more what it means to be a woman. They have spoken to me about that. I think the audience is able to see these dancers who've done that part as women, whereas in some other parts, they may still see them as girls. (Kariamuu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 12, 1997)

The voices of women provide Kariamuu with feedback and artistic direction. From Muslim women to the experiences of homeless women, these lived experiences give Kariamuu a world perspective:

The artist that I am is definitely impacted by the fact that I'm female. And the woman that I am is definitely impacted by the fact that I'm an artist. The two are so intertwined that they are symbiotic.... Being an artist is really my world. (Kariamuu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997)

Kariamuu also reveals a personal dimension to feedback. Throughout her life she was mentored by strong women. Her mother was an inspiration. "I grew

up with a really sophisticated arts education because of my mother” (Kariamuwelsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997). A strong professional mentor was Pearl Reynolds:

She influenced every sphere of my life.... She was very charismatic. She had a son so much like the rest of us. He ran around the studio. She had traveled many places. She was unafraid to go places alone. I also did child rearing, went to Africa alone.... She was the greatest and I guess the biggest thing about her too is she loved me and she loved my work and that is always incredible when you have someone who supports your work and loves your work and understands your work. That is incredible. (Kariamuwelsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997)

Pearl Reynolds provided Kariamuwelsh with vital feedback which guided her personal growth as an artist and woman. This feedback was reinforcing and instrumental in developing Kariamuwelsh’s confidence and integrity as an artist. Both Kariamuwelsh’s mother and Pearl Reynolds provide the kind of feedback that continues to be effective over the life span. A heritage of voices provide Kariamuwelsh with personal feedback which reinforces her sense of self. She gains strength and independence from these voices.

Jan Erkert reveals how she becomes her own source of feedback. During her work on *Forgotten Sensations*, she experienced a fire that almost destroyed her home. “I woke up and it was fire. It was orange. Why is it daylight in the middle of the night? It was bright all around us. And so we just literally got out by the skin of our teeth” (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997). The loss, through the fire, stimulated Jan to re-assess her life. She reveals that up

to the fire, she had not wanted children but “after the fire, I wanted children. It was as though I felt like I had missed something and I was really angry at myself for having worked so hard. I didn’t realize what I was missing” (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997).

Jan became pregnant during the development of *Forgotten Sensations*. She explains:

Four months into the piece I miscarried. Just as I was finishing the piece I miscarried and so to lose that baby was really, really hard on me. I had this sense, everybody said, “Oh, you miscarried, well you’ll get pregnant again.” But I had this real intuitiveness that no, that was it. I never did become pregnant again. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Jan describes how this experience impacted and still impacts her performing of *Forgotten Sensations*:

I really felt it as a loss at that point and it was a mourning. Performing it during that time was really heavy for me because, for me, it was all about that loss.... The audience didn’t know that and that isn’t important at all. As a performer, it was really, really very cathartic for me and still is to perform because it feels like it’s very much about that in a personal way even though the piece is not about that per se. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

In this instance, feedback is not so much artistic intent as it is a way of knowing. As performers, we bring layers of knowing which affect the performance experience. These internal sources of feedback emerge from our interactions with the world.

Jan also finds self-satisfaction when she receives feedback from an outside source. In *Turn Her White With Stones*, Jan illuminated the lived experiences of the Cambodian women to the world. After one performance of *Turn Her White With Stones*, a woman called Jan and asked her where she could contact the therapist who had worked with Jan and the Cambodian women during the creation of the work. The woman made the comment to Jan that she needed to get out of the circle of stones. "She said, 'I have to get out of the stones. I have to get out of the circle'" (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997).

Jan, encouraged by this feedback, recognizes that *Turn Her White With Stones* is a difficult work to comprehend. "I think it's a hard piece for an audience to totally understand in a certain kind of way" (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997). When *Stones* reaches someone in that profound way, Jan feels she has been successful:

That piece sparked something in her where she totally understood it. She was right there and that was really satisfying to me because I felt like I've touched a woman that's been abused. Because to me it's about being abused and getting out of the abuse pattern, getting out of the torture, and finding your voice. And all of those things, I think, are understood at a primal level, if people are willing to go there. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Jan describes how feedback unveils the reality of women's experiences as valuable, insightful, and liberating. This feedback reinforces her artistic exploration into how women's experiences are shaped and defined socially and

culturally, as well as through a gendered lens. Through her explorations, she also reveals an ambiguity that is associated with feedback.

Jan develops *Forgotten Sensations* from her curiosity with ecofeminism:

I was reading about ecofeminism and the thing that struck me about ecofeminism is its world view. What we are doing to our land which is to dominate it, rape it, abuse it, is what we have been doing to women and that the two go hand in hand. A new world model has to be for both women and nature. We have to partner with it. We have to learn how to work with it, not against it. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Jan explores full-circle the ramifications of an ecofeminist stance by interweaving the reality of dominating nature with the reality of dominating and oppressing women. Public recognition of this exploration was recorded in this review:

Erkert's dance not only reminded us of the current planetary crisis and its roots in patriarchal culture, but also reached for a new paradigm. By using an essentialist position as her starting point, Erkert explored strategies that look outward to social responsibility, community, muse and mentors. (DelliQuadri, 1991, p. 63)

This particular review is positive but Jan acknowledges that feedback from her audiences with *Forgotten Sensations* has often been ambiguous:

Either people were profoundly moved by it or not at all. At the Athenaeum, the audience just cheered but it was different from night to night. I could never figure out whether the bulk of the audience was coming from this place to receive it or asking, 'What the hell?'" (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Forgotten Sensations is the kind of dance work that presents the artist with the possibility of ambiguous feedback.

Jan, aware of the diversity with which *Forgotten Sensations* is received, is also sensitive to other dimensions which affect its presentation. One of these dimensions is the performing place and/or situation in which it is presented.

She discusses a particular instance of the performance of *Forgotten Sensations*:

We did it at a festival which featured Chicago dance and they literally did *Swan Lake* right before we had to do the piece. It was one of those showcase festivals. We came out there, rolling on the sod and eating fruit and I thought, "Oh, God. This is so embarrassing." I really felt like this is not the place to be showing this work. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Jan discusses that she had not intended for *Forgotten Sensations* to be a part of that particular festival. She had to add it to the program at the last minute.

The experience did fortify for her the necessity of a certain place and space for the dance work's performance. She states: "I do believe there is a set-up that has to happen and for a piece like that, it can really be embarrassing if it's not presented in a right light" (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997).

Claire, also sensitive to the diversity of performance space for feedback, actively seeks out other performance venues. For *Fitness Digest*, she is interested in performing it for a group of medical professionals. She performs in museums and is developing a series of dances to perform at science centers. Claire enjoys what the performance space brings to her performing experience. It reveals new aspects of the dance work and provides her with feedback.

The diversity of place gives feedback to artists. As both Claire and Jan describe, they are aware that they can control this element in order to fortify artistic intention. By being sensitive to the verities of the entire experience of the dance work, the artists can gauge its direction and challenge audiences to question.

The potential for feedback is greater when more is demanded of the audience. Jan asks her audience to become responsible witnesses. "We have a responsibility to witness those things and say, 'hey, yeah, this went on.' In a way I'm asking the audience to know that we have a responsibility here to look at this" (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997). Feedback illuminates the depth to which individuals engage with the dances. Jan states:

I ask for a willingness to go to a place and that's why I think I'll always have such a limited audience because there's not a lot of people who are willing to go there. They can appreciate it on a structural level or an intellectual level but that's not really where my dances are felt. They're felt somewhere else. I mean something to the people who want to go there. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 7, 1997)

Jan realizes the diversity with which her work is received. Ambiguous feedback reflects to her how she is doing in the world. It is a gauge for assessing how her work is making an impact. Awareness of this feedback reinforces her commitment to her work. For *Forgotten Sensations* she states,

I do feel this is one of those pieces that feels unabashedly about being a woman and I do feel like I want to say no apologies. I am not going to apologize one iota. It's out there for being out there. If certain people

think that's too weird, that's tough. I like that about it. It feels like it's really there. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Feedback brings depth to how Jan, Claire, and Kariamu realize their ideas as choreographers and/or dancers. Through internal and external sources of feedback, these woman are guided toward new understandings of what their work is all about. It influences their artistic intention. Feedback guides them to know their work and themselves better. It enhances worldmaking because it brings a fullness to the experience of interacting with the world. Feedback reveals the way they create meaning in the world and often sets in motion an evolutionary process.

The Process of Change

I feel like on my own journey for the first ten years I made dances that look like men's dances. And I remember at a certain point, making them because I thought that would be successful because I saw men being successful. So I thought if I make dances like that, I'll be successful too. They didn't say anything to me. They didn't speak. There was a certain level where I felt like I don't like these. They're not rich. I want to make my works speak from women's voices. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Jan Erkert reveals a critical juncture in the development of her work. She realizes that she is not making dances from her own voice. Csikszentmihalyi (1993) states that when individuals attempt to move beyond their personal boundaries and integrate their goals with larger ones, they transcend self and unite for a greater directive. Jan transcends from what is thought to be successful to what she considers to be more fulfilling and rewarding. She seeks

greater complexity with the world in order to pursue a more in-depth experience with it. In order for her to do so, she must be true to herself and follow a different path. As Hall (1990) states,

Transcendence is a means for women to focus on their possibilities and long-range goals rather than on restricted circumstances and existing hardships. Women transcend their limited self-concepts when they express their real interests. (p. 137)

Jan directs herself to what she is interested in pursuing. Her creative energy is guided to the exploration of new perspectives emerging from the lived experiences of women. This energy gives her a different focus and assists her in understanding her relationship to others and to the world. It affects her artistic intent as she examines her work and its possibilities. Jan exhibits a willingness to explore and change her work when she examines the significance of gender in *Forgotten Sensations*. She elaborates:

I was just recalling that when I did it with May in my character and two men as the kind of children figures, it was really interesting.... I thought I wouldn't like it at all but there was something really quite wonderful about these two men being these little kids and May being the big role.... I feel like its essence really lives with three women but it was interesting to change the roles, to see what it would do. It helps me to understand that the piece lived beyond gender and stood up very strongly to me, whether it was men or women. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, February 4, 1997)

Jan took the risk of exploring how gender influenced her work. It gave her a new perspective on *Forgotten Sensations*. Encouraged to see that the dimension of gender contributed something new to the world of the dance, Jan

transcended what was limiting, becoming more diverse and open to what possibilities the dance, the world in which she lives, has to offer.

For Claire, change is a paramount consideration for the performing of her works. Individuals have asked to perform her works but she weighs those decisions very carefully. "I don't want to break them down. I think they change when they're broken down and put together. I think that's the big thing" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 7, 1996). Claire isolates how important this possibility of change is to her work. She realizes that the piece will change with another individual performing it. "I also look at the person and know that the piece has to change because of that person. I'd even have to use different movement material for each person" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 7, 1996).

Claire also sees how important the performance of each work is to her artistic intent. "With *Green Dress Circle* I wanted it exact and *Fitness* depends a lot on performance. I'm still finding out who she is in each part. I like it the best, knowing the movement and the text so well that I can really work it" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 7, 1996).

For Claire, performing is a process through which she comes closer to knowing her work and her intent. The constant practicing of the work in performance gives her insight into the work's world and its meaning. "Coming up is a showcase in New York where I can perform *Weather* seven times. That is a

real luxury. I can work it a little bit everyday and not worry about any other piece. That's nice" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 7, 1996). The ability to concentrate and focus specifically on one work over this period of time is important to Claire. It is here that she comes to know the work better. Like Jan, she re-enters the world with every performance and learns more from it. The context of the dance is the same, but every performance is different. Dancing the created world inspires another world for re-view.

Kariamū's *Raaahmona* is representative of how performing is a process. She continues to work on the dance and change it. She is driven to re-assess the work from her sensitivity to women's lives. According to Kariamū, as quoted earlier, *Raaahmona* "symbolizes for me who women are in terms of their essence, their internal strength and commitment. And in that sense it transcends history, transcends time. It could be anybody, any female you know" (Kariamū Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 12, 1997). Kariamū sees the possibility of women's lived experiences as global resources for making dances.

This vision becomes evident as Kariamū questions her choices for the soloist role:

On the horizon is a dancer who does not physically look the part. So I have to move past the physical look of Ramona and make it even more abstract in my mind.... My challenge is that there will be a fair-skinned woman who will be dancing the part and I just have to let go of that image of a real Ramona. (Kariamū Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 12, 1997)

Performing is a means of autobiography. As Kariamtu experiences her life, her work reflects her growth and interests. As evident in the development and continual performance of *Raaahmona*, she discusses how she sees herself changing within the work. Both work and artist are developing and changing for the future.

Jan, Claire, and Kariamtu reveal a part of an evolutionary process through the performing of their work. Performing reveals how artistic intent becomes evident. It is a means for the exploration and manifestation of ideas, perspectives, and world views. Performing reveals the nature of change as process. Change illuminates both personal and professional development for the implementation of new perspectives and insights. With each performance, artist and work, thought and action, merge together, implementing the world for experiencing.

Transcendence in Performing

There are many dimensions to what Jan, Claire, and Kariamtu experience during and, as a consequence of, performing. The moment of performing requires forgetting self in order to access the meaning of the dance work and the seminal idea it is conveying. Forgetting self allows the performer to engage with the artistic intent of the dance work. The choreographic idea becomes manifested when artist and intent come together.

Feedback provides the artist with more ideas about the work. Through feedback, the artist questions and explores the dimensions of the dance work as well as themselves, refining the intent and purpose of the dance work. With feedback from both internal and external sources, the experience of performing becomes self-revealing.

Each artist transcends the expected to seek an accomplishment greater than self. Jan combined ecofeminism and dance to enhance the experiences of *Forgotten Sensations*. *Forgotten Sensations* afforded her an intellectual and physical opportunity for her exploration of the parallels between nature and women. Its performance is satisfying, regardless of response. She realizes that the feedback she receives from the performance is indicative of a world in need of attention to the details of its surroundings and its participants. She is confident in being a voice of reason for that world.

Kariamuu lives through her work. It is symbolic of how she is growing and changing. She examines how the lived experiences of women are unique and yet universal. Her work is an outreach to her dancers and her world. Performing represents the process which stimulates her to explore and seek new worlds. As Kariamuu notes,

I would like to do more research and incorporate all kinds of things to bring the dance to full life.... I would love to take a piece of literature and do an evening long work.... I have many unfulfilled dances in my head.
(Kariamuu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997)

Claire's performing experiences expand her insight into herself and her work. Conscious of a constant need for feedback, Claire seeks it in the form of materials and notes or from her audience. Feedback informs her, and as a result, the process of performing is enlightening for her. With every performance she gets closer to a new view of the work and the world she seeks to produce. Her works become personal challenges and goals. The performance of those works are the passages through which she is able to actualize her intent. She transcends ordinary life and seeks the extraordinary as a new reality.

The performing experience is the manifestation of idea and action. Here, artistic decisions and intentions become integrated to perpetuate a world for viewing and experiencing. Change is an inherent component of this world. Transcendence is the goal as an artist's ideas are embedded in the work and the work becomes a new reality. In worldmaking, performing becomes the realization of possibility as the artist's voice speaks to be heard, received, and reciprocated. As the artist re-enters the world of the dance he or she created, there is the possibility of change and new views. As Goodman (1978) writes, "Worldmaking begins with one version and ends with another" (p. 97). Hence, performing in worldmaking contributes to the evolutionary process, building, making, and forging ahead for the dancer to embrace new worlds to discover.

CHAPTER VI

PUT YOUR MOTHER ON THE CEILING: FEMINIST DANCE MAKING AS EVOLUTIONARY PRAXIS

The 'world-in-the-making,' the 'world-in-view,' and 'performing the world' provided three frames of reference for examining Jan, Claire, and Kariamū's personal experiences with creating, embodying, and performing. Since they were constructed through feminist lenses, we can see how gender has impacted the shaping of their artistic voices and their abilities to express themselves as women, regardless of challenges or limitations. As we consider the complexities of their worlds, the ways they navigate through them and at the same time create them, we discover the foundations of a theoretical description of the phenomenon of feminist dance making. While this theoretical description emerged from the voices of three women, it speaks to the larger world of women dance makers.

Women Dance Makers: Models of Evolutionary Praxis

As stated earlier, the driving questions for this study were: If the dance work is a symbolic world and each symbolic world is created from a particular perspective or world view, what does a woman's world view embody? How is it created? How is worldmaking related to knowing in a feminist context?

As Jan, Kariam, and Claire reveal, women dance makers create symbolic worlds, dancing and choreographing through a complexity of interactions between self and world. Gardner (1993), studying Martha Graham, stated that because of her work she inspired many women "...making it easier for them to find or create an audience for their distinctive modes of expression" (Gardner, 1993, p. 12). Graham created a distinct form of dance, challenging traditional models of dancing and dance making. Women in dance, like Martha Graham, Kariam, Claire, and Jan, have impacted the dance world with new dance forms. Through social, political, and everyday ways of knowing, women dance makers create worlds of possibility as evolutionary praxis. Choreographing, they unite thought, perception, and action. With every dance work, they practice deconstructing and re-constructing their social realities, building toward a different future for personal and global implementation.

Thus, as evolutionary praxis, women dance makers engage in critique of self and world, "always in the position of beginning again" (Lather, 1991, p. 38). They are constantly evolving, constructing personal and danced worlds through worldmaking, the process of exploring life's complexity, conveying voice, creating knowledge, and constructing worlds of possibility for action. Worldmaking provides the opportunity to "displace the universal, the necessary, the obligatory with the singular, the contingent, and the strategic" (Lather, 1991, p. 38).

Women dance makers develop a distinct mode of expression, autonomous, self-cultivating and diverse. Dancing and choreographing join knowledge with praxis, embracing a reverence for uncertainty, finding mobility in resistance, experiencing and producing a complexity of consciousness. As a consequence, women dance makers create worlds as strategies for future vision and revision.

Reverence for Uncertainty

I think the reverence for uncertainty is the difference between a creative visionary and a fanatic. A fanatic looks for something that will stamp out the uncertainty. The creative person acknowledges the uncertainty. That person says, 'Here's what I'd really like to see happen. I'm not sure it's possible but I'd really be willing to stick my neck out for this.'" (Peter Senge cited in Briggs and Peat, 1971, 200)

A reverence for uncertainty enhances the evolution of change. The creative person embraces uncertainty and takes the risk as a consequence. Women dance makers take risks in order to create symbolic worlds of possibility. Without risk, there would be no creation of different worlds and different spaces. Jan described a critical juncture in her life when she realized she was creating dances that were not her own. Describing herself in that moment, she reflected upon how she felt she was making men's dances, modeling her work on an apparent successful formula. She rejected that formula, developing her own artistic voice, finding her own worldmaking process. Jan voiced the reality that it might be less popular or unacceptable to the outside world, but she was

willing to take that risk, affirming and positioning herself in the world as unique and autonomous. Situated in the world of her own making, a woman strategically creates her own spaces and places, formulating and empowering voice.

With a reverence for uncertainty, women dance makers embrace the unknown, seeking to create a new space for that voice to be heard. Maneuvering within the unknown, open to new directions and possibilities, they encounter shifts of perspective. Shifts of perspective provide constant critique of self and world, a dialogue between what is known and what is possible.

...the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them. (Foucault cited in Lather, 1991, p. 50)

Women, dance making, engage in constant experimentation with social, political, and everyday ways of knowing to produce a perspective that is revelatory of change. The dance maker is an autonomous worldmaking agent, seeking complexity, building worlds. This endeavor is self-fulfilling and self-cultivating, enabling agency.

Janet Finn (1998) defines agency:

The notion of agency refers to the capacity of human actors to engage in critical, strategic action, even as powerful social forces shape the contours of their subjectivity and social reality. This concept of agency recognizes both the power and indeterminacy of structural forces in the making of social subjects. (p. 214)

Women dance makers are agents of change, participating in the creation of a new culture and a new way of life. The result is a new world, a new world view, and a new identity. Lugones (1998) states, "We must have a movement that creates space for rearranging one's own identity, for making the complexity of one's own subjectivity explicit for articulating it, for making it public" (p. 52). Dance making provides women the opportunity to increase their autonomy, exploring dimensions of personal and public realities, contributing to society as a whole. Jan utilizes dance to connect to her community, hosting events which include women's organizations and dance performances. Kariamuu plans to create a full length evening program based upon the novel, *Praise Song* by Pauli Marshall. Acknowledging the challenge, Kariamuu describes her desire to avoid literally interpreting the novel, but she also recognizes how important the project is to her personally in her journey to autonomy:

This novel is about a woman, who, after her husband dies, sort of finds herself and finds her roots. She goes through a metamorphosis in which she becomes a different person. Her husband's death triggers it. She is released from the life that she would have been content to have lived, but because he died, she undergoes the questions; Who am I? What do I do with myself, etc. etc..... How do you outline a novel into a dance? And how do you make it so that it's understandable and not literal. Hopefully, through my lifetime, I want to at least try. Not all things are successful but I want to say I tried. (Kariamuu Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997)

Jan utilizes her dance as a bridge connecting to others, facilitating dialogue. She becomes an agent for change, a community activist through her

dance. Kariamú acknowledges how important it is for her to experiment, finding agency in the unknown, questioning the possible.

Through agency women dance makers actively question the complexity of the world, learn from it, challenge it, and make it public. They become activists, fostering discovery for public realization that is influential, manifesting change. In Garland's (1988) work on women activists, Frances T. Farenthold states, "Whatever the issue, wherever the battlefield, it is agreed that women are at the center of movements for change" (p. xxi).

Through creating, women dance makers shape a consciousness and action for change. Engaging with an extraordinary view of the everyday, the everyday is deconstructed, critiqued, and constructed anew. Worldmaking provides the opportunity to challenge the world in that critique and create a new world.

Gloria Anzaldúa (2000), writing about the *mestiza* way, elaborates:

I am cultureless because, as a feminist, I challenge the collective cultural/religious male-derived beliefs of Indo-Hispanics and Anglos; yet I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet. (p. 400)

Anzaldúa describes developing a new story, a new way to explain the world. She challenges a world view that is limiting and exclusive to create a more inclusive culture, a culture of many voices and world views. Nancy Mairs (1994) states:

...women live in a polymorphic rather than a dimorphic world, a world in which the differentiation of self and from other may never completely take place, in which multiple selves may engage multiply with the multiple desires of the creatures in it. (p. 41-42)

As Mairs and Anzaldúa point out, women live in and about multiple realities. Women dance makers, seeking diversification, construct self, dance, and world from multiple realities. Social and political forces construct those realities but women dance makers engage in possibilities of difference from unique vantage points to disrupt and dismantle these constituting forces of society. The result is re-vision and change. As Hall (1990) states, "Issues of change revolve around our ideals, our visions of society, and human nature, and our perceptions of life and universe" (p. 5). When women create, they question reality, building a woman-centered reality.

Dance making is meaning-making, producing change. In its production, there is agency and activism, embracing multiple realities as multiple possibilities for ways of knowing and being. In worldmaking, there is a high tolerance for ambiguity, engaging in a pluralistic world view. A pluralistic world view privileges an interconnectedness and interrelatedness of parts to the wholes in dynamic relationship. This interconnectedness is reminiscent of Csikszentmihalyi's (1993) findings on the creative individual. He determines that one specific word, complexity, describes the creative personality. Creative individuals:

...show tendencies of thought and action that in most people are segregated. They contain contradictory extremes--instead of being an "individual," each of them is a "multitude." Like the color white that includes all the hues in the spectrum, they tend to bring the entire range of human possibilities within themselves. (p. 57)

Women worldmakers are complex individuals, embracing a world view that is pluralistic to construct new worlds. In essence, they are critical constructivists of new worlds, seeking to embrace the multiplicities of their being. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) describe women constructivists:

These women want to embrace all pieces of the self in some ultimate sense of the whole...and they want to develop a voice of their own to communicate to others their understanding of life's complexity. (p. 137)

Women worldmakers voice their understanding of life's complexity through their dance and dance making. They construct worlds from multiple realities as critical, strategic action for the realization of a new world. Seeking more diversity and complexity, the interactions of self and world are continuously being negotiated. With a reverence for uncertainty, experimentation is in constant motion, and growth is inevitable.

Growing from acknowledged uncertainty, Peter Senge speaks of the possibility such a stance provides. "You're always in an experimental mode. I think it's enormously powerful. It liberates the vision side of things. It also liberates the intellect" (Peter Senge cited in Briggs and Peat, 1971, p. 180).

Through choreographing and dancing, women dance makers explore and experiment with multiple realities to construct new world views, seeking how self and world merge, relate, and interact. Deconstructing social and political realms of the everyday to construct new perspectives and new realities is the essence of dance making as worldmaking. Without a reverence for uncertainty there would be no risk and no activism. Embracing uncertainty, agency is strategic, and activism emerges, engaging in further uncertainty, becoming evolutionary, and committed to change.

In the worldmaking process, the artist enters into uncertainty with every new idea explored. The woman worldmaker embodies “ a commitment to change and to being part of that change” (Farenthold cited in Garland, 1988, p. xviii). Committed to greater complexity, allowing uncertainty to lead into further uncertainties and realizations of possibilities, agency and activism emerge, evolving to the realization of new worlds.

Mobility in Resistance

Resistance can be either moving in directions that have been denied or forbidden or rewalking coerced paths under one’s own steam and thus refashioning a sense of self (Lugones, 1998, p. 49).

Women worldmakers are complex, reaching for possibility within themselves, designing possibility in their dance. Worldmaking provides the opportunity to discover the possible. Discovering the possible occurs through mobility in resistance, moving between worlds to experience diversity and

difference, deconstructing tradition and convention. Lugones (1998) points out, "as I think of issues of motion versus stasis and ways out of dichotomizing them, I think of walking and where we are walking to and from" (p. 51).

Metaphorically, we walk from our socially constructed worlds to worlds of our own construction. Crossing boundaries to access the lived realities of others, whether cultural, racial, or political, enhances a diversity of experiences between self and world. Culture is not limiting; it is a vital resource for perspective.

Csikszentmihalyi (1993) writes:

A person who invests psychic energy exclusively in goals prescribed by society is forfeiting the possibility of choice...Creative geniuses are often marginal people, individuals whose vision was greatly expanded because they were forced to move from one cultural world into another, and thus were able to see the relativity of both. (p. 74-75)

Csikszentmihalyi (1993) illuminates the necessity of multiple perspectives to enhance growth. Women dance makers, sensitive to multiple perspectives, create possibility. Claire's creation of *Fitness Digest* provided a much different vantage point from which to conceptualize the idea of fitness. Her desire is to perform the dance for other organizations, perhaps, the American Medical Association. "I think it would give the American Medical Association a whole new view of their discipline" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 7, 1996). Through *Fitness Digest*, Claire's dancing and dance making would traverse different worlds, affecting not only herself, but the world at large.

Another good example is Ananya Chatterjea's (1997) discussion of feminism and Indian dance. Dances of India range from classical and folk forms to dance dramas and the avant-garde. Chatterjea makes the distinction that the evolution of the avant-garde dance movement in India, in response to "different socio-cultural, political, and economic structures...marks its arrival not as a movement per se but in the endeavors of individuals. The work of these artists reflects regional, cultural and political differences" (p. 293). Chatterjea attributes the avant-garde movement to artists who resisted traditional forms of Indian dance. Women, integral shapers of the movement, articulated women's experiences and issues in their dances, fortifying what Chatterjea describes as the avant-garde's intention to privilege what had been marginalized, attending to influences of class, caste, and gender inequities. She states, avant-garde dance looked "beyond the neo-classical dance celebrated by 'modern' or modernizing India and beyond the models of modernity created by the West" (Chatterjea, p. 294).

The dance of the avant-garde is different in comparison to traditional Indian dances. Chatterjea describes traditional Indian choreography as rich in complex rhythms often occurring in solo forms while avant-garde choreography utilizes groups. She also details how avant-garde movement emphasizes "the spatiality of movement, counterpointing complex and often interrupted spatial patterns with intricate rhythmic structures" (Chatterjea, 1997, p. 294). She

analyzes this difference from multiple perspectives. Not only is the movement evolving from resistance to traditional frames of dance in India, she also posits that “the shift from a focus on time to one on space is a response to contemporary conditions in which the displacement, resettlement and redistribution of land in India is paramount” (Chatterjea, p. 294).

What is fundamental about this example is the explanation of how dance evolves from resistance and cultural, environmental, or social changes, to create a different form. But what is of more importance is how the avant-garde “looks to itself to define its own aesthetics and politics” (Chatterjea, 1997, p. 294). The development and evolving of the avant-garde movement in India occurred through the efforts of artists seeking to build different worlds. What started as resistance to tradition transcended tradition to form an autonomous dance experience. The avant-garde movement, influenced by a changing society, subsequently changing landscapes, created its own political, social, and cultural world from which it could evolve.

Women worldmakers seek to create worlds that are unique and autonomous. Mobility in resistance perpetuates the possibility of creating such a world by stimulating diversity and perspective. Multiple perspectives provide more possibility, comparing, contrasting, deconstructing, and disrupting tradition, emerging from crossing cultural boundaries. Another contributing

force to perspective, is the body. The body provides its own frame of resistance from which mobility occurs.

The body is a material map, socially constructed of race, gender, and ethnicity. In Kariamu, Jan, and Claire's works we see that they perceive their moving bodies via social and cultural lenses. They discussed the reality of ageism and sexism. But what Claire, Kariamu, and Jan also note is that their bodies are liberating and insightful regardless of a social and cultural world which seeks to define them. Moving in and about the world, these women dance makers experience a body of possibility. Moving to resist the convention of what is expected from an older, younger, or gendered body becomes opportunity to re-shape identity.

Cooper Albright (1997), in her study of physical bodies as cultural identities, examines the social construction of the body in Western dance. She states:

It is my contention that contemporary dance foregrounds a responsive dancing body, one that engages with and challenges static representations of gender, race, sexuality, and physical ability, all the while acknowledging how deeply these ideologies influence our daily experience. (p. xiii)

Choreographing provides the opportunity to challenge and resist socially and politically shaped identities of the body in its multiplicity of difference.

Cooper Albright (1997) states:

It is through the act of choreographing these differences that the dances I discuss in this book mobilize cultural identities, unleashing them from their overly deterministic moorings while at the same time revealing their somatic ground. (p. xiii)

Cooper Albright (1997) examines how choreographing the body disrupts its construction. In her examination of the convergence of dance and disability, Cooper Albright (1997) asks, "Does the integration of disabled bodies into contemporary dance result in a disruption of ablist preconceptions about professional dance? Or does the disabled body 'transcend' its disability to become a dancer?" (p. 57) She illuminates various examples where dance becomes a reproduction of images and constructions from which the everyday world shapes disabled individuals' identities. In her analysis, there is no disruption in the social construction of disability unless conscious attention is made to physical possibility rather than impossibility. Contact Improvisation provided this possibility.

Cooper Albright (1997) discovered that Contact Improvisation, as a movement experience and performance, challenges and deconstructs "the category of ableness...creating a continuum of abilities rather than an either/or situation" (Cooper Albright, 1997, p. xxiv- xxv). Focusing on the relationship momentum and weight create between individuals, Contact Improvisation is a performance of constant motion. In its improvisational frame, the dance unfolds

as each dancer carries, lifts, and supports each other, sharing each other's weight.

Cynthia Novack (1988) states:

People doing contact improvisation create a dance through collaborative interaction, basing their improvisation on the physical forces of weight and momentum. The dancers are supposed to be absorbed in experiencing the movement and sensing (largely through touch) the experience of their partners; in order to allow momentum to develop, dancers have to keep their energy freely flowing, abandoning self-control in favor of mutual trust and interaction. (pp. 104-105)

Cooper Albright (1997) discusses that when viewing Contact Improvisation, attention to the dancer's ongoing physical experiencing of the dance is prominent, "rather than positing a need to fit into an idealized image" (p. 86). This parallels Kariamü's experiences with her dancers in *Raaahmona*. She discusses how Ramona Africa had "a dramatic look to her. She was very ebony colored, her hair braided in thick-like ropes, locks" (Kariamü Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 12, 1997). Kariamü sought to maintain that dramatic look for the soloist but realized that, in addition, the dancer had to accomplish a movement character to effectively portray the strength of Ramona Africa. She was at an interesting crossroad. As noted earlier, Kariamü quoted, "I found that there were dancers that were really capable technically but they would be too fair" (Kariamü Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 12, 1997). The distinction between movement and race becomes evident as Kariamü evaluates her work through her dancers. What makes *Raaahmona* is the emotional dynamics it conveys. As stated earlier, Kariamü sees dancers on the

horizon, able to portray the character of Ramona Africa, who are fairer skinned. She sees the power of the movement and the motion rather than the dancer's surface materiality as necessary for conveying the full experience of *Raaahmona*.

Focusing on the power of the motion rather than the image of the dancer, disrupts expectation and enhances the possibility of creating a new movement experience that re-defines and resists restrictive constructions. In this instance, the body is a site (sight) of resistance "where ordinary people-those who have no political power-become empowered, creating their own social identities by manipulating and re-working the oppressive body images produced by the dominant ideology" (Fiske cited in Banes, 1994, p. 46).

The dancing body changes the world. Its identity, inscribed by social, political, sexual, and gendered attributes, is a blueprint of resistance. Choreographing that resistance enhances mobility to new perspective, new direction, and new worlds because resistance is integral to change. Through resistance, diversity and difference emerge to formulate new world views. Resistance also enhances mobility, disrupting, and deconstructing complexities of realities to foster change. It provides direction and constant renewal. Through mobility in resistance, there is greater possibility, and as a consequence, evolutionary capacity.

Complexity of Consciousness

Our knowledge of things is bound to be developmental: its progress involves amplification but does so in such a way that cognitive amplification also means cognitive modification, i. e., changes of mind. (Rescher, 1998, p. 50)

A complexity of consciousness is about “changes of mind.” A reverence for uncertainty and mobility in resistance provides possibilities for multiple perspectives and diversity. Women worldmakers embrace a reverence for uncertainty challenging, deconstructing, and building new worlds. Mobility in resistance refers to the depth of growth women dance makers experience as they move in and about the world, conscious of its constraints, yet moving beyond limitations.

As women worldmakers move in and about their worlds, both created and constructed, they experience a complexity of consciousness, evaluating and re-newing an understanding of what possibility really means to the future.

Csikszentmihalyi (1993) defines a complexity of consciousness as a multi-faceted phenomenon.

Complexity of consciousness is not a function of only intelligence or knowledge, and is not just a cognitive trait--it includes a person's feelings and actions as well. It involves becoming aware of and in control of one's unique potentials, and being able to create harmony between goals and desires, sensations, and experiences, both for oneself and for others. (p. 207)

Jan emulates Csikszentmihalyi's definition of a person engaging with the world to learn, evolving for the future. Enabling a complexity of consciousness

through her dance making, Jan is committed to young choreographers in the Chicago area as well:

I've begun a project in which I feel it is important to try to foster the work of younger choreographers in town and give them a chance to perform their work, which is hard for them financially, as well as to give them feedback on their work. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, July 8, 1994)

Jan is dedicated to her role as mentor, facilitating a complexity of consciousness for others. In her actions, she stimulates a dialogue between self and world for the future. She realizes, that through herself and others, growth and evolution are possible.

Women worldmakers, in their worldmaking, engage in a complexity of consciousness that evolves and changes. Dance making, revelatory through this evolution, becomes an extension to the world for the future. Consciousness emerges as women dance makers participate in a dialectic between self and world. The complexities of socially constructed and lived realities become evident through this dialectic, webbed and interlaced with subjectivity:

No longer viewed as merely the repository of consciousness and creativity, the self is constructed as terrain of conflict and struggle, and subjectivity is seen as site of both liberation and subjugation (Giroux, 1991, p. 30).

Subjectivity provides details of lived realities that are personal and insightful. The personal dimension becomes an empowering force in the creative process as the artist finds voice, self-fulfillment and self-determination. The

subjective realm enhances a complexity of consciousness which interweaves socially constructed realities with the possibility of constituting new realities. As Stanley and Wise (1993) state, "Different states of consciousness aren't just different ways of interpreting the social world.... Our differing states of consciousness lead us into constructing different social worlds" (p. 132).

Through a complexity of consciousness there is a realization of being "original yet systematic, independent yet responsible, bold yet disciplined, intuitive yet rational" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993, p. 238). Women dance makers become autonomous agents, implementing worlds for discovery and creating different states of consciousness for the construction of different social worlds. They achieve this construction through what Csikszentmihalyi (1993) defines as transcendence.

In transcendence, women dance makers, continually seeking complexity in their world, maintain curiosity and interest. There is the desire to challenge the world, develop skills, and experience change. Claire, constantly re-viewing the ordinary everyday, finds the extra-ordinary everyday. In her dancing, she creates an extra-ordinary experiencing of life. She is not content with what appears to be reality. "I remembered seeing dances. I loved dancing and I always wanted more in what I saw" (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, July 7, 1996).

Through transcendence women dance makers have “the ability to see beyond the appearance of things...to grasp the essential relationship between the forces that impinge on consciousness” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993, p. 248). Women dance makers seek transcendence in order to engage with the world and create a symbolic world of possibility for change. They encounter a multiplicity of realities and a complexity of consciousness from which they create and realize new perspectives. Not a static experience, a complexity of consciousness is a process best described by Stanley and Wise (1993):

...consciousness should be conceptualized as a “process” ...because differently situated and changing understandings underpin any “state” of consciousness. At any one point in time we may be able to point to our particular state of consciousness. And in months or years later we may be able to point again at our state of consciousness. But what we point to may well be a quite different state of consciousness. Change has occurred, although we may not have been aware of this happening at the time. And we may look back on “ourselves” as though at a stranger. (p. 125)

Women dance makers, choreographing, dancing, and performing, engage in a continuum of consciousness. Through this continuum, how the self influences and contributes to the future is discovered. This is Kariamú’s desire for the future: “ I like keeping in touch with the next generation, the next generations’ thoughts, and ideas” (Kariamú Welsh Asante, Personal Communication, June 8, 1997). Kariamú moves beyond the present to become consciously aware of tomorrow. Like Jan and Claire, she initiates the desire to seek, pursue, and discover beyond self. Interacting with others is instrumental in

learning and growing toward the future. Csikszentmihalyi (1993) describes this level of complexity as the ability to “invest psychic energy in the future” (p. 248):

A person who spends all his attention dealing with the present, or defending against possible future dangers will inevitably have a self that will be left out of the stream of evolution. There will be no kinship with, no attachment to, no participation in the future. Only those who trust what is to come, who are eager to try out their skills on unforeseen opportunities, will succeed in building the future into their selves. (p. 248)

Women dance makers move toward the future and evolve into more complex individuals as they continue to create, experiment, and challenge what is known. They stay in a self-referential loop, a continuum of knowing based upon choreographing and dancing. Through choreographing and dancing as knowing, the desire to explore the dimensions of self and world becomes a necessary part of life. Continually experiencing dance making, re-entering the process of encountering uncertainty and resistance is revelatory because the dance maker stays in a state of complexity, transcending what is expected, to construct, experience, and implement the possible, thus evolving for the future.

Csikszentmihalyi (1993) states:

Individuals who transfer part of their life energy into this unconditional future are fulfilled. They have become part of the stream of evolution; the future has been grafted into them. Whatever might happen to their individual bodies and minds, the shape of their consciousness will influence the matrix of growing complexity, the forms of future energy. (p. 249)

Women worldmakers create symbolic worlds of possibility, embracing uncertainty, interrelating self to world, and perpetuating the future. Through

mobility in resistance, self and world interconnect to reciprocate experience and diversity. A complexity of consciousness provides constant perspective, building worlds with new distinguishing characteristics. The world revolves around an axis of complexity. In its turning on this axis, the world is revelatory, illuminating perspective and world view. Critical consciousness of self and world perpetuates a complexity of consciousness for the discovering of new realities. Women dance makers are models for evolutionary praxis. Worldmaking provides the strategy for discovery, evolutionary in essence, indicative of future vision. See Figure 1.

Worldmaking as Evolutionary Praxis

I'm suggesting then...a particular political practice, which includes the adoption of several new attitudes as well as a different way of living: moving in and out of communities without thinking that these are places just to pass through as tourist. I am talking about being able to work enough with other people so you gain a deep understanding of who they are, what they are thinking, where they are going, and at the same time you develop some kind of stake in their lives. In the process you might come to see yourself, to some extent, with the eyes with which they see you. To take such political action, you must be willing to adopt an epistemic attitude of being comfortable with uncertainty, moving in and out of places where you do not know what is going to happen. (Lugones, 1998, p. 51)

Lugones (1998) describes diversity as a process, pursuing the complexities of realities and what those realities reveal to self and other. She reveals that it is a process of engagement with others and a losing of self in order to find self in a new world. It is a worldmaking process. The experiences of women dancers,

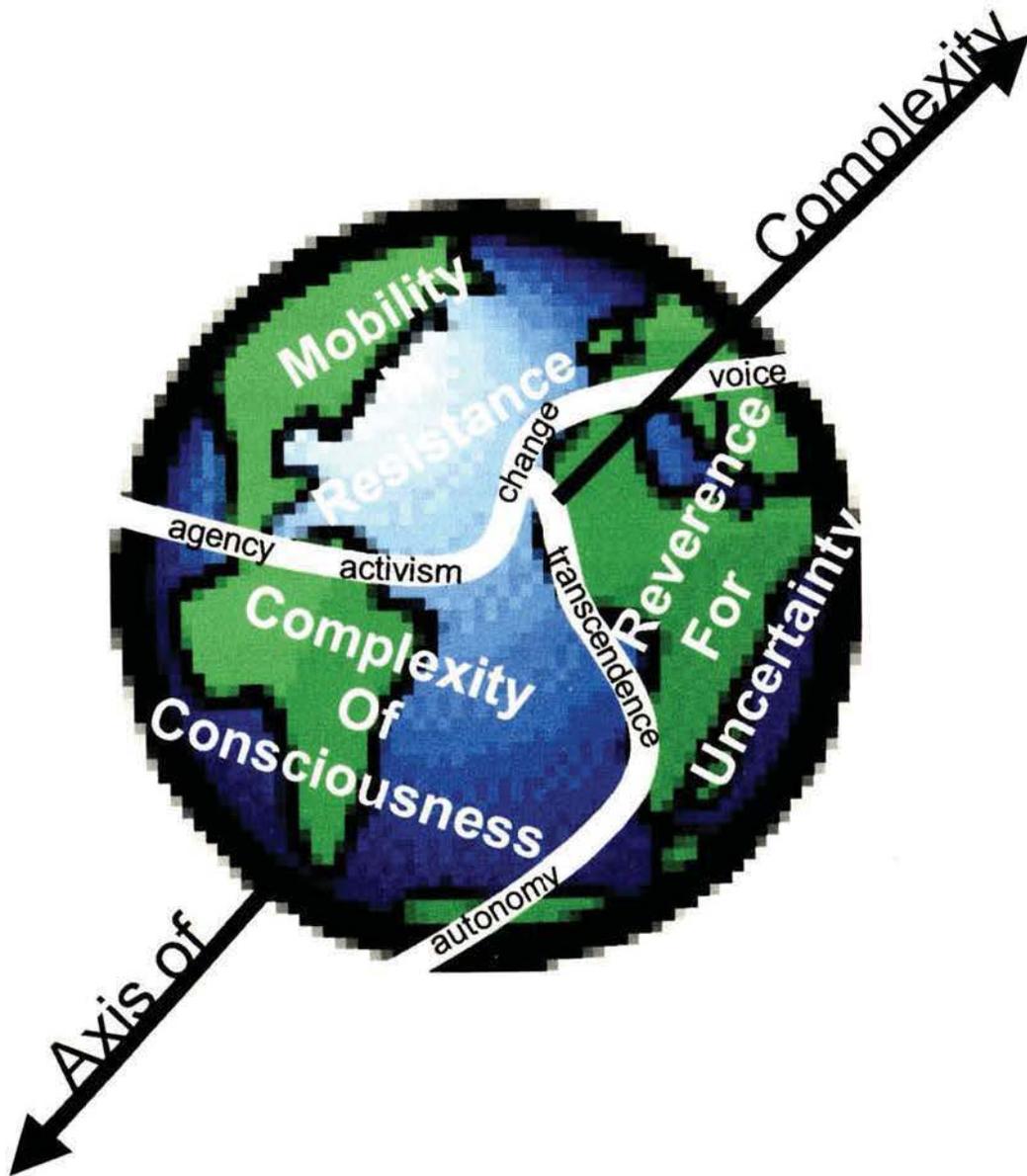


Figure 1: Women Dance Makers:
Models of Evolutionary Praxis

choreographers, and artists are revelatory. Women worldmakers create symbolic worlds of possibility. They move in and about the world, comfortable with uncertainty. In that uncertainty, they challenge, risk, and explore, developing as autonomous change agents. Hall (1990) states, "individuals cannot escape their destiny as historical actors" (p. 144). Women dance makers pursue agency, becoming strategic actors, active in the perpetuation of change for the future.

Feminists have long pursued identifying a different reality, criticizing a patriarchal reality that is exclusive and oppressive. "Women's lives, women's bodies, women's experiences, demonstrate that the social (and physical) world is complicated. 'Reality' is shown to be multi-dimensional and multi-faceted" (Stanley and Wise, 1993, p. 183). Mobility in resistance illuminates how maneuvering the complexity of women's realities is empowering. Resistance provides the opportunity to explore beyond what is known, engaging in a production of knowledge that is autonomous and empowering for global application.

Sensitive to a conscious awareness of change, transcendence emerges. "Transcendence is a dynamic of change, and influences the kind of change that occurs in women's lives" (Hall, 1990, p. 146). As with Kariam, Claire, and Jan, women dance makers choose to become change agents, embracing the value of diversity, rejecting conformity.

Women worldmakers are creative, seeking to learn, grow and evolve. In his analysis of creative individuals, Csikszentmihalyi (1993) writes, "These are people who enjoy everything they do, who keep learning and improving their skills..." (p. xviii). Dancing and choreographing provide women with a means through which they can view themselves and the world in which they live. Their worldmaking is evolutionary, a dynamic phenomenon, indicative of the future. In their dance making, women are models of evolutionary praxis. Their created worlds speak a woman-centered agency, activism, voice, and autonomy. Women dance makers create worlds of possibility and worlds of change. See Figure 2.

As a woman dance maker, I too create possibility. My work, "Put Your Mother on the Ceiling" becomes reality and possibility as a feminist dance making experience. Feminist dance making, as evolutionary praxis, combines thought, perspective, and action to facilitate a new view of the world, creating future worlds. Put your mother on the ceiling is but one of those worlds. As evolutionary praxis, it is the launching pad for further investigation and application in a continual cycle of growth and change.

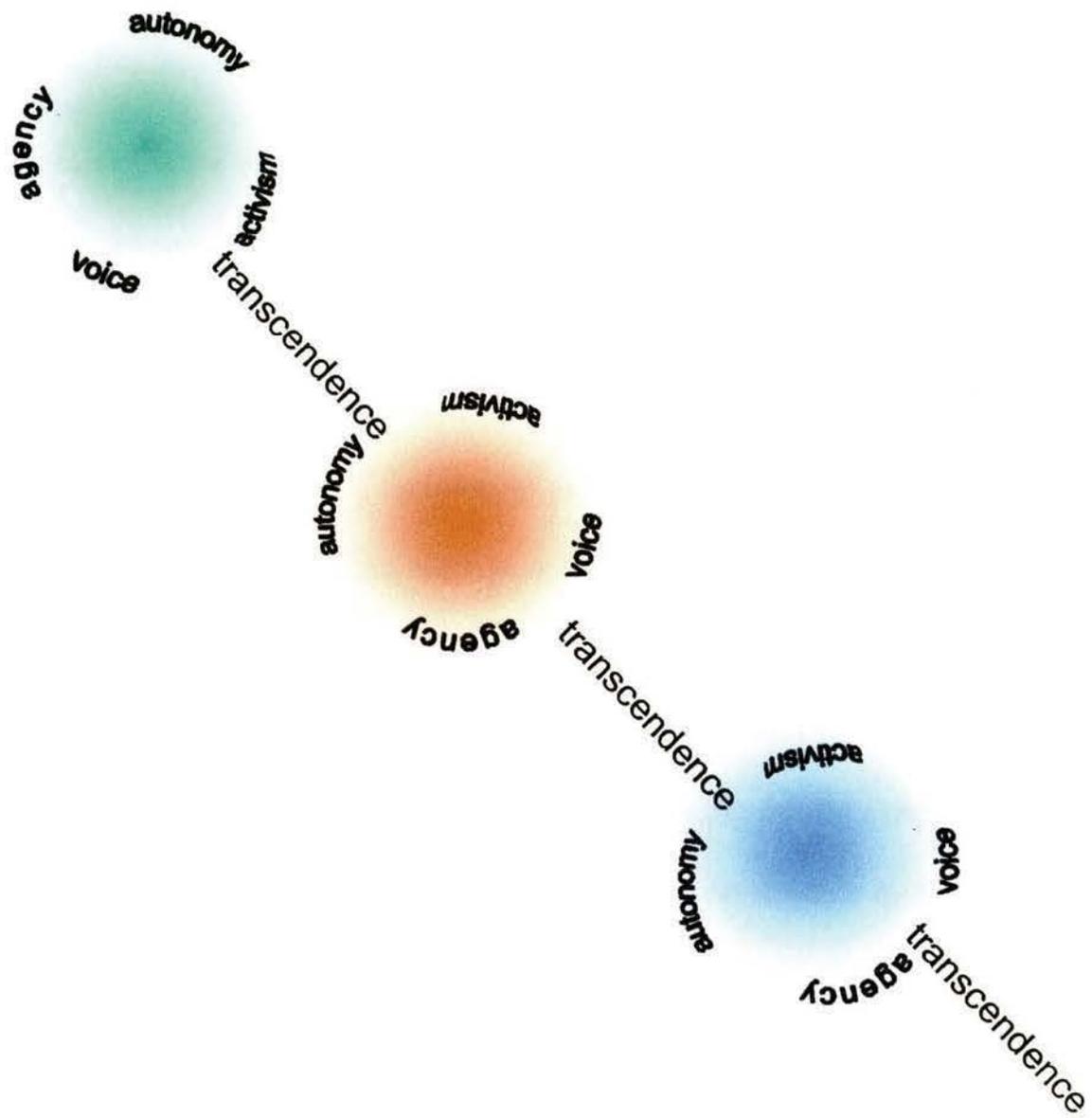


Figure 2: Worlds of Possibility, Worlds of Change

CHAPTER VII

MAKING A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Women dance makers, seeking to know the dimensions of their multiple realities, are models of evolutionary praxis. With a reverence for uncertainty as a way of embracing the unknown, women dance artists become autonomous change agents. The body enlivens physical and social dimensions of constructed realities for perusal putting resistance in motion. Mobility in that resistance is empowering. Dancing the created world unveils self and world in dynamic interaction with women dance makers experiencing and perpetuating a complexity of consciousness, growing and changing for the future. Thus, women dance makers construct a world of possibility where there is mobility in resistance, a reverence for uncertainty, and a complexity of consciousness, a process evolutionary for both self and world. They struggle, resist, and evolve, constructing a new reality.

Feminist dance making emerges from women's expressions, revealing a socially constructed world that is constantly evolving. Women choreographers create from unique world views which perpetuate new perspectives, giving them "voice." Their artistic endeavors change the world, evidenced historically by the work of Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, Katherine Dunham, and Pearl Primus,

to name a few; and in the present day artistries of Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, Bebe Miller, Pina Bausch, and many more.

Claire, Jan, and Kariamu contribute to the artistic diversity of women in dance, creating new images of the world for experiencing. This theoretical investigation, grounded in their experiences, created a dialogue for women dance makers. Women, seeking to know more about their world through their artistic endeavors, gain perspective, insight and discovery through a worldmaking process.

Worldmaking becomes a conceptual framework revealing “values, attitudes, and assumptions which shape and reflect how one views oneself and one’s world” (Warren, 1999, p. 453). But worldmaking is not simply for artistic application, worldmaking applies to many levels of inquiry. What becomes possible as evolutionary practice, is a conceptual framework for “life-long learning.” I use the term “life-long learning” to expound upon how the idea of worldmaking applies to pedagogy and dance education because the process of worldmaking prepares individuals to engage with complexity and uncertainty, not only within the classroom but in the world at large. When equipped to do so, individuals make a world of difference.

Making a World of Difference in the Classroom:
Choreography as Critical Pedagogy

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) defines creativity as “a central source of meaning...” (p. 1). Creating is integral to being in the world. Through creative endeavors, women make sense of their worlds, questioning, seeking, and pursuing deeper meaning. They actively engage with the world to better understand themselves, but they also go beyond themselves. Creativity gives women purpose and desire to encounter the world as both revelatory and change enhancing. Teaching expands the possibility creativity contributes to learning for the future. Choreographing provides the opportunity to put the future in motion.

Worldmaking provides dance educators a tool for the implementation of a dynamic pedagogical approach. A worldmaking approach to teaching addresses learning as the ability to grapple with uncertainty. With uncertainty as liberating, individuals “craft their own existence” and identity becomes empowering in the process (Claxton, 1999, p. 18). As Daly (2000) stated:

Identity cannot be theorized as a static category; it is a shifting positionality. I don't think about “women” as a category; I think of women in relationship to each other, to lovers, to the world.... What are the limits and possibilities of these relationships for women? Dance, an art of bodies across time and space, is particularly well suited to investigating such relationships. (p. 40)

Dance and dancing serve as a means for the formation and exploration of identity. The creative self, in exploring how world and meaningful activity merge, discovers new dimensions of self-understanding and self-awareness.

Claire worked with a group of high school students during one of her residencies. From performing to writing, she provided a myriad of artistic explorations for the students to experience. The high school paper reviewed the workshop stating:

The most exciting part about being choreographed was moving through space by breaking out of the style of grace and fluidity in movement and instead leapfrogging and taking tiny baby steps across the stage.... By the end of the workshop we were all "Claire Porters" in the making." (Claire Porter, Personal Communication, May 30, 1996)

As evidenced through this review, tapping into Claire's passion to create and embrace the unknown empowered the students. Learning was exciting and purposeful.

Through creative endeavors or self-constituting activities, such as choreographing, "We discover ourselves and choose to change ourselves" (Hall, 1990, p. 167). Teaching to facilitate the exploration of self and world through choreography empowers individuals to experience the complexity of multiple realities, seeking possibility, shaping and inventing identity along the way.

Identity means more than exploration; it means self-invention. Perhaps the most significant desideratum of an identity quest is that which comes about through the possibilities which creativity reveals. Creativity meaningfully links together the various areas of self-exploration. (Garzilli, 1972, p. 144)

Choreography as critical pedagogical practice, premised on a creative self constantly evolving, facilitates an enlightened and more complex view of the world. With new views come new realities and possibilities to re-construct the

social world. Women choose a more inclusive future. "Orientation to a specific future compels us to formulate goals" (Hall, 1990, p. 173). Women's creative voices orient themselves to a different future in the quest for an identity that is not rooted in gendered, racial, sexual, sexual orientation, ability, aged, and politically motivated realities, but toward a world that embraces difference as diverse perspective. As a consequence, teaching becomes a means of agency with the teacher and agent for change and possibility. Such teaching makes a world of difference for it is here we see the teacher as activist, proponent for change, mother, doctor, in essence, a woman in and about the world in a multiplicity of roles.

With a feminist perspective, teaching choreography as a worldmaking process seeks difference and validation in that difference. Creativity is the avenue for re-constructing the social world. A creative self seeks to learn through a value for the experiencing of difference. Pedagogy directed to facilitate that experience, addresses the complexity of reality in order to foster a different world and enhance a different learning experience. For example: What if a choreography class was taught from a qualitative research perspective? This project would be challenging for both teacher and student. Encouraging the student to consciously engage with the everyday and create from it stimulates the possibility of new world views and perspectives, facilitating change. The process is revelatory. Through choreographing and the creative teaching of

choreography, both teacher and student become immersed in seeking and pursuing an understanding of the complexities of the world to design new worlds and make a difference in the process.

Making a Difference in the Curriculum: Implementing an Evolutionary Design

Making a difference occurs in the classroom. Choreography, as critical pedagogy, represents a part of a larger design, the curriculum. The curriculum defines and shapes the implementation of the educational discipline. What are the content and the goals of the curriculum? With curricular design as evolutionary praxis, heralded in courses such as choreography, course development and content prepares individuals for the future. The curriculum becomes the design for implementing an active, strategic learning environment. Worldmaking provides a praxis oriented approach to developing, constructing, and implementing curricula for the learner to create “new makings” of reality.

Worldmaking explains the complexity of the interactions between self and world. As a conceptual framework, it expands and broadens investigation into the social and cultural experiencing of dance. The everyday world provides constant action for evaluation. Curriculum development must incorporate the experiences and complexities of the everyday to enhance a learning environment that will meet the needs of a quickly changing world and the complexities of how we come to know in that world.

McClaren (2000) discusses how the learner must approach the world as an “object to be understood and known by the efforts of the learners themselves” (p. 11). Contingent upon individual lived experiences, knowing evolves in combination with understanding the constructed realities of historical and cultural influences. “The historical and cultural world must be approached as a created, transformable reality...constantly in the process of being shaped and made by human deeds in accordance with ideological representations of reality” (p. 11.) Learning occurs in a complexity spiral as self engages with lived experience, history, and culture, achieving revelation in a newly constructed reality. The curriculum masters the balance of yesterday and today to create a learning experience that encompasses a broad foundation for engaging with the world. Incorporating technology in choreography and theory courses expands the promise of engaging with the complexity of the world.

Richard Povall (1998) discusses the use of technology as a creative partner. Povall distinguishes between technology as a tool and its potential to fortify and shape content. Emphasizing technology as a tool diminishes the potential of the creative partnership. “The audience should be absorbed in the performance, not in the technology or the tricks, or the gee-whiz effects that so much high-tech performance work relies on....” (Povall, p. 3).

Technology in the curriculum denotes a whole new meaning for dance education and dance educators. Weschler (1998) describes technology as neither

tool nor new medium. He sees its strength “in its unique ability to overlap and interconnect formerly independent forms of expression which have long been separated – indeed, for its ability to connect people together in new ways” (p. 4). Technology provides the possibility of shaping a new curriculum which addresses the needs of the learners for the future of dance education. The curriculum evolves to incorporate and implement technological advances becoming a dynamic model for a liberatory, critical pedagogy.

Critical pedagogy is a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationships among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and the social and material relations of the wider community, society, and nation-state (McLaren, 2000, p. 10).

Worldmaking as evolutionary praxis brings individuals and ideas together into a curriculum of never ending possibilities. The learner comes to know in her or his own spiral of complexity, engaging with ideas, encountering new perspectives and world views, to construct and map new realities. The curriculum provides exploration and possibility through its course development and integration with technological advancements. Consciously aware of social and cultural dimensions of the everyday world, curricular evolution meets the challenge of questioning and stimulating a learning environment for the future. Engaging with the possibilities of technology, dance education takes on a new dimension in leadership and invention. Curriculum development makes a world of difference in its vision for the future.

Making a World of Difference: Developing Communities of Inquiry

We did workshops with all these women. I had maybe ten or fifteen different teachers and they were all either company members or students of mine or associates that I had trained in what I wanted. Then they went out to all of these different organizations and gave workshops in dance and then out of that we pulled all these women...and the name of the piece was *Two Lives of Women*. (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, July 8, 1994)

Jan developed her dance *Two Lives of Women* by extending herself into the community. In essence, she conducted an ethnographic study, going out into the field and engaging with the lived realities of women. She created a work from and with these women's experiences and the women performed the dance. Extending her dance to others, Jan created a community of inquiry. Each woman she contacted connected to other women and the community at large. Dance became a mode of inquiry for "voice," not only for the artist but for the community as well. The dance started in uncertainty and evolved to a presentation that was fulfilling. "When I talk to any of those women, for them it was the highlight of their life" (Jan Erkert, Personal Communication, July 8, 1994).

Women dance makers create worlds of difference and, like Jan, they make a world of difference. Their art reflects a unique world view and perspective. Friedler and Glazer (1997) realize women's dance challenges perceptions of the world, devoting their book to the "richness and complexity of women's

contributions to the art of dance" (p. xv). Their study recognizes the value of women's experiences as creators, mentors, teachers, performers, mothers, daughters, and writers. These experiences contribute to the dance world and the world at large "providing a resource for looking back at the past realities and looking forward to possibilities for the next century" (p. xv).

Such scholarly works and more reveal how women's lived experiences provide valuable insight between self and world. A feminist perspective privileges a woman's view and vantage point. "Feminist re-visions and re-makings of culture and knowledge expose the connections and continuities between 'different' cultural practices and domains of social existence" (Brown, 1997, p. 134). Feminism focuses on the realities of women as insightful and unique. Worldmaking, in practice, values women's realities, building communities of inquiry.

Like Jan's experience or Claire, who joins the community to learn about it and reflect it, communities of inquiry can be fostered more thoroughly through participation and study. Desmond (2000) calls for more ethnographies of audiences or institutions to develop a deeper understanding of their impact on cultural studies. I call this cultivating a community of inquiry because we cannot enter into the field without an awareness of the reciprocal nature of the experience. Critical to accomplishing an understanding of reality and evolving to new realities, is a sustained engagement with the community "not just going

to a performance several times, or spending a couple of months in an archive” (Desmond, p. 45). It requires a commitment to the future and to the possibilities of that future. Kariam, in her desire to observe, participate and learn from other cultures, moves between worlds, discovering ways in which women subvert or resist oppressive realities. Her dance is a means of expression which reveals the unique attributes of women’s lived experiences and the subsequent boundaries around which they maneuver. Through her cultural consciousness and dance as a “voice” for that consciousness, she reaches for the possibility of different realities for women.

I utilized the conceptual framework of worldmaking to make sense of women choreographer’s lived experiences, seeking theory. The ‘world-in-the-making,’ the ‘world-in-view,’ and ‘performing the world’ provide the components of the worldmaking process. Creating, embodying, and performing the dance work, as symbolic world, reveals unique insights. Analyzing the complexity of creating, embodying, and performing the dance work, produces theory. Theory becomes action when agency and activism emerge. When a community of inquiry develops, dance as passive viewing becomes dance-as-witness.

The choreographer and her dance are witnesses to culture, as then become the spectators.... As a model of performance it posits not a passive spectator who requires a “mediating ideology” to make the connections. Instead it empowers an active spectator whose humanity can be depended

upon to bear witness--to continue telling the story or spreading the word, and thereby making movement toward change. (Daly, 2000,p. 41)

Jan's work puts the spectator in the position of witness. She noted the audience's reluctance with *Turn Her White With Stones* because it was expressive of the reality of torture. Jan believes, regardless, that we have a responsibility to witness these tragedies, learn from them, and grow. Her work, in its witnessing, seeks to create a mutual dialogue.

Jan, Claire, and Kariamu design, map, and put new realities in motion, developing communities of inquiry by reaching beyond self to others, stimulating change. They make a world of difference in the communities they inspire, actively practicing their artistic "voices" in the worlds in which they live and connecting beyond those boundaries for the future.

Our Futures are Now

Hall (1990) states, "Our futures are created now" (p. 173). Feminism enlightens the social world to re-view itself, creating a future that is inclusive and integrative. The complexity of the social world provides opportunity, building toward such a future. And since complexity does not rest on what is simply known, knowledge becomes a continual journey, finding a beginning but never an end.

We make a world of difference in the knowledge we produce. What is important is that knowledge of new discoveries "need not supplement but can

displace the old" (Rescher, 1998, p. 39). With this direction, we change, evolve, and grow, becoming models of evolutionary praxis. And with complexity, we learn to start over, finding meaning in new beginnings, unafraid to repeat the journey to see anew. Through worldmaking and complexity, we make a world of difference, actively engaging with the world to change it. This world is possible for anyone to construct and experience. Engaging in self-constituting activities, we acknowledge self and world, exploring the possibilities of constructing new realities. Learners, in knowing the complexities of their realities, analyze connections between self and world to consider the possibility of constructing new realities. According to McLaren (1993), learners:

...must consider the possibility for "new makings" of reality, the new possibilities for being that emerge from new makings, and become committed to shaping a new enabling and regenerative history. New makings are a collective, shared social enterprise in which the voices of all participants must be heard. (p. 11)

The opportunity for learners to grow and become life long learners emerges through an action sensitive, critical pedagogy and curriculum. Aware of the world's rapid advances in technology and industry, a liberal arts education must have the foresight to embrace uncertainty and re-define curriculum and program development. Through a life long learning emphasis, individuals will shape their own destinies beyond the classroom, experiencing "a sense of growth and of being part of some greater entity" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993, p. 178).

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) elaborates that everyone can experience such possibility. It is not reserved for creative individuals only.

Every person who wants to realize fully the potentiality of what it is to be human, and who wants to take part in the evolution of consciousness, can aim for a more complex personality.... By fully expressing the tendencies of which we are capable, we become part of the energy that creates the future. (p. 363)

As models of evolutionary praxis, women dance makers move toward the future, describing a passion and desire to move, regardless of their age and physical ability. In this passion, they thwart the social construction of a dancer as young, lithe, and sylph. They call for 'real' bodies on stage, asking for a diversity in physicality, challenging the social construction of the body and its subsequent movement. Creating their own technique and dance world, women dance makers are voices of resistance to the world's conventions seeking to define and distinguish a new reality. Dancer and audience experience the dance anew with every performance. There is endless possibility and the dance never ends. The future is now.

And
This is the end
But this is the beginning
This is the start

Are you ready? (Claire Porter, *Green Dress Circle*)

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