DANCE AND SEXUAL POLITICS:

SOME IMPLICATIONS ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

IN SELECTED DANCE FORMS.

by
Sobhna K. Poona

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts in the
Department of Drama, Rhodes University,
GRAHAMSTOWN, 1990.

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores, from a feminist perspective, some implications on the status of women in selected dance forms, and addresses the perceptions of women as 'inferior' and 'subordinate'. One of the intentions behind the work was, indeed, to challenge prevailing perceptions and create an awareness of sexism, capitalism and patriarchy, especially for the uncritical and uninformed who have become its vicims.

Part 1 offers an analysis of the premises upon which social, political and economic inequality are founded and consolidated, with specific reference to sexual inequality and sexual prejudice. Utilising a Marxist-feminist and semiotic approach, the machinations of the traditional mass media are linked to negative imaging of the female body in support of the sexist, patriarchal, capitalist male manipulator, who benefits from women's subordinate social status.

Part 2 addresses the issue of sexual politics, and the implications for dance research and performance. The researcher offers a descriptive analysis of four specific dance forms, which serve to highlight the socialisation and educational processess that shape our perceptions and instruct our lives.

A set of questionaires was sent to fourteen autonomous dance institutions, including those attatched to national performing arts councils. The thesis concludes with a summary of the results of the questionaires that were distributed amongst female dancers, dance students and choreographers. The researcher questions our culture's preoccupation with the female body image, and posits the urgent need for an assessment of this situation, and an education which will create a better understanding and a more harmonious climate for development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I extend a debt of gratitude to many people for their time, assistance, and encouragement during the preparation of this thesis. I am especially grateful to **Farouk Hoosain** for his continued support, patience and suggestions. I am also indebted to **Jay Pather** for his cogent and informed criticism and advice.

I am most grateful to **Erik Louw, Liora Lazarus, Professor Sydney James** and **Professor Dennis Schauffer** for their time and valued suggestions, and to **Alfred Hinkel** who willingly read through my draft and inspired me to continue. Also to all the women who responded to my questionaire, and those who patiently sat through the interviews.

This work is dedicated to all women, especially those who have long suffered the imposition of sexism and patriarchy and who have become inextricably trapped within the system.

I would like to thank the **Human Sciences Research Council** for their financial assistance which made this work possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

War, Politics and Public Speaking are the spheres of Man;
That of Woman is to keep house, to stay at home, and to recieve and attend her husband.

XENOPHON - Greek Historian

History has revealed that more and more women have become preoccupied with their physical image, particularly their body shape. Dissatisfied women have made desperate attempts to alter their natural bodies through medical operations, by adding or removing parts.

This preoccupation with the body has sparked a number of academic studies in feminist theory that have concluded that women's concern over their body shape and size is directly related to social pressures, and the need to fit into society and to become more acceptable (See Cartledge and Ryan, 1978; Gallagher, 1981; Oakley, 1989; Sharpe, 1982).

Media research has also indicated that the mass media plays a pivotal role in shaping our perceptions and attitudes to conform to prescribed sexist, patriarchal values which lie at the root of women's subordination (See Buswell, 1989; Cartledge and Ryan, 1978; Downing, 1980; Gallagher, 1981; Oakley, 1989).

In our modern, technocratic, competitive society, women are constantly reminded that their body shape and size are unacceptable. This commodifying of the female body gives rise to tangentially related industries, for example haute couture, make-up, diet clinics and slimming salons.

Feminist interest has also broadened with regard to the status of women within the family, and the broader socio - cultural context (social, political and economic spheres), and their struggle for egalitarian status. Although women constitute a large percentage of the labour force, they are given marginal status or recognition for their contributions within and outside the home. This marginalisation of women is related to the concept of cheap labour in capitalist society. They have always been regarded as "other" and inferior to men. (The term "other" was first used by Beauvoir in The Second Sex,1972 - first published 1949).

The "women question", however, has been a perennial one. To associate female imaging in the male capitalist heirachy only with the feminist movements of the past few decades, is to ignore the fact that, more notably in some historical epochs than in others, it has preoccupied psychologists, philosophers, social commentators and creative writers since earliest times, for example in the tragedies of Euripides, the satires of Aristophanes, and the Platonic - Aristotelian debates (See Gallagher, 1981).

That the problem was formulated theoretically and divergently in the twentieth century at all, is itself revealing. Definitions and rules handed down through history are those of men, who have occupied positions from which to impose their analyses and prescriptions, be it intellectual, economic or political.

In our society the policy of general welfare is readily couched in the statistics and language compatible with masculine-dominated, bureaucratic and technocratic thinking. Codes of social behaviour and educational trends are imbued with cultural images that reflect and promote the values of the powerful male controlling forces.

Clarice Stoll reflects that "Very few women are mentioned in history books. (History is just that, feminists will tell you, not herstory). Economics has traditionally ignored women as a serious contributor to the economy because much of her work is not recompensed financially and her participation in the labour force is considered to be surplus. As for Sociology, I discovered that most books in my personal library (his private collection) did not even mention that there are two sexes. Sociology speaks mainly of the society of men" (Stoll(ed), 1973:5). "The assumption is really that women exist through their husbands, and the whole work situation is geared to this" (Rowbotham,1983:25).

> " One is not born, but rather becomes a woman"
> Simone de Beauvoir - The Second Sex (1972)

Plato's radical, ideological, egalitarian arguments for women were suppressed by Aristotle's belief in fundamental biological and psychological sex differences, which placed women firmly in the household, and took for granted the exclusion of women from any political or public function.

Although today, more women are occupying jobs previously reserved mainly for men, the Aristotelian private - public polarisation in which certain roles and functions are judged natural and appropriate to women and men, has prevailed. It is this polarisation which underlies the entire historical problem of the different social status of the two sexes (Gallagher, 1981).

> "Defined primarily through our destinies as wives and mothers - to be somebody else's private life, women are principally placed, politically, ideologically and economically, in 'the personal sphere' of the family"
> (Brunsden 1978 - quoted in Gallagher, 1891:12).

The world of production is, nevertheless, dependent on the world of reproduction (located within the household). The determinations of domestic and personal life by the industrial - economic sphere, thus becomes central to an understanding of the status of women and of the nature of their

relationship to the socio - economic system. Since society is socially constructed, it is, therefore, capable of change.

Although it has been indicated that the segregation of the sexes and the subordination of women in particular existed in many societies, some researchers propose that this was a result of industrialisation. According to Engels (1972), the critical development which triggered the change, was the specialisation of labour. Eleanor Leacock (1978) extends Engels' thesis (see Signs, volume 7, 1981:2), and indicated in her ethnohistorical research that "sexual division of labour related to their childbearing ability becomes the basis for their (women's) oppression" (Ibid:13).

A further theory proposes that colonisation, in the personal political sense, offers some explanation of the subordination of women. Millet writes that perhaps all women have been subject to a form of "interior colonisation" resulting from the "birthright priority" whereby males rule females (Millet, 1970).

All of the above theses provide some insight for the respondent,into the possible roots of subordination of women. No single explanation, however, can fully or adaquately stand as the truth, since they all in some way contribute to our understanding and interpretation of the way in which men relate to women.

History and tradition have reinforced popular ideology about sex roles, which is passed on through the family, school, religious education, the economic organisation of the home and work, and the mass media. This is, however, a determinist view, and yet whilst we are bearers and orators of ideology, we can take action to change society and, therefore, a voluntarist perspective also has its place.

Betty Friedan, writing in the early 1960's, called it "the problem that has no name", underlining the difficulty of coming to grips with women's experience of subordination, when the culturally limited representation and exclusion of women's experience was one of the very conditions of that process.

According to Barret et al. (1979), Culture may be defined as the social and historical process through which meaning is defined and produced. It is within this cultural consciousness that the roots of inequality are buried.

With reference to their research, the Dalston Study Group,(1976) explains that women have been defined negatively in relation to the culture into which they have been born. "Women mean love and the home, while men stand for work and the external world" (Sharpe,1972:68).

Although only marginally recognised, the world of art, fashion and literature, in contradiction, play an integral part in every society, especially modern, technocratic societies. This, however, does not exist in isolation from the broader socio - political and economic activity, as there exists between the two a reciprocal relationship.

All human behaviour is influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic forces. The way we live is challenged and influenced by our social and political behaviour and our economic status. Similarly, all art is challenged and influenced by the superstructure (a system or philosophy in relation to its political and ideological principles) which sets the status quo. Dance, like any human activity emanates from social conditions, and reflects the socio - cultural context in which it exists. In progressive dance forms, however, the participants do not merely play a reproductive role, but a productive, illuminating role.

Dance is thus involved in a dialectical relationship with factors pertaining to the superstructure. Social, together with political and economic factors influence cultural and performance patterns. Furthermore, dance rarely exists for a single purpose or sole construct, and can be viewed as social, artistic and ritualistic. This thesis will focus on each of the above mentioned three areas, with greater emphasis on the artistic and ritualistic forms.

Through an investigation of ideological and cultural images and perceptions, this thesis will address the status of women within the socio - cultural context. It will investigate the hypothesis that the traditional mass media function as an instrument of coercion and propaganda by promoting a false ideology to maintain the status quo, and the capitalist, patriarchal economy, particularly within developing, technocratic societies.

This thesis is written in two parts. Part one examines the socialisation process; the roles of capitalism, sexism and patriarchy in devising and controlling political, economic and cultural structures; the status of women within the capitalist, patriarchal economy; and the impact of the mass media.

Utilising a sociological, semiotic, and Marxist - feminist perspective, this thesis will examine the effects of mass media (electronic and print) on the socialisation of the female body and the consequent repercussions on female dancers, in an attempt to highlight some of the roots of sexual politics and the subsequent subordination of women in modern and post - industrial societies.

Specific television and magazine advertisements will be addressed in observing gender separation, sexual stereotypes, and male manipulation and dominance. Some problems related to body image will be addressed within the context of the dominant ideology discourse.

Part two will include an evaluation of specific dance forms. This will include the ballet, dance extravaganzas, the Bharata Natyam, the Mohorum festival dance ritual and the Venda girl's initiation ceremony.

This section will investigate women's educational and social roles and their status within their respective societies.

An examination of the selected dance forms will attempt to illuminate how social practices impact negatively on body image and consequently performance roles, thus perpetuating women's inferior status. (Body image concerns how a person feels towards their body, and implies value judgements and an awareness of social and cultural standards when perceiving the body.)

This study, as an attempt at synthesis, is ambitious in scope, and merely a beginning. This paper focuses on research into contemporary media and feminist studies, and dance material and practices that are at the researcher's disposal.

PART 1

In an unjust Society, It is the privileged who define morality, and the oppressed may need to redefine it.

Bertolt Brecht (Mother Courage)

In a capitalist society economic considerations are dominant. In support of Marxist theory, Althusser writes that economic power is associated with the legal system, but the whole superstructure is only complete with the existence of political and ideological relations. Ideology is, therefore, significant to class consciousness, for the dominant ideology works actively in favour of one class doing something to subordinate another.

Marx believed that all social classes are incorporated within the belief system which is appropriate to the interests of the dominant class. A Marxist-feminist ideology addresses women's issues within a sociological context, directed primarily at the capitalist profit motive and the consequent subordination of women. Marxism explains ideology as the unconscious mechanisms that binds different social subjects divided by wealth and class into a common society. Today, however, one needs to note that gender and race have become intrinsically involved in the construction of ideology.

Ideology consciously teaches us what to take for granted in the world around us. Institutions of civil society, including formalised religion, educational institutions and the mass media tell us, among other things, who we are, where we come from, what we believe, how we should behave and how we should interpret things. The media reflect social roles and behaviour patterns. They define relationships and prescribe how to relate to people of different colour, creeds, social classes and areas of residence.

According to Durkheim, a Determinist Sociologist (1858 - 1917), when people associate with each other they engage in a "collective consciousness", which constrains and obliges them to behave in particular ways (Payne, 1984:31).

We live our existences through particular views of the world, which we have assimilated through socialisation. Tomaselli (1985) argues that our 'reality' then, depends more upon our social experiences rather than on objective external reality, or any independent set of facts. "The way we live out and make sense of our place in society is culture" (Tomaselli,1985:2).

Tomaselli attributes the differences in culture to a direct result of differences in ideology. Thus different societies

will prescribe different ideologies, which will maintain a culture peculiar to that society. (The term 'culture', however, becomes problematic when attempting to define something specific. It is a broad term that encompasses a vast array of definition, and requires a focussed interpretation within the context of a particular area of study. For a further analysis, see Raymond Williams, 1986.)

It is widely accepted that individuals make sense of reality through semiotic systems. This creates different perceptions, which identifies one culture from another. These are largely a response to social, political, environmental, historical and economic conditions. From Tomaselli's definition, one can conclude that culture is learned through socialisation.

The nature of culture should therefore include the following elements: that it be communicated from one generation to the next, includes expectations of the members of groups, fulfils ethical and social needs, is adapted to external forces, possesses order and a system, and includes ideal patterns and norms of behaviour according to which members of society attempt to conduct themselves. (drawn from Sharma and Sharma, 1983:84 - 85).

Although ideology may differ from one social context to another, world wide research from a marxist and feminist perspective, has indicated that many social structures are dominated by capitalism and/or patriarchy, and sexism prevails to a large extent. In most developing countries the social mechanisms are dominated and manipulated by the capitalist, who is essentially the economically privileged, white, middle class male, who either belongs to the hegemonic group or identifies with its interests.

Cultural structures in many societies, support a system of patriarchy, which like capitalism, operates on a hierachical scale with women at the bottom of the hierachy. Patriarchy may be seen as basic in structure to capitalism: the one describing a set of sexual relations and the mode of social reproduction, the other describing the area of economic relations and the mode of social production.

Patriarchy, according to Hartman can be defined "as a set of social relations between men and women, which have a material base, and which, though hierachical, establish and create interdependance and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women" (Hartman,1979:11).

Although individual men honour and respect individual women, the patriarchal system is organised for the benefit of men, who control the mechanisms of political and social power. All hierachical relationships are power relationships. In order to maintain superiority and control, those in power will ensure the devaluation of the activities of those subordinate in the hierachy.

Patriarchy may be seen as the manifestation and institu- tionalisation of male dominance over women and children in the family, and the extension of male dominance (political and social) over women

in society. By implication, men maintain power in all important institutions of society, and women are denied access to such power. It does not imply, however, that women are totally powerless or deprived of any means or access to influence, rights or resources.

Patriarchal structures has been described within Marxism as the relationship between patriarchy and private property (Engels), and in psychoanalysis as the patriarchal family imposing reproductive sexual identity (Freud). The concept of patriarchy has occupied sociological and modern anthropological debate, all of which has been given certain credibility within contemporary academic dialogue. Modern feminists, however, are still grappling with the difficulties of definition and the problem of suitable recourse to a solution to end patriarchy.

Patriarchy, Lerner (1986) writes, is an historic creation formed by men and women in a process which took nearly two and a half thousand years to evolve. (This, however, does not imply that patriarchy as a social development has reached its conclusion). Women became a resource, acquired by men as much as land was acquired by men. Women were turned into a commodity, and were reified. This exchange according to Levi Strauss, marks the beginning of women's subordination.

Racism and sexism preceded the formation of classes and class oppression, which were, at their very beginnings, expressed and constituted in terms of patriarchal relations. For women, sexual exploitation marked the basis of class exploitation. (See Brittain an Maynard, 1984).

A further example on a larger scale is in South Africa where "the apartheid system has operated to discriminate against people classified as non - white, and in so doing has less obviously bolstered and legitimated discrimination against the poor and against women who are at the very bottom of the power hierachy". (Brittain and Maynard, 1984:217 - quoted in Agenda, 1989:97)

It may thus be asserted, that all mechanisms of oppression and subordination are seen to operate in a similar manner.

Most feminist thinkers share the conviction that since patriarchy as a system is historically entrenched, it can be ended by historical process. They also concur that values and implications based on sex differences are the result of culture.

De Beauvoir (1972) admits that the man of today did not set up this patriarchal society, but he profits from it, even if he is one of those who are critical of it. He has made it very much a part of his own conscious thinking. Today many feminists and critics agree that the overthrow of capitalism would create more favourable conditions for the emancipation of women.

A socialist state, however, may not be the total solution, for in many socialist economies today, the social status of women has not been given its due attention. Rayna Reiter writes, "the subjugation of women is a fact of our daily existence, yet it neither began with modern capitalism, nor automatically disappears in socialist societies" (Reiter, 1975:11).

Lerner proposes that the system of patriarchy can only function with the cooperation of women. "This cooperation is secured in many ways: gender indoctrination; educational deprivation; the denial to women of knowledge of their history; the dividing of women, one from the other, by defining "respectability" and "deviance" according to women's sexual activities; by restraints and outright coercion; by discrimination in access to economic resources and political power; and by awarding class privileges to conforming women" (Lerner, 1986:217). Ruth, asserts that the subordination of women is a necessity in patriarchy (1980:55).

She further asserts that women have participated in the process of their own subordination because they have been psychologically shaped to internalise the idea of their own inferiority, which is passed on to their children.

The myth that women are marginal to the creation of history and civilisation, has profoundly affected the psychology of women and men, and given men an essentially erroneous view of their place in human society. Margaret Mead (1935) writes that culture thus creates and gives sanction to certain standards of personality and behaviour, not only by rules, but by consent, example and education.

Sexism defines the ideology of male supremacy, of male superiority and of beliefs that support and sustain it. Sexism and patriarchy thus mutually reinforce each other. (See Kristeva,J.,1985) Many researchers have identified sexism as allied to racism in the sense that both ideologies actively and consciously subordinate groups they believe are inferior and weaker than themselves. (See Brittain and Maynard,1984)

> "These are times of chaos; opinions are a scramble; parties are a jamble, the language of new ideas has not been created, nothing is more difficult than to give a good definition of oneself in religion, in philosophy, in politics. One feels, one knows, one lives, and at need one dies for one's cause, but one cannot name it. It is the problem of the time to classify things and men. The world has jumbled its catalogue."
>
> (Larmartine, 1940. quoted in Kumar, 1986:58).

Although Larmartine was writing in the 1940's, his sentiment remains true today. Within this context, all forms of human activity are influenced by the prevailing ideology. Within a hierachy of developmental status, first world countries enjoy a high level of technological progress.

The prevailing ideology of the third world is technocratic, a rationale predisposed towards the manipulation and control of human resources for technological progress and economic advancement. Human beings are consequently monopolised as cogs to service the wheel of scientific progress.

Industrial societies in the twentieth century have strikingly similar features. Ernest Gellner put it thus:

> "In the twentieth century, the essence of man is not that he is rationale, or a political, or a sinful, or a thinking animal, but that he is an idustrial animal. It is not his moral or intellectual or social aesthetic... attributes which make man what he is; his essence resides in his capacity to contribute to, and profit from industrial society. The emergence of industrial society is the prime concern of sociology"
>
> (Ibid:62).

Kumar (1986) describes industrial societies of the contemporary western world as urbanised. This co-incides with the Spencer - Durkheim conception of modern society which resulted in the progressive decline of extended family ties, reducing the family to a unit of consumption only.

Mattelart (1986) sees the arrival of capitalism as having undoubtedly represented a decisive moment in the segregation of sex roles by depriving the family of its old function as a productive unit. There resulted also a marked decline towards institutionalised religious values, specialistion of labour, and nationalisation of people. Production lay in the hands of the capitalist.

Weber offered a rather grim determinist vision:

> "Together with the machine, the bureaucratic organisation is engaged in building the houses of bondage of the future, in which perhaps men will one day be like peasants in the ancient Egyptian State, acquiescent and powerless, while a purely technically good, that is rational, official administration and provision becomes the sole, final value, which sovereignly decides the direction of their affairs"
>
> (Ibid:107).

Within this technocratic society, art enjoys marginal status. Since art does not directly foster technological progress or stimulate economic growth, its values and activities are under-rated and often ignored within the central considerations of human advancement.

In a world dominated by the advancement of science, and economic progress, art and dance endure a demoted status.

In another sense, however, they may enjoy a kind of licence afforded by this marginal status. Under the banner of art, there is the space to perhaps uphold the predominant socio- cultural influences or to offer critical comment, or to explore alternatives or even to deliberately subvert the popular ideology and existing order. From a Marxist perspective, art within a capitalist system has a great deal of value, since it operates to reaffirm and solidify ideology.

> "All art is a product of its time and consequently affects the continuous changes of history" (Sorrel,1986:347).

In this age of technocratic achievement, the mass media has come to play an important role within the realm of mass culture. Technological developments like television, cinematographic film, photography and print media, has changed our perceptions and attitudes.

These technical accomplishments, according to Sorrel, occupy an inalienable place in our present world. Sandy Flitterman-Lewis asserts that commercials have "an important function in shaping society's values" (quoted in Allen, 1987:231).

Mechanisation, Sorrel suggests, "turns us into passive non-beings, pushing buttons and turning knobs for no real purpose. It cannot help but become a mechanical reflex, setting in motion a mechanical gadget in a highly mechanised world" (Sorrel, 1986:399). "Television assists in creating an easily malleable society", which Sorrel admits "is the price we must pay for an apparently unlimited profusion of ready- made music, words and pictures" (Ibid:399).

Since contemporary, western, urban society is so largely affected by the total onslaught of mass media, it is important to identify some major elements that directly affect the social consciousness. In this regard attention is drawn to some attitudes towards the female body, using radical, Feminist theory and semiotics.

Marxist theory asserts that "Emotional needs have been desublimated ... and then redefined in terms that support the established reality. Community, love, and friendship ... are associated with consumer products by advertisements and made available for easy purchase" (Poster, 1984:124).

Education and social conditioning, have trained women to identify messages aimed at them. Most commercials target women as their audience, since they are commodified. Advertising deliberately plays upon women's ability to decode visual clues that signal class and status.

The mass media perform a number of quite different functions in society, providing news and entertainment and acting as vehicles for both education and advertising. Mass communication

processes and media organisations, however, cannot be separated from the social, economic and political systems in which they are located. (See Ceulemans, et.al.,1979 and Gallagher,1981)

Although at the level of theory the mass media may be somewhat abstractly identified as agents of change (for example, providing alternate points of view, or challenging the status quo), at the level of reality, their ability to promote change is dependant on the range of socio-economic and political policies prevailing in the wider society.

The prevailing feminist point of contention is, however, that within their many separate functions the media's portrayal of women may be more or less damaging. This becomes clearly evident when examining specific commercials, which are discussed later in this essay.

Probably the greatest concern has centred on images of women in advertising, where reliance on women, particularly women's bodies as sales bait, is in wide-spread evidence.

The degrading nature of many advertising images of women is well documented (see Task Force on Women and Advertising,1977; Millum 1975; Arbeitsgruppe Frauenmaul,1979; Sepstrup,1978; Ceulemans and Fauconier, 1979). Advertising deals in known, safe, traditional appeals, that make for an insidiously manipulative and conservative appeal to the audience.

Advertising is able to exploit the 'definition' of women in terms of their sexuality, and constantly reconstructs images of women as sex objects in its striving to harness the sexual pleasures of its audience for the sale of an unlikely range of consumer products. Sexuality can be seen in terms of how consumption, as well as production, is organised in a capitalist society. (Cartledge and Ryan,1978:213-214)

> "Society is organised around the differences rather than the similarities between the sexes" (Oakley,1989:210).

Ruth Hartley observes that from a young person's point of view, sex roles and self definition "are blended in an unselfconscious complex of unobstructed behaviours" (quoted in Oakley,1989:177). This indicates that whatever it is that the child learns, he or she is not aware of learning it, nor aware of its content and implications.

Recent research has indicated that gender roles are not mechanically acquired, but are learned from the parent figure, through socialisation. As a child's cognitive powers arise, through a process of maturation, the definitions of gender that the child arrives at, are socially determined (Ibid:180, also see Ruth,S. 1980).

Thus sex diferentiation is learned and maintained through early learning of gender roles (see studies by Chodorow-1978, Irigary-1974 and Modleski-1982), and sex-typed models provided by the mass media. (For example, women are most often associated with domestic duties and the care of children. Single and unmarried women are often used as targets for sexual attraction. All doctors, judges, engineers, and investment advisors are male. Nurses, teachers, domestic help, and supermarket shoppers are women). Oakley argues that the images they present, reflect and exploit societies definition of gender roles.

To take an example: in the South African women's magazine, the idealised woman is young, feminine, domesticated, pursuing a man, or (if she already has one) devoted to the care of the home and children. She is the patriarchal, sexist, capitalist stereotype, exploited and reified.

Kristeva (1985) sees women's struggle as part of a broader struggle. In so far as women are defined as marginal by patriarchy, Kristeva affirms that their struggle can be theorised in the same way as any other struggle against a centralised power structure (Kristeva in Moi,1985:164).

During the 1980's and 1990, one is constantly confronted with a mysterious and desirable "whole woman" who seems exclusive, expensive, luxurious, elegant and "naturally" leggy (Gamman and Marshment,1988). The spectator is presented with readily available, sexualised images of women, designed specifically to appeal both to men and women. Women, who are subtley and continuously manipulated, will aspire to the image to please men, and thus fall prey to the male gaze, both on and off screen.

Marshment and Gamman postulate that in most popular representations it appears that men look and women are looked at. Men act and women are acted upon. This they define as patriarchy, which informs a society's political regimes, economic systems, culture, language and unconscious behaviour. As a result the male perspective informs the dominant mode of representation, and the hierachical constructs of society. Men assume the power and dictate the rules. In this way they equate patriarchy with capitalism.

Within the domain of politics and cultural struggle, there is a perpetual struggle for power and control. The complimentary systems of capitalism and patriarchy peddle 'false consciousness' to the duped masses (Ibid:1). Male dominated institutions of production and distribution are inscribed with sexism. Only through pragmatic strategies, they conclude, can any structural shift occur.

Women then, ultimately aspire towards socially created and accepted roles. Socially they are expected to be the 'carers'. Men on the other hand, are portrayed as strong and assertive. They are represented as the authorities on food, washing powder and everything else. Through a plethora of

luxury consumer goods, the media celebrates reinforced notions of female success, for example : women's success in the kitchen, or women's success with relationships with the opposite sex.

The following popular advertisements illustrate the above argument.

Television advertisement 1 (1989): *Skip - The automatic choice*

In all the washing powder advertisements the voice over is male.

The man instructs the women as to what washing powder she ought to use, telling her it is best suited to her needs. The men are the manufactures. They make the recommendations, and give instructions. Women accept and perform accordingly.

The women in the advertisements are always represented as young, enegetic housewives, mothers or carers of others. The assumption is that if one uses the advised product, one will be better able to cope with one's duties, and stay alive from nine to five.

Television advertisement 2 (1989): *Ask your Pharmacist. He's there to help.*

Television advertisement 3 (1989, 1990): *Panado. The GP's choice.*

In all of the above advertisements, there exists the assumption that only men occupy such professional positions, and are the authorities on medical advice or scientific information.

Men appear in the visual advertisements, and one thus takes for granted the gender stereotypyes that such advertising perpetuates: men are doctors and pharmacists, and women are nurses and assistants, most often in the subordinate role. Perceptions are thus moulded to capitalist, patriarchal needs.

In a study of sex role stereotypyes in the United States, McNiel(1975) recorded that ninety percent of 'supervisors' seen on television are male (who are less likely to be supervised). This has been found to be true in many countries, since advertisements spread world wide. Katzman (1972) found that women's television conversations tended to focus on family, romantic, health and domestic issues. Men often discussed professional and business concerns.

Anderson and Greenberg(1980) reported females were portrayed doing disproportionately more entertaining and caring for others, preparing and serving food, and performing indoor housework. Females did less driving, participating in sports, conducting of business on the telephone, drinking, smoking, and they also used firearms less (see Williams, 1986).

In soap advertisements (Lux, Nordika, Palmolive) and advertisements for deodorants (Sixth Sense, Body Mist, Pears), and some toothpastes, efficiency in promoting cleanliness is hardly ever the message; it is rather the products potential for romance, or for averting romantic disaster, which is its key property. People may think such associations ludicrous, but, says Downing(1980), they are quite likley affected by them in their thinking about male-female relations even while remaining unconvinced about soap or deodorant brands.

Advertising can never be totally ignored. Problems are recognised, stressed, and solutions offered for sale. Sex is seen as a good sell, and is included wherever possible. The irrelevant use of women's bodies to sell products totally unrelated to them is clearly in evidence. Pretty, scantily clad girls appear on advertisements for bricks, furniture, cars, garage doors, drink, food, cigarettes and a number of other products. The following cartoon illustrates an example of sexist advertising.

Cartoon - extracted from Sugar 'n Spice,1989:11).

A large percentage of commercials advertising motor vehicles use women as a sex symbol. To the consumer, the advertisement seems to say, if you buy this car, you can also have a woman like this, or, women will be attracted to you.

After a furore over a Toyota advertisement, the advertisement was withdrawn from television. The advertisement sported sixteen sexually alluring women. It said 'sixteen beautiful women, sixteen beautiful valves'.

In an interview with a group of senior university women (Rhodes University, June, 1989), they all agreed that the advertisement was offensive and disturbing, especially in its association with women and valves, and the manner in which the women's bodies were objectified and exploited.

The above are a blatant example of the way women are defined and sold in terms of their sexual attributes. Advertising categorises women, and although men and women face this barrage of propaganda, it is the women who are most vulnerable.

All health food advertisements sport lean athletic women. The advertisement sells a particular image of the successful woman, and recommends what she should eat, in order to remain slim and attractive to the opposite sex. This impresses upon the impressionable, uncritical consumer that men prefer slim, alluring women.

Schwartz (1974) rightfully argues, that a much greater emphasis tends to be placed on women's attractiveness than on a man's. More often her success depends on the way she looks, rather than on her ability to perform the duties demanded by the job.

Health advertisements hardly ever target fat men, or tell them to diet, so that they may be attractive to women. It may thus be assumed that fat men are more socially acceptable but not fat women. Wooley, et.al. in their review of papers about obesity and women, identify and attack the current assumption that fat is a women's problem (in Klein and Steinberg, 1989:22-34).

Advertising projects fat women as an illness in our society, a malady that has to be fought against. Thus the male experts have all the solutions to the female fat problem, for they prescribe what men want in a woman, and what women should aspire towards.

There exists a perpetual need to keep women clamouring for products, and no area or space of a women's body or life is free from the prying, manipulating and exploiting prescence of advertising. Advertising may be seen as capitalism's soft cushion. An anonymous mass of people called consumers have each to be persuaded to need whatever a product can give them, to buy it and to keep on buying.

Women continually attempt to emulate the image of womanhood presented by billboards, newspapers , magazines and television. The media represent women either in a sexual context or within

the family (a survey of print and television advertisements bears witness to this), reflecting a woman's prescribed roles, first as sex object, then as mother. (Also see Brittain and Maynard,1984).

According to Orbach's study, since most women are fashioned as candidates for men, they become prey to the huge fashion and diet industries that set up the ideal images and then exhort women to meet them. The woman's body is not satisfactory as it is. It must be thin, free of unwanted hair, deodorised, perfumed and clothed. It must conform to an ideal western physical type that often looks anorexic.

The following two advertisements were selected from Fair Lady magazine.

Advertisement 1:

> "It only takes 15 days to uncover that lovely smooth skin under your cellulite.
>
> Cellulite. An ugly word. And not a pretty sight. Yet cellulite can occur on any women's skin... many women suffer the embarrassment of orange peel skin on the hips, thighs and upper arms... if you are seriously unhappy about ugly, embarrassing cellulite, the only way to prove that Elancyl MP24 works is to try it on yourself".
>
> (Fair Lady, 20 January 1988:7)

The advertisement sports the stereotyped, lean, seductive body of a beautiful women in a bathing suit, lips pouted and her hand caressing her skin. She gives the reader an alluring gaze, seeming to say "wouldn't you love to have a body like mine".

Elancyl MP24, by alluding to the French (Paris-the centre of haute couture, glamour and what is considered to be chic), and scientific studies, offers a romantic, and simple, magical solution that is guaranteed to please all women who use it. The scientific MP24 also gives the product an aura of scientific respectability and acceptance.

Advertisement 2:

> "To make more of your body, make some of it disappear".
>
> (Fair Lady, 11 October 1989:22-23)

Clarins purports to solve women's problems and to get rid of the worst enemy-cellulite. The advertisement shows a stereotypically slender, sensual figure caressing her body with the product. Through nine different seductive poses, she seduces her audience. There is no face, only a disem-

bodied, dehumanised object; parts of her body used to titilate and to sell. Many angry people would call it pornography, others, good advertising.

"The capitalist patriarchy discovered it, decided I didn't really want it and that I'd definitely look better without it, invented products to get rid of it, made me ashamed of it, and sold me the product" (Sugar 'n Spice, 1987:8).

The mass media thus taunts, torments and terrorises women by setting up ideals. Women begin to hate themselves and their bodies for their inadequacy and inferiority, and their lack of youth, slimness, whiteness and beauty. They are set up as objects to be scrutinised and idolised. The fact that many women accept such attitudes, is a direct cause of prevalent sexist attitudes in our society.

The following is a television advertisement for Sprite Caravans.

> "Yesterdays people ate large meals.
> Yesterdays people drove large cars.
> Todays people eat smaller meals.
> Todays people drive smaller cars".

Although the above is an advertisement to sell caravans, it targets the human body. It blatantly tells the viewer that fat people are unacceptable in todays society, and the aspiration is to be thin.

The advertisement shows a family of fat children and adults eating a large meal, then a thin family eating a "healthy" meal. The advertisement encourages the viewer to identify with the thin family, and subtley attributes a great deal of

importance to body physique and the acceptance or rejection of present socio-cultural values. It is also aimed at the fat person, asking them to reject their fat if they want to "fit in" to society.

Thus obsession and preoccupation with the body has increased. We live in a culture that continues to be obsessed with women's body size and shape - that sees fatness and thinness as ultimate statements about people's worth.

Advertisers sell us not only commodities, but also images of ourselves if we buy or use the goods. As Williamson (1978:12) explains, "material things we need are made to represent other, non material things we need" (quoted in Downing,1980:141). The assumption then exists that the audience is not passive but an active partner in the process.

Every women's magazine and newspaper has a diet column. Diet specialists and diet clinics flourish. The names of diet foods and drinks are now a part of our general vocabulary. Pysical fitness and beauty have become every modern women's goal. "Being fat isolates and invalidates women" (Orbach, 1988:27).

The number of diet clinics has trebled in recent years. Of the many women interviewed, many were dissatisfied with their body shape and size. In a desperate effort to lose weight quickly, they change from one diet and diet clinic to another. They experience great insecurity and inadequacy with regard to their bodies and are constantly referring to their weight and body size. Many starve themselves in public and binge in private. It appears that they have dedicated their lives to losing weight.

Children have also become more aware of their bodies. During a discussion at a children's party, ninety percent of the girls between the ages of seven and eight, said they did

not want to get fat like their parents or relatives, and, therefore, refrained from cakes and biscuits. For these children, cakes and biscuits have come to symbolise weight gain and ugliness. They all agreed that being fat was unpleasant and ugly, and other people made fun of you if you were fat (source: primary drama class at Sastri College, Division of Speech and Physical Education, Durban, September 1990).

A distraught Transkeian mother was extremely worried about her thirteen year old daughter who refused to eat. When approached, the girl admitted that all the girls in her class at the Grahamstown boarding school were dieting (even though none of the subjects were overweight) because they did not want to get fat.

Once again fat was associated with unpleasantness, especially among young adolescents who were actively involved in sporting activities and meeting with members of the opposite sex (extracted from a personal interview with the subject, Grahamstown, August,1989).

A seven year old girl brought her barbie doll to talk about in her speech class at Sastri College (August,1990). Her talk provided interesting insight into the interests and concerns of young girls. In conclusion she announced that there existed the threat of the banning of the dolls in America, since medical doctors have discovered that many young girls who identify with the barbie doll, become obsessed with the aesthetic of 'thinness'.

The above examples indicate the extent to which the idea of being thin has penetrated into our consciousnesss. Being thin is being socially acceptable, confident and beautiful.

"To be fat is to worry every time a camera is in view; to be fat means to be excluded from contemporary mass culture, from fashion, sports and the outdoor life; to be constantly trying to lose weight; to wait for the man who will love you despite the fat-the man who will fight through the layers" (Ibid:51).

Orbach writes that young girls right through to women in their sixties have absorbed the message that all their personal and social problems can be solved through the transformation of their body (Ibid:20).

Under such pressure, many women have resorted to liposuction, a medical process that draws out the fatty tissue through a suction mechanism. The treatment, however, has left many women horribly scarred, and their skin badly damaged.

"Girls are going to the operating theatre for prettier noses, sleeker thighs, bigger or smaller breasts, more appealing ears" (Burton,1989:6). "Women are still all too often seen as sexual objects for others, and whether at home or at work, their self esteem can still depend in large measure on how they feel about their bodies (Op. cit.:21).

Clearly advertisers feel compelled to warn women that "the sexual inquisition is constantly on its rounds, ruthlessly investigating their overweight, their smells, their houses' cleanliness, their child-care practices, their cooking" (Downing, 1980:139). As a result women continue to fall prey to male manipulated prescriptions and industries, and endure a subordinate status.

PART 2

To be a woman is to be constantly addressed, to be constantly scrutinised...

Female desire is crucial to our whole Social structure. Small wonder it is so closely obscured, so endlessly pursued, so frequently recast and formulated.

Rosalind Coward (1983)

As can be seen from previous statements in this paper, much has been said and written about sexuality and the body. How then does dance fit into all of this? According to Hanna, "sexuality and dance share the same instrument - the human body" (Hanna, 1988:xiii). Dance she explains, is an eye-catching, riveting way for humans to identify themselves and maintain or erase their boundaries. Feelings and ideas about sexuality and sex roles take shape in dance.

Dance requires the human body for its realisation, thus calling attention to the body, either as male or female. Live dancing is often imbued with multisensory, pulsating and often sensual and electrifying qualities.

One's response to a dance stimulus, however, depends upon one's attitudes, beliefs and experiences within a specific cultural context. Culture teaches conformity to standards of behaviour, and society uses dance as one of the ways of transmitting messages of sexual identity (See Phelan,1988 and Adair,et.al.,1989).

Among many ethnic and social class groups, masculinity is given greater attention; sexism persists, and sex role stereotyping oppresses both sexes. Stereotypes, developed at an earlier time make contemporary discrimination against women seem legitimate. According to Albert Bandura (1972) following Kohlberg's social learning theory, individuals tend to reproduce attitudes, acts, and emotions exhibited by an observed model (live or on screen), and modelling influences can lead to generative and innovative behaviour (Hanna,1988:10).

Bandura's theory of vicarious learning provides proof that images do influence attitudes and behaviour. Through images, manufacturers and service providers sell their own notion of smell, taste and touch to the consumers. Orbach (1988) argues that it is in this way that women become trapped in an attempt to conform to a standard that is externally defined and constantly changing. The one constant in these images is that a woman must be thin.

Since the human body is the instrument of both dance and sexuality, people's intimate experience with their bodies influence their responses to dance. Through sight and movement they enter

relationships, which may lead them to dress in particular ways, exercise, watch their diet and their body shape and size.

This problem of socialisation of the body, is addressed by Mauss (1935), who poses a three pronged analysis of the individual body: physiological, psychological and social. Through society and cultural identity, the physiological body is transformed and moulded. Mauss concluded that the body is trained and educated under conditions imposed by society and is "assembled for social authority" (Polhemus, 1978:27). Since body perception constitutes an important part of one's socio-cultural heritage, through one's body one is enculturated into a society (example: size and shape of body, length of hair, style of clothes).

Again according to Mauss, the body has a unique inter- relationship between the physical, social and psychological, and it is, therefore, imperative to approach a sociological study of human movement from this three pronged perspective. In attempting to elucidate his arguement, Mauss demonstrates the example of Anorexia Nervosa (see: Polhemus, 1978:21-25), a dietary disease common among female adolescents in the urban west.

His study revealed that through exessive forms of dieting, and obsessive fear of being over weight, the afflicted women reject food in order to maintain a socially acceptable body image. Most victims suffer from severe psychological or physiological problems.

From the above study it is evident that the body image is a major consideration for education and socialisation of the individual, and a socio-cultural perspective of dance in contemporary western society would need to take cogniscance of this, (although thinness was a phenomenon in the western world prior to the 1960's). The threat of modern technology and the flood of mass media, hangs like a sword of Damocles, reducing one's behaviour to become as mechanised as the button-pushing conveniences in life, resulting in an avalanche of crumbling values.

History has revealed that major social, political and economic changes occur during times of crisis. The 1960's were particularly turbulent, with events that included the banning of the bomb, the Vietnam war, the May day celebrations, and the formation of the Women's Liberation Movement. It was a period of disillusion and the formation of new philosophies and religious ideologies.

In America, the 1960's may be remembered as the period of the 'hippie' generation. The use of drugs, particularly 'speed', led to excessive weight loss, and being thin became a fashion. It could then be plausibly argued that women played a part in interpolating themselves. The 1960's also hailed the beginning of the media-centric world, and the mass media came to play a pivotal role in the social construction of reality.

In the early 1960's the 'Twiggy' figure became popular. A more acceptable image was to be skinny and flat chested, with long straight hair. The first of these was achieved through near starvation, the second, by binding one's breasts with an ace bandage, and the third by ironing one's hair. Then in the early 1970's, the look was curly hair and full breasts.

Long and skinny one year, petite and demure the next, women were continually manipulated by images of proper womanhood. Todays image of the 1990's is that of the lean, athletic figure.

Like all human activity, the dancer's body is constrained by society and culture to whose prescriptions it actively aspires to conform. Todays dancers are relatively young, strong, slim and athletic. There exists a great fixation on slimness.

Dance can be understood as a medium through which choreographers, directors, and producers interpret, legitimate, reproduce and sometimes challenge gender and associated patterns of cooperation and conflict that order their social world (see: Ortner and Whitehead, 1981).

The dance audience comprises to a large extent, many values of the opinion makers, especially those who manipulate and control the worlds of print and electronic media. The media also promotes elitism in the form of sexism and racism.

Historian Carl N. Degler (1982) writes:

> "Sexuality is to women as colour or race is to blacks: a source of difference from the dominant group, therefore, a source of possible oppression... Men wrote history to meet their needs and concerns as men. They did not exclude or ignore women because they were misogynists or malicious, they did so because what women did, felt, or thought was not important to them when they looked to the past for guidance, understanding and identity."
>
> (quoted in Hanna 1988:27)

In a thirty nation study on sex stereotypes, it was found that the male is stronger and more active and is "characterised by higher needs for dominance, autonomy, aggression, exhibition, achievement and endurance, and the female stereotype reveals higher needs for abasement, deference, succorance, nurturance, affiliation and heterosexuality" (Williams and Best, 1982:245).

As a result more and more vulnerable women are being absorbed into the fantasy world of artificial values and false status, and where young children are exploited as sex symbols. Naive faces flash across television screens, and sensual smiles splash across magazine covers, while thousands of fashion-conscious women are desperately trying to emulate thin, sexy, socially admired and accepted bodies.

Performance and media share a cultural platform, and semiotically are similarly constructed. Performance can be seen as a form of media, since both include a sender and a recipient of a message. Performance also creates language, and like the mass media, brings together an audience.

Since both performance and the media are part of the culture industry, they tend to generate the same kind of ideas within a particular socio - economic and political ethos. Thus the performance arena will create particular images of women in support of the status quo.

Saturated by the media, western, urban society has become obsessed with the thin form. In the dancing world, teachers and choreographers give precedent to a female dancer who has a "good body", with its related associations of thiness. Thus social factors become a psychobiological problem for many women who feel socially unacceptable and unworthy.

For some of these women, pregnany becomes something ugly and unattractive, for the body loses shape and attractiveness. This mentality is further enhanced by beauty contests which take the form of Miss South Africa, Rag Queen and Miss Fresher. Women are expected to parade their bodies and their sex for a predominantly male approval and consumption.

Sociosexual values are reinforced and the capitalist spirit of competition is encouraged.

Dance shares with the other arts a gender related prestige hierachy. It is to some degree occupationally differentiated and sex segregated, separating performers, choregraphers, composers and directors.

The non dancing positions being more powerful and male dominant. Males primarily have been the recognised choreographers, who project fantasies and longings as they conjure women (dance roles) into existence or exorcise them into oblivion.

Women's ballet roles generally do not depict independant women, but untouchable, elusive sylphs or earthy sexual peasants. Although a few women did come into the limelight in ballet, it continued under men's three hundred year dominance, and continues so today (see Haskell, 1938). On the stage, males are literally behind the females. Off stage, men retain control as ballet masters, choreographers, directors and producers, inextricably involved in sexual politics.

The history of the ballet clearly shows the male as the dominant figure. Although women have played active roles within the context of the ballet arena, their recorded contributions as ballerinas, ballet mistresses and rehearsal conductors, amongst other roles, can hardly surpass that of their male counterparts.

Contemporary ballet choreographers and directors "almost always male, mould ballet's young women to the ideal of femininity that equates beauty and grace with excessive thinness" (Gordon, 1983:173).

It is also important to recognise that a large concentration of male choreographers who are active within the various dance circles, are gay. This factor then, brings a great deal more complexity to a study of this nature.

The consequence of this is the continuing reinforcement of conservative attitudes in dance in many developed countries which partly stems from the entrenched positions of social class. In South Africa, this is clearly illustrated by the control of the Arts Councils by the state apparatus. Dance has to conform to a particular ethos to maintain the status quo. The funding situation illustrates the dominance and perpetuation of patriarchy and the marginalisation of sexual politics.

But what bearing has sexual politics on dance? Dance is particularly potent in an examination of sexual politics, because the language of dance is centred on the body and bodies are inevitably gendered (within the socio-cultural context).

> "Biological research has not edaquately explained the fact that cultures everywhere have given Man as a category opposed to Woman, social value and moral worth"
> (Rosaldo and Lamphere, 1974:22).

Today, a decade and a half of feminism has legitimated the body as a proper area for political concern, and it is attempting to come to terms with what the culture at large represents as femininity.

Feminism is deeply concerned with the spectre of women as sign and as symbol: how she has been appropriated and presented within patriarchy, for she has been presented more often than she has been permitted to speak for herself (King,1988). Feminism encompasses both an awareness of women's position in society as one of disadvantaged or inequality compared with that of men, and also a desire to remove those disadvantages.

Simone de Beauvior (1972) wrote that woman will do anything for man, all in the name of love. The Bristol Women's study Group echoed this sentiment in saying that "women's feelings are shaped by male needs" (Bristol Women's Study Group, 1984:9). They concluded in their study that children learn through imitation. Girl's learn about appropriate behaviour from observing and imitating their mothers.

As Oscar Wilde put it:

> "All women become like their mothers; that's their tragedy, No man ever does, that's his."
> Oscar Wilde- The Importance of Being Earnest.

George Balanchine, a renowned dancer and choreographer, is also remembered for his attitudes towards women, especially his female dancers.

> "Man is a better cook, a better painter, a better musician, composer. Everything is man... And women accept this. It is her business to accept... In ballet, however, woman is first. Everywhere else man is first. But in ballet, it's the woman. All my life I have dedicated my art to her." George Balanchine
> (Gruen,1976:284). (quoted in Daly,1987:8)

When one speaks of the fact that Balanchine 'glorified women', it is generally considered a laudable accomplishment. Such glorification, however, has come under severe attack by feminist critics, who recognise the inherent sexual politics. A close study of Balanchine's choreography reveals a strong patriarchal influence.

Balanchine's idealised woman is a product of the patriarchal system, and clearly exists as the dependant, sexually defined object at the bottom of the hierachy.

Upon viewing recordings of Balanchine's work, familiar themes appear: Woman is naturally inferior with regard to matters that require action and imagination, she obligingly accepts her inferior status, and appears as an object of beauty and desire. Daly writes that Balanchine's woman is first in ballet by default, only because she is more beautiful than the opposite gender, and exists as an icon for women to emulate.

The researcher is not opposed to beautiful bodies on the dance stage, but draws attention to the fact that disproportionate attention is given to the physical attributes of the female dancer. Physical and external characteristics appear to be the precedent upon which female dancers are selected.

Balanchine's choreographic framing of women was briefly discussed at the Dance Critics' Association seminar on The Four Temperaments (1946) on 25 January 1985. Former New York City Ballet dancer Suki Schorer provided an interesting analysis of her role in the third theme pas de deux, while two students from the School of American Ballet demonstrated.

In her description she mentioned that the man "is manipulating (the ballerina) controlling her. You see the boy totally controlling the girl. He opens her arm. He's doing her port de bras. The boy

should appear then to be strumming-playing-some sort of harp or cello. The girl is like an instrument." (Ibid:9). Figuratively and literally, the man has the controlling hand.

From the above observation, it is evident that Balanchine's ballerina clearly exists within a culture that is deeply rooted in the myths of demarcated sex differences that clearly privileges the male. Kirsten writes that the gender system is the traditional one "in which girls perform, supported by male partners" (Kirsten,1983:296).

The tight-fitting toe shoe, restricts natural movement and perpetuates the ethos of female frailty, and dependance upon male authority. Displaying the line of her body, artificially elongated by her toe shoes, is the goal of their joint venture.

Women are constructed as to be looked at. As John Berger wrote: "men act and women appear" (Berger,1973:47). Daly thus sees the romantic ballet as the expression of a masculine society's needs. Since so much emphasis was placed on the way the dancer looked, it is no wonder that male choreographers have come under such close scrutiny and attack.

Balanchine receives much credit for the female 'anorexic look'. Gelsey Kirkland, in her illuminating and absorbing autobiography, recalls his demand for starvation. "He halted class and approached me for a kind of physical inspection. With his knuckles, he thumped on my sternum and down my ribcage clucking his tongue and remarking, 'Must see the bones...' He did not merely say, 'Eat less'. He said repeatedly, 'Eat nothing'" (Kirkland,1988:55-56).

Kirkland admits that Balanchine was possessive of his dancers, and was jealous of his female dancers dating. He wanted their sole dedication. "Mr. B. placed a ballerina on the pedestal of his stage, using her as his muse. Such a dancer became a fetish, whether he touched her or not" (Ibid:50). According to Kirsten(1984), for Balanchine, women were angels through which he shaped icons for the laity.

Kirkland confirmed that Balanchine "assembled steps that were supposed to have been predetermined by God and humbly described himself as an instrument of divine will. His word was holy" (Ibid:49-50).

In her journal, Toni Bently, another Balanchine dancer, reflected, "It's a pity he needs 100 individuals as his tools rather than paint brushes. What would have happened if Van Gogh's brushes one day had refused to be manipulated because they wanted better living conditions?" (Bently, 1982:89 - quoted in Hanna, 1988:128)

Adair et.al. (1989) writes that the dancer/performer is trained in objectification techniques which are taught in professional academies and called 'art' in mainstream aesthethics. This they advance,

is what the dancer aspires to and the critics talk about. The dance technique codifies the dominant ideology of patriarchy.

A graduate of the Royal Ballet School once said: " ...you are taught to deny your creativity, intellect and sexuality to conform to an exact, predetermined image. Severe dieting, for example, was common amongst ballet dancers... in some cases leading to total anorexia. We struggled to conform" (Adair et.al.,1989:28).

The corps de ballet is the result of this narcissistic struggle: rows of thin, sylph-like women with identical bodies, without individuality or autonomy, and struggling to conform.

This is typical of the experience of women dancers, who are forced to accept these circumstances in order to achieve the goal of being beautiful, desirable women, that which is constantly demanded of women from our media controlled, consumer society.

The 1990's has certainly not seen any change with regard to these perceptions. Jane Bonbright (1989), in her study on the nutritional status of female ballet dancers, is concerned about the ultra-leanness imposed upon todays ballerina.

She writes, "Each year among the hundreds of beautifully trained dancers who audition for the few vacancies available in professional ballet companies, many are rejected on sight because they do not project the proper, or ideal, body image: long legs, long arms, long neck,oval shaped head; a body of excellent proportions; and, perhaps of greatest importance, a 'bone thin' frame" (Bonbright,1989:9).

Sun International's Sun City, and Wild Coast Sun complexes offer the patron 'legal' access to what, from a feminist point of view, may be described as pornographic. Members of the predominantly male audience, pay exhorbitant sums to watch a performance which lasts about forty five minutes.

The particular performance which is being addressed, included elaborate, expensive set designs, and magnificent constumes. It was a great pity, however, that the dancers wore very little of the exquisite designs.

The performance included several short pieces, accompanied by a musical score. Each piece included one or more scantily dressed, clean shaven women, many of whom progressively shed pieces of their clothing. The performance was expicitly sexual in content, and the alluring gazes and seductive smiles teased and pleased the desiring audience. Once again attention was drawn away from the dance towards the dancer's body.

One particular section highlighted the vulnerability of women. A small, thin figure (the woman) was placed in a huge masculine hand, which formed the major part of the rotating set. The woman writhed and gyrated, exuding gentle waves of sexuality.

With each turn of the "hand", the women shed a part of her clothing, until she was completely naked. The musical score formed an intimate accompaniment, and the audience clapped and cheered.

Focus was placed on private, intimate parts of the body. The woman carressed her naked body with her hands, and made passionate sexual contact with the fingers of the 'hand' in which she performed her seduction. The entire performance was about legs and breasts, white curvaceous bodies and pink, pouting lips. In many of the sequences, the women performed forward high kicks and deep bends with their backs to the audience, exposing their inner thighs. Forward bends and upper torso gyrations, called obvious attention to their naked breasts. During the performance of each, the audience was very quiet.

During the preparation for the recent production of "Bravo", at Sun City, the choreographer was interviewed by a television reporter. He made the following comment on national television, about the selection of "girls" for his production: "...we've got to see that their boobs are good enough to put before the public" (Source: Revue Plus, M-Net, wednesday, 29 November 1990, 19hoo).

Blacking (1979) describes this western ethos as economic, competitive and achievement-orientated. Fiske (1984) sees this context as one in which society is categorised and divided and classified. He writes that the linking of sexuality with social mobility is normal in our culture, and regards 'glitzy dances' as social statements.

The glamour, he sees as a sign of social success, combined with an overtly sexual content that derives from the lower strata of society. Semiotically the dance is a sign of class tension and a signifier of the myth of upward class mobility seen through female sexuality. Women's bodies thus become the object of capitalism's manipulations and productions.

The glamour of showbiz with its vulgarity and ostentation has become a popular cultural sign. Members of our society are able to satisfy their fantasy needs and class sexual tensions, via a socially sanctioned form of dance. Although such dance may provide a sexual catharsis, for the feminist dance observer, it is a degrading and devaluing activity.

Many women see it merely "as a job, from which they earn a living" (source:dance student, Rhodes University, October 1989). They have something to sell (their sexuality), which the consumer is willing to buy. Sex loses its privacy, and the act is no longer the resposibility of the individual.

Fiske proposes that "by making the sexuality of the moving female body public, well lit and open, it legitimises society's view of the female as a sex object, and while implying her availability to the male, also relieves him of the potential resposibility and/or guilt of a merely sexual relationship" (Fiske, 1984:135).

Lange (1975) asserts that "the dance of sexual display 'naturalizes' our view of women as sex-objects by showing it to be part of the social structure and thus acceptable" to its viewers (Ibid:135). Dress codes and its association with sexuality operate within the more formal codes of aesthetics, and together with bodily expression are accepted and advertised as dance.

A consciousness of body image appears to affect all women, irrespective of racial denomination or cultural affiliation. Although the aesthetic of thiness may not be a major concern in certain dance forms, the understanding of sexual differences, gender separation, and female sexuality prevail.

Blacking (1979) reminds us that in ancient times in India, there seems to have been no social proscription on women dancing or performing music.

The arts themselves were highly respected because of their association with worship. He does write, however, that in Indian mythology, males in particular are associated with music and dance. The Gandharvas, heavenly musicians, were all males and their female counterparts were the Apsarases, beautiful and libidinous, mistresses of gods and men.

During the middle ages (about A.D. 325 to 1565) the image of the apsaras had become the image of any female who could perform in public. Her public performance, writes Blacking, could not be separated from her sexuality. The performers of dance thus became the purview of low caste females and prostitutes. This culturally accomplished woman could be compared to the hetaerea of ancient Athens or the geisha of Japan.

The devadasi was the temple dancing girl of southern India, in whom resided the dance tradition that was recorded in the Natya Sastra and in temple sculpture. Although this tradition was also associated with sex, it was allowed to continue only because of its direct connection with the temple.

In the 1920's the particular caste (jati) associated with temple dancing, was abolished by provicial law and the surviving tradition was forced underground. Today that dance tradition, Bharata Natyam, in its original form, exists as a classical one and has moved to the concert stage. Although it is still the purview of women, anybody who wishes to learn it may do so (Blacking, 1979:126-127).

With the exeption of the dance-drama Kathakali, Indian classical dance is regarded as a female associated art. Like the ballet, the performing of classical dance is done mainly by females, and the

teaching has been done mainly by males. One may then identify this as an important factor in determining the status of women even in an art form in which they dominate. In Indian culture, it has been the teachers who have been respected most, and they have, in the majority, undoubtly been men.

Hindu culture abounds with festivity, dance, prayer and ritual. All celebration is colourful, social and usually extravagant. At the basis of Hindu culture lies religious and ethical teaching.

Hindu society is paternal and patriarchal, with women being attributed stereotyped roles and inferior status. This, however, is a male construction. The Bhagavadgita, the Holy book of the Hindus, does not mention anywhere that men are superior, or that women are subordinate to their male counter-parts. In fact it states that one should fight for what rightfully belongs to one.

Within the traditional family, the woman is always regarded as the mother figure, who takes care of the house, and is morally and sexually weak. She is restricted in many ways, these include freedom of speech, strict codes of dress, and conformity to behaviour.

Amongst the traditional Gujerati community, men and women do not sit together at social gatherings, weddings, prayer ceremonies, and funerals. As a sign of respect, women are always expected to leave the room if an older man enters. Arranged marriages are common amongst the Hindu people, and these often occur at an early age.

Women are thus accorded little autonomy, and are expected to devote their lives to their family. She enjoys little independance, and has to face strong sexual discrimination within the family unit. Religious and moral education is fundamental to early socialisation, and is an important facet of dance education and performance.

The term 'Indian Dance' is used to describe all forms of Indian dancing. For the purpose of this essay, specific reference will be made to the Bharata Natyam performance, in illustrating facets of Hindu ideology and culture.

The Bharata Natyam dance form comes from South India, and still exists in the prescribed form of one thousand years ago. It includes as its components, Bhava (expression), Raga (melody/song), Tala (rhythm and timing) and Natyum (act and dance) (see Bhavnani, 1965:33 onwards).

Central themes include love, philosophy, religious tales and classical mythology. A characteristic feature of the Bharata Natyam performance is the statuesque posturing of the body. The dance is mainly interpretive, and includes intricate patterns of hand gestures, complex combinations of foot work and rhythms, and a unique vocabulary of facial expressions.

Bharata Natyam is often performed at social functions and religious festivals, and is an integral part of the dance graduation ceremony. The dance is performed mainly by women, ornately dressed in a blouse and fan-like trousers. The dancer wears gold jewelry, and her hair is plaited and adorned with fresh flowers.

Strong makeup highlights facial features, and accentuates facial expression. Phelan regards this as 'conventional tropes of seduction' (Phelan, 1988:109), which place women as an object to be looked at. Makeup is also used to attract the gaze of the audience, which enhances their ability to objectify the performer.

Dancers begin their training at an early age, and many spend a period of training and performing in India before they acquire professional status. Many women in South Africa have acquired professional status, and have become reputed dance teachers. In this way young, innocent girls absorb technique, tradition and values which are never questioned.

Like all Indian classical dancing, Bharata Natyam is steeped in ritual. As a result, religious education plays an integral part in the dancer's socialisation. An invocation to the gods is performed before each class or performance. Women dance stereotyped roles of mother, lover, daughter, always taking care of, or attracting the men.

Although both male and female roles are danced, posturing of the body includes characteristic types. The male exhibits a strong, upright spine, and his movements are defined in strong effort qualities. The female dancer exhibits lithe, curvaceous and retiring movements, with an emphasis on feminine qualities and characteristics.

The gods are always depicted according to gender roles. Men are always strong, free, and inevitably conquer the women. They are the hunters, patriarchs and heroes, who rescue the women or break their hearts. Much activity centres around the male. He has to be constantly pleased, appeased and attended.

Thus socialisation reinforces gender behaviour, which few dancers have questioned, since it is so much a part of the dance code and content of Bharata Natyam. A radical attempt at alternatives, would perhaps destroy much of what has been internalised over many decades, but an attempt no doubt, is necessary.

Courses in dance education, cultural studies and women's studies as an integral part of the dance syllabus, would be an invaluable beginning in addressing some of the issues. Practical training in the various cultural dance spheres, needs to focus on the roles of women and their status both within and outside of the dance context.

In the Bharata Natyam, female mortals are often seduced by male gods, who conquer all women. Such tales are fraught with sexist attitudes and patriarchal precedents, which have been passed down from one male dominated generation to the next. One is rarely presented with female goddesses flirting with the men.

As a result, it is implied that only males can enjoy such liberties. The women are always tender, beautiful, vulnerable and alluring. Movements are lithe, seductive, and often flirtatious and sexy, elliciting feminine charm.

The Bharata Natyam dance style reflects 'earth borne' movements. The women display low hips, bent knees and vigorous foot stamping. This is reminiscent of a bond with 'mother earth', nature and childbearing. Thus social values are further entrenched through dance education, and competition (an essentially elitist activity) is encouraged through use and exhibition of the body.

It is not only the Bharata Natyam which is imbued with sexism and gender separation. In the Kathakali performance of The Sacrifice of King Daksha, a young professional woman economist noted that "most vivid is the clear depiction of the relative status of the two sexes. This permeates the entire performance. The female is always submissive and even an attempt at anger is subdued" (quoted in Hanna, 1988:27).

The aesthetic of thinness is not of primary concern in Indian classical dance as it is in ballet, and also to some extent in contemporary dance. However, as has been previously indicated, sexual stereotypyes do abound.

Being acutely aware of this, Shobana Jeyasingh, an American contemporary dance choreographer, attempts to create an alternative female body image to challenge existing sexual stereotypes. With a knowledge of Indian dance forms, one can fully appreciate this challenge.

Jeyasingh has created an innovative mix of Indian dance and Western music. She subverts traditional dance techniques by breaking the rules. One instance she describes, is of the actions where the woman opens the palm of her hand as a mirror and looks in it with confidence, assuring her of her femininity and looks.

Instead, in Jeyasingh's performance, the dancer looks away from the mirror and presents doubts. In this way she presents a different view of expectations of women, and women's attitudes to their looks, and the ways in which they are observed (see Adair et.al.,1989:29).

Peggy Phelan questions the function and role of the female performer. She quotes a performance of a classical piece in which an eleven year old boy dances the role of a female. She writes that while several women played male roles, the young boy, Gautum, was the most outstanding and convincing.

His youth and silence, she says, "pointed out another implicit aspect of the 'power knowledge' system operative in the role division of classical dance. A child can play the part of an adult female, but not of an adult male" (Phelan, 1988:110). Schechner (1987) recently put it thus:"woman equals girl but man does not equal boy" (Ibid:110).

The boy rests squarely in front of the spectator, and smiles seductively with a disarming directness. He wears bright pink, his face is painted with flowers and his lips are painted cherry red. The fetished female image is perfectly encoded in Gautum's costume, makeup, and movement, which reinforces rather than subverts the structure of the patriarchal consciousness.

All aspects relating to women's subordination are relevant to Islamic culture. Women are subordinate to men, and are considered to be morally and sexually weaker. This too, has come to be defined within a western male construct, since no mention of men as superior is mentioned in the Koran (the Holy book of the Muslims). Thus in many areas of Islamic culture, the men have decided that women should be excluded from positions of authority and related ritual activities (Source: interview with research student, Contemporary Cultural Studies Unit, University of Natal, Durban, thursday, 13 december 1990). Women are absorbed in domestic work, which continues from childhood to adulthood.

In Islamic culture, a man may have many wives, but women are allowed to marry only one man. She may, however, marry again. Women always adopt submissive roles, and are seldom present within the same space as men.

During their wedding ceremony, the bridal couple do not meet until the religious formalities have been concluded. The man enters the mosque to take his holy vows, whilst the woman remains in the hall with the guests. All women are excluded from the religious ceremony, and women sit apart from the men during the social ceremony. Many girls marry at an early age, with many marriages being arranged by the family.

Notions about physiology and kinship reinforce sexual stereotypes, and social status. Women's moral frailty and their problematic sexuality are further expressed in dress codes, etiquette, and restrictions observed during menstruation and after childbirth.

In South Africa and many Arab countries, certain sectors of the Muslim community celebrate the month of Mohorum, which has strong religious, political, cultural and social significance. They

celebrate, through fasting, prayer and ritual dancing, the heroic death of two ancient leaders, the brothers Hussein and Hoosein, one who was deprived of water by the enemy and the other who was poisoned.

All people directly involved in the ritual are required to observe a fasting period of ten days prior to the festival. The dancers participating in the dance ritual, however, experience a more rigid fasting endeavour, and are deprived of water for certain periods of time. The festival takes place over a duration of three days. The dance ritual only takes place at night, usually at about eight o'clock. Drumming, chanting and prayer begin a half hour before.

The dance ritual takes place on two consecutive evenings. On the third evening the 'thaja', or structure built in the shape of a mosque, is revealed. People pray at the foot of the 'thaja' and shower it with money and sweets, which are contributed to charitable organisations. During this part of the celebration, the men and women interact freely, and also enter the prayer area together, if they wish to be blessed.

The first part of the ritual (which is not revealed to the spectators) takes place behind the curtain, in front of the altar. Only the men who have observed the fasting period may observe this ritual. Before the dance ritual begins, the dancers are put into a trance by the presiding priest. They are then brought out from behind the curtain. Each dancer is dressed in a pair of long white trousers, and a white long sleeved jacket.

A band of red and green strings (the red reminiscent of blood, and the green, of poison) is tied around each person's right wrist, and each dancer wears a garland of colourful flowers around his neck. Each dancer's hands are bound together as in prayer, and tied in front of his face. Each one also holds a blessed metal hand and blessed flowers between his hands. Ashes from the altar are placed on every participants forehead.

Each dancer is tightly bound, with a red or green band, around the waist. This band is securely held by one or two men (depending on the size and strength of the dancer) who prevent the dancers from escaping to a source of water, where they will purposefully drown themselves.

The dancers are pushed alternately to the left and the right. They engage in spontaneous, energetic movements, rising and falling, and twisting and turning, their feet stamping the ground, or kicking into the air. They appear to have an unusual amount of stamina. They move seven times around a specially prepared mound of sea sand. A stand of special incence called 'lobaan' burns on the sand, and the fragrance infuses the air around the paticipants.

An assistant priest follows the performers, calming the gyrating bodies with a fan of peacock feathers in his one hand, and a pack of incence sticks in the other. If a dancer in a trance becomes uncontrollable, water is sprinkled at his feet in order to calm him.

Throughout the ritual, chants of 'Hussein - Hoosain' reverberate. After the ritual around the sand, the participants retreat behind the veil, where they are blessed by the priest, and the dancers are taken out of the trance. One observer revealed that once the prayer has begun and the flowers and metal hands are removed, the dancers are given a special milk to drink, and after a brief period of rest, the trance is broken. When the dancers next reveal themselves, they appear weak and fatigued. On many occasions, over the years, several participants (owing to the strain of the performance) have fainted or become ill after a performance.

The dance performers are unmarried men of varying age groups. Women are not allowed to participate in the dance ritual, or view the ceremonies in which the trance occurs.

The entire event is organised and administered by men, and women are excluded from any direct participation in the festival. Women who are menstruating are not allowed near the prayer area, or near the dancers, who go 'beserk' at such proximity and have to be calmed by throwing water at their feet.

During the cultural celebration, women are housed in a separate area for the meal (prepared by the men), and sit apart from the men during the quawali (rendition of traditional music). Although this is an annual, cultural event, aimed at bringing people together, the perception of patriarchy and male power and independance is strongly generated, felt and observed.

Women are not allowed to discover the secrets of the ritual, or ask any questions with regard to it, even though their sons or brothers may be risking their lives by participating in the dance ritual. The man interviewed for this paper could not disclose any information with regard to the ceremony that takes place behind the curtain, out of view of the spectators. When questioned about the lack of participation by women, one man who had participated in the ritual for many years, admitted that he did not know the reason for the exclusion of women from the ritual. He then added, "...but it has always been that way".

From the above statements, it thus appears that people have hardly made an effort to question this situation or address this imbalance. The men continue to perpetuate old values and customs in order to keep alive tradition. Although many values of the western world have impacted on their lives, they have consciously chosen to maintain sexual prejudice, and to keep the women in a subordinate position.

The status of women in many Black African cultures is no different. The socialisation of women through dancing activity is clearly depicted in Blacking's description of the Venda girl's initiation ceremony.

Blacking (in Spencer, 1985) cites the initiation programme of the Venda girl's, and the 'Domba' dance ceremony. The Venda of the Sibasa district, who live in a lush, mountainous part of Southern Africa, performed traditional ritual dances, which were a focus of their social and educational activity. The young Venda girls, after their first menstruation, underwent a series of dance initiation rites where they were educated in the institutions and resposibilities of marriage, motherhood and childbirth.

The entire cycle of dances lasted over a period of one to four years, and prepared the individual for social, adult life within a community. Included in the cycle, was ritual washing, verbal instructions by elder women (vhusha), the learning of songs and dances (tshikanda), and the final performance of music, dance and drama manifested in the 'Domba' dance. Vhusha, tshikanda, and domba constituted a single dance-music-drama, that was shared by all the members of the community.

Most Venda dances were circle dances, and the general movement was counter-clockwise. Blacking suggests that this was appropriate for the restricted dancing space that was common in the mountainous Venda country side, but it could also be related to the symbolic significance of the circle in Venda thought.

In the domba dance, the circle of dancers enclosed a space that symbolised the womb, and their movements symbolised an act of love. The ashes of the fire symbolised the semen that was said to build up the foetus in the womb, and the bass drum represented the unborn baby. In the domba dance there was no solo dancing. The girls linked physically, and were a united body.

Vhusha was held regularly in the council houses of local rulers whenever a commoner girl in the district reached puberty. Girls from noble families attended their own vhusha. Tshikanda was a month long school whose main purpose was to rehearse the songs and dances of vhusha. This included all girls, irrespective of class.

If a girl reached puberty during the period of the domba ceremony, she was allowed to join immediately, and later attend vhusha and tshikanda.

Married women also attended the final rites of domba if they had for some reason, missed the initiation before marriage. (Women who moved to the towns often missed the initiation rites and had to perform them at a later date). Domba was not only an institution where girls 'learnt the laws', but it also served to improve their musical expertise. The dance movements, in its various stages of complexity, emphasised the new complexity of the body, and the complexity of social life.

The girls spent the first six days naked, completely shaven and unwashed. All the song texts were related to the objects and concerns of womanhood. After several months, they were led on a path through a bush, to a pool where they were ritually washed. Their journey (labour) was made painful, and hurried on by a stinging potion that was splashed on their backs. The pool was said to be the place from which all babies are said to come.

Although there was much explanation of sexual matters, the most important lesson of the domba, for the girls, was the responsibilities of motherhood and marriage. Thus if a girl became pregnant during domba, she was dismissed in disgrace.

The initiation cycle presented an education of the emotions, social skills, and aesthetic experiences of music and dancing. It was a system of formal education designed to follow informal education and childhood. Girls, irrespec- tive of rank or status, were compelled to attend these ceremonies, which was an intergral part of Venda culture.

The term 'initiation' within the context of the above ceremony, is itself loaded with sexist, patriarchal connotations. Women are regarded as 'separate', 'different', and are, at an early age briefed about duty and expectations. They are accorded little autonomy, and moulded without choice or argument. Their education is an indoctrination, perpetuating behaviour patterns from one generation to the next, and endorsing patriarchal power structures. Patriarchy thus appears to be a universal construct, imposing its values and belief systems.

Two hundred years ago, Jacques Rousseau summed up the purpose of women's education and upbringing:

> "A woman's education must therefore be planned in relation to a man. To be pleasing in his sight, to win his respect and love, to train him in childhood, to tend him in manhood, to counsel and console, to make his life pleasant and happy, these are the duties of women for all time, and this is what she should be taught while she is young"
>
> (from Emile-quoted in Bristol Women's Studies Group,1984:24).

PART 3

Summary of Independant Research

Fifteen sets of questionaires (See Appendix I) were distributed amongst one hundred and fifty seven women dancers, dance students, and choregraphers in fourteen autonomous dance institutions (See Appendix II). Four sets were returned without completed responses. Twenty three percent of the questionaires were fully completed and returned. These produced very revealing results.

The most number of written responses were recieved from between the seventeen to twenty five year old age group. One hundred percent responded that their body shape and size were important to their work in the dance field, that they were constantly aware of their body physique, and they all went on diets.

One twenty five year old ballet dancer responded: "Most women, even my mother is constantly dieting. All indicated that they knew of women dancers who were anorexic (some reported cases of up to seventy percent), although none of them had been. One person indicated that she often reached a point of starvation.

All the respondents agreed that dancer's should have lean, sexy bodies, which need not necessarily be athletic. One response read, "The accepted look of a dancer is to be as thin as possible". Another said, "Dancers have to be very thin". "Overweight is simply out", wrote another, "...no choreographer or designer wants to be limited by fat or 'slightly' fat dancers. A well proportioned, well toned, slim body is the ideal".

One person felt that, "When auditioning for a specific part your body is taken into consideration. Dancers should always be able to attract the opposite sex". Many agreed that men dominate as choreographers.

A large percentage of the women agreed that the media plays a manipulative role. "Yes, definitely. Most advertisers will only use women with ideal bodies for their productions, which causes the reader/viewer to be either determined to become like that or to feel guilty and try to change their eating habits." Another response was, "If I see a picture of somebody thin, then I want to be like her and I would like to change my eating habits".

One dancer wrote, "...I think the media and advertising play a major role, but a women should not be weak, and should enjoy her own image.

If she does not like her image, then she should change. Just because women in the media are beautiful or slim or super intelligent, doesn't mean to say you have to be. The media is responsible for shaping everyone's image".

Very few women said they would choreograph a production with a "large" or "fat" woman, and added that they would, however, prefer thin ones. One answer read, "...Yes I would (use a fat dancer) if I want to portray large/fat characters or if I were choreographing a humorous or comical piece.

Others remarked that, "we want to look graceful, and fat girls look very heavy on the stage; they are less appealing to look at and dancing is a visual art; when people are fat or large, they are unattractive on stage".

The following comment was expressed by a twenty five year old ballet/contemporary dancer, "I think if one is using the body to entertain, one should respect that and look good, be it in classical or contemporary dance. Who wants to go to the theatre or watch dance, where the dancers are fat? People like to see athletic bodies".

The prevailing assumption, that only thin dancers can be graceful, ignores the fat woman, and does not accord her any credibility as a dancer. It may be assumed then, that only stereotypically thin women can be graceful and thus acceptable. The fat dancer is often judged prematurely.

Another young lady wrote, "...it is important to have the look that the audience/public is expecting, that is, lean and thin. A 'large' or 'fat' dancer is not the accepted look of a dancer, as people see dancers as being skinny".

Many women concurred that all women should be aware of what they look like, but dancers as a group, do take dieting more seriously. They also agreed that society has placed too high expectations upon women in general. One woman wrote, that "all ladies are concerned about their weight, but more dancers than other people become anorexic".

The nursing journal of South Africa recently indicated that a large number of ballet dancers are affected by constant dieting, and the cases of anorexia have increased at an alarming rate (Nursing RSA, March 1989).

Fair Lady magazine (20 December,1989:80) reported that in 1986, American plastic surgeons performed more than five hundred thousand cosmetic operations, and South Africa was not far behind with regard to their number of operations. It is clearly evident that women face pressures to conform to prescribed images, and are constantly reminded of their inadequacy.

As a result of the socially imposed values upon the female form, certain stereotyped expectations with regard to bodily movement and posture is developed. Dance, subsequently presents an idealised version of human movement, and only persons capable of graceful movement are deemed acceptable or beautiful.

This is particularly relevant to the status of the ballet in South Africa, for example, which by the nature of its "vocabulary of movement, instantiates a hierachical, elitest view of human beings. For the movements it represents for our inspection and approval validate (or demean) certain images of maleness, of femaleness, of humanity. And they set up a dichotomy between gracefulness and awkwardness, that is, at root, elitest" (Wartenberg,E.T. - quoted in Fancher and Myers, 1981:121).

Through its syntactical devices, dance is clearly identifiable as fitting a style of movement of a certain class or group of people, thus setting up a fundamental dichotomy of human worth. Dance, then, by definition of its movement, can come to serve as the basis of an evaluation of people.

From amongst all the responses from some of the major dance institutions in South Africa, only one group of women indicated positive perceptions towards the large or fat body. They represented the views of the women from the Jazzart dance company.

The company is, notably, not attatched to an Arts Council, or involved mainly with the ballet. From the responses, it may be assumed that they do not face the pressures of maintaining the status quo, but do in fact present work that challenges the present dance climate in South Africa, both in a political and cultural context.

The women (dancers and choreographers), ranging between the ages of tweny one and thirty three, all indicated that they were constantly aware of their body shape and size. All the women, however, were aware of sexist stereotypes, and regarded their company as a challenge to existing political and sexual prejudices.

They responded that they would choreograph work which included large or fat bodies. One women wrote, "Yes, if someone moves interestingly they're worth watching, whatever their size and it would make a statement".

Another response read, "Yes, I would. To prove the point that 'large' or 'fat' women are as capable of moving as anybody else". They all concurred that "a female dancer needs a strong, expressive body, that does not necessarily equal thin, sexy or athletic".

These dancers are confident, and comfortable with their bodies. A very small percentage went on diets. An older member of the group wrote, "In the context here at Jazzart

women have more autonomy than in the dance industry at large - however, it is still easier for men to progress to performance level (usually as pas de deux partners), than women". She also recognised and acknowledged the media's influence on women's images. "It is difficult for any, other than the strongest individual, to avoid being affected by the bombardment from the media". She is aware of her body to the extent that, "it makes me aware of how I do not fit in with the current ideal of the female body".

Another student, when commenting on the content of this study , indicated that it was important and relevant. The main reason being that, "...African female bodies are generally 'big'. Does this mean", she added, "that they cannot perform intricate movement styles?".

A senior member of the company added, that at Jazzart "women dancers enjoy independance in dance. The body will determine the physical limitations, but it can be improved. Here at Jazzart, everyone seems to have one thing in common, the love of movement to express their individual qualities".

CONCLUSION

The oppression of women then, comes from a power imbalance, some aspects of which can be seen in the illustrated examples. Stoll (1973) writes that in our society the policy of general welfare is readily couched in the statistics and language compatible with masculine dominated, bureaucratic and technocratic thinking. Women lack autonomy, and men are the controllers of the media.

Dancers display the male fantasy of femininity, for example, the virgin and the whore. In many contexts women dancers are alienated from their feelings in order to satisfy men's sexual needs. Dance history reflects this relationship between the choreographer and the dancer. The man is the creator, the thinker, and the women is the body. She reflects his thoughts and feelings.

Within a hierachical structure such as ours, traditional values and attitudes towards class, race, religion, age and sex will permeate a work unless it is intentionally subverted. Perhaps one of the main barriers towards creating alternatives, is that of technique which is the codified language of dance. Since the dancer and choreographer spend years internalising this language, resisting it could be problematic for both of them.

Choreographers can, however, challenge existing content and perceptions. The choreographer and dancers need to embrace political content, and be constantly aware of the problems of body image and its objectification.

Adair et.al. proposes that audiences bring a variety of experiences to the way in which a dance is viewed. These perceptions are, nevertheless, set within the dominant culture, which means that whether one is male or female, one will objectify the bodies as one sees them on stage. It is this shared cultural understanding that determines the way in which meanings are interpreted, and which limits one's critical facility.

Blacking observes that women in the performing arts are perhaps one of the most visible groups of females. Their status is linked first to the status of women in general in those cultures, and second to the status of the particular art in which they perform. Within the sphere of a particular art, the roles of women appear to be traditionally defined.

On the question of inequality, two approaches present themselves. One approach, using anthropological, biological, historical and psychological evidence, argues that women are essentially no different from men, and that, therefore, in a differently structured society it would be possible for divisions based upon sex or gender differences to disappear, leaving us with an equal society.

The other approach argues that women are essentially different from men, and that inequality results in an undervaluing of female activities and characteristics. Finding answers to this question of inequality, has been the difficult task of feminists, researchers and women's studies groups (see Bristol Women's Study Group,1979).

It is time, however, to question our culture's preoccupation with women's body image. One needs to challenge the ideas that women should conform to certain set standards of behaviour, be a particular shape and size, and that happiness or contentment is contingent on attaining it. One needs to question massive advertising campaigns that profit the patriarchal capitalist and exhort women into conformity. Cultural and social practices also need to be questioned so that future generations may learn to live more comfortably with their bodies.

Women's issues are thus closely allied to the political, economic and ideological structures in which women's oppression and subordination is rooted. Issues which inform this oppression are often trivialised and marginalised. Within a sociological study, one can attempt to pinpoint areas where women's issues can be addressed, and challenge the dominant ideology and expose its iniquities.

Patriarchal structures have dominated our society for many centuries, and it would take a considerable effort and education to reeducate values that have been entrenched in our society. Too many myths have been built into our society, and it is not going to be an easy task to challenge existing structures.

One does not expect immediate or radical change, or a reversal in the socio-cultural system with regard to socio-cultural values. However, one always needs to know, and to be constantly aware, that there is an alternative, and this alternative urgently needs to be addressed. A course in Women's Studies should be considered as an intergral component of every dance syllabus.

APPENDIX I

QUESTIONAIRE 30-11-1989

The following questionaire provided feedback from women dancers, dance students and choreographers, whose responses have been summed up in this paper.

Name of Dance Company/school: .....

Age: .....

Occupation: .....

1. Do you feel your body physique (shape and size) is an important factor when applying yourself in the dance context? .....

2 a. Are you constantly aware of your body shape and size? .....

b. Do you go on diets? .....

c. Are the above demands (a and b) related to your work as dancer/dance student? .....

d. Have you ever been a victim of anorexia? .....

e. How many women dancers do you know of who have been affected by constant dieting or afflicted by anorexia? .....

Answer YES or NO to the following:

3 a. Female dancers should have lean, thin bodies. .....

b. Female dancers should have sexy bodies. .....

c. Female dancers should have athletic bodies. .....

4 a. Women dancers enjoy little autonomy. .....

b. Male dancers dominate performance roles. .....

c. Males dominate as choreographers. .....

Briefly summarise the reasons for your responses to 3 and 4. .....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

5. Do you think the media and advertising play a major role in determining a women's image? Why do you think this is so? .....
.....
.....
.....
.....

6. Does the advertiser's image of body consciousness affect you? To what extent?
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

7. Would you choreograph a production using "large" or "fat" women? Why?
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

8. Do you think that a study of women and their social body image is relevant to a study of dance in the contemporary South African climate? Why? .....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

9. Any other observations or comments. .....
.....
.....
.....
.....

APPENDIX II

List of Institutions

CAPAB - Cape Administration Performing Arts and Ballet

Danza Lorca Studio

Johannesburg Art Ballet Drama Music School

Jazzart Dance Studio

Johannesburg Dance Foundation

Lynton Burns Dance Studio

NAPAC - Natal Performing Arts Council

Nina Mellerney Dance Studio

PACOF - Performing Arts Council of the Orange Free State

PACT - Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal

Pretoria Technikon

The Britz Clarke Organisation

Tossie van Tonder Dance Studio

UCT Ballet School

REFERENCES AND SOURCES CONSULTED

Source List

Abercrombie, N. *Class, Structure and Knowledge*. Basil Blackwell Publishers, England, 1980.

Abercrombie, N. et.al. *The Dominant Ideology Thesis*. Allen and Unwin Publishers Ltd., UK, 1984.

Allen, Robert. J (ed). *Channels of Discourse: Television and Contemporary Criticism*. Methuen, London, 1987.

Bhavnani, Enakshi. *The Dance in India*. D.B. Taraporevala and Sons and Co. Private Ltd., India, 1965. Pp.33 ff.

Baehr, H. and Dyer, G. *Boxed In: Women and Television*. Pandora Press, London, 1987.

Benthall, Jonathan. and Polhemus, Ted. (eds). *The Body as a Medium of Expression*. Penguin Books Ltd., London, 1975.

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. Harmondsworth, Penguin, London, 1972.

Blacking, John. *Movement, Dance, Music and the Venda Girl's Initiatiation Cycle*. (in Spencer, Paul.(ed.) Society and the Dance.) Cambridge University Press, USA, 1985. Pp.64-90.

Blacking, J and Keali'inohomoku, J. (ed) *The Performing Arts*. Mouton Publishers, Great Britain, 1979.

Bowles, Gloria. and Klein, Renate.D. *Theories of Women's Studies*. Routledge and Keagan Paul, New York, 1989.

Bristol Studies Group (ed). *Half the Sky: An Introduction to Womens' Studies*. Virago Press Ltd., London, 1979.

Brittain, Arthur. and Maynard, Mary. *Sexism, Racism and Oppression*. Basil Blackwell Publisher Ltd., Oxford, UK, 1984.

Buswell, Carol. *Women in Contemporary Society*. MacMillan Educational Books Ltd., London, 1989.

Cartledge, S. and Ryan, J. *Sex and Love: New Thoughts on old Contradictions*. Womens' Press, London, 1978.

Ceulemans, Mikee. and Fauconnier, Guido. *Mass Media: The The Image, Role and Social Contributions of Women.* A collection and analysis of research materials. Unesco Press, France, 1979.

Chambers,I. *Popular Culture*. Methuen, London, 1986. Pp.200-217

Connell, R.W. *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*. Stanford University Press, California, 1987.

Coward, Rosalind. *Patriarchal Precedents - Sexuality and Social Relations*. Routledge and Keagan Paul Ltd., London, 1983.

Cuff,E.C. and Payne, G.C.F (ed). *Perspectives in Sociology*. 2nd edition. Allen and Unwin, London, 1984.

Downing, John. *The Media Machine*. Pluto Press Ltd., London, 1980.

Fancher, G. and Myers, G. *Philosophical Essays on Dance*. Dance Horizons, U.S.A., 1981.

Ferguson, Marjorie. *Forever Feminine: Womens' Magazines and the Cult of Femininity*. Heinemann, Educational Books Ltd., London, 1983.

Fiske, John. *Introduction to Communication Studies*. Methuen, London, 1982.

Fiske, John. *Television Culture*. Methuen, London, 1987.

Fiske, John. *Reading Television*. Methuen, London, 1978.

Fransella, F. and Frost, K. *Women on Being a Woman*. Tanstock, London, 1977.

Friedman, Leslie. J. *Sex Role Stereotyping in the Mass Media: an annotated bibliography*. 1977.

Gamman,L. and Marshment,M. *The Female Gaze*. Womens' Press, London, 1988.

Gallagher, Margaret. *Unequal Opportunities: The case of women in the Media*. Unesco Press, France, 1981.

Goffman, Erving. *Gender Advertisements*. MacMillan Pub- lishers Ltd., London, 1979.

Gurevitch, Michael. *Mass Communication and Society*. edited- Curran,J. et. al. 1979.

Hanna, Judith Lynne. *Dance, Sex and Gender*. University of Chicago Press, London, 1988.

Hanna, Judith Lynne. *To dance is Human*. University of Chicago Press, London, 1987.

Haskell, Arnold. *Ballet*. Penguin Books Ltd., London, 1938.

Haug, Frigga. *Female Sexualisation*. Verso, London, 1987.

Kessler, Evelyn. S. *Women: An Anthropological View*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, USA, 1976.

Kessler, S.J. and McKenna, W. *Gender: An Ethnomethodological Approach*. John Wiley and Sons Inc., USA, 1978.

Kirkland, Gelsey. *Dancing on my Grave*. Penguin Books Ltd., London, 1988.

Kritzman, Lawrence. D (ed). *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture*. Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc., USA, 1988.

Klein, Renate.D and Steinberg, Deborah.L. (eds). *Radical Voices: A Decade of Feminist Resistance from Women's Studies International Forum*. Pergamon Press, Great Britan, 1989.

Klein, Viola. *The Feminine Character: history of an ideology*. Keagan Paul, Trench, TRubner and Co., LTD., 1946.

Kumar, K. *Prophecy and Progress: The Sociology of Industrial and Post-Industrial Society*. Penguin Books Ltd., London, 1986.

Lerner, Gerda. *The creation of Patriarchy*. Oxford University Press, New York, 1986.

Lowe, Marian and Hubbard, Ruth (eds.) *Women's Nature Rationalisations of Inequality*. Pergamon Press, USA, 1986.

Mattelart, Michele. *Women, Media and Crises: femininity and disorder*. Comedia Publishing Group, London, 1986.

Moi, Tori. *Sexual Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*. Methuen, USA, 1985.

Newton, Judith.L. et.al.(ed). *Sex and Class in Women's History*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1983.

Oakley, Ann. *Sex, Gender and Society*. Gower Publishing Co. Ltd., Great Britain, 1989.

Orbach, Susie. *Fat is a Feminist Issue*. Arrow Books Ltd., London, 1988.

O Keohane, N. et. al. *Feminist Theory: a critique of ideology*. 1982.

Parekh, Bhikhu. *Marx's Theory of Ideology*. Croom Helm Ltd., London, 1982.

Polhemus, Ted. *Social Aspects of the Human Body*. Penguin Books Ltd., London, 1978.

Poster, Mark. *Foucault, Marxism and History*. Polity Press, Oxford, 1987.

Punter, David.(ed). *Introduction to Contemporary Cultural Studies*. Longman Group Ltd., New York, 1986.

Reeves, Nancy. *Womankind: beyond the stereotypes*. 2nd edition. Aldine Publishing Co., New York, 1982.

Rieter, Rayna. R. (ed). *Toward an anthropology of women*. Monthly Review Press, New York, 1975.

Ray, R., et.al. (Contributors). *Role and Status of Women in India*. Firma KLM (P) Ltd., Calcutta 1978.

Rosaldo, Michelle,Z and Lamphere, Louise. *Women, Culture and Society*. Stanford University Press, California, USA, 1974.

Royce, A.P. *The Anthropology of Dance*. Indiana University press, USA, 1986.

Rowbotham, Shiela. *Dreams and Dilemmas*. Virago Press Ltd., London, 1983.

Ruth, Shiela. *Issues in Feminism: a first course in women's studies*. Houghton Mifflin Company, USA,1980.

Segal, Lynne. *Is the Future Female? Troubled Thoughts on Contemporary Feminism*. Virago Press Ltd., Great Britain, 1988.

Schwarzer, Alice. *After the Second Sex: Conversations with Simone de Beauvoir*. Pantheon Books, New York, 1984.

Sharma,R.N. and Sharma,R.K. *Social Anthropology and Indian Tribes*. J. K. Publishers, UK, 1983. Pp.82-90.

Sharpe, Sue. *Just Like a Girl: How girls learn to be women*. Penguin Books Ltd., Great Britain, 1983.

Shaver,P. and Hendrick,C. *Sex and Gender*. Sage Publications Inc., USA, 1987.

Sorrel, Walter. *Dance in its Time*. Columbia University Press, USA, 1986.

Stacy, Margaret and Price, Marion. *Women: Women, Power and Politics*. Travistock Publications, London, 1983.

Stoll, Clarice Stasz. (ed). *Sexism: Scientific Debates*. Addison - Wesley Publishing Co., USA, 1973.

Tomaselli,K. and Tomaselli, R. *Media Reflections of Ideology*. vol.3, University of Natal Durban, 1985.

Weeks, Jeffrey. *Sexuality*. Travistock Publications, New York, 1986.

Williams, Tannis MacBeth. *The Impact of Television*. Academic Press Inc., London, 1986.

Wober, Mallory and Gunter, Barrie. *Television and Social Control*. Gower Publishing Company Ltd., England, 1988.

Journals and Articles

Agenda. A journal about women and gender. no.3

Agenda editorial collective, Durban, South Africa, 1989.

Adair, C. et.al. Viewing Women: The Second Sex. *DTJ* August, 1989.

Bonbright, Jane.M. The Nutritional Status of Female Ballet Dancers 15-18 Years of Age. *Dance Research Journal 21/2,* Fall 1989.

Burton, Tony. The Silicone Kids. Today, *Sunday Tribune,* 26 October 1990 pg:6.

Daly,Ann. The Balanchine Women. *DTJ* Spring, 1987.

Feminist Review. The past before us - *Twenty years of Feminism.* no.31 Spring '89, Routledge, London.

King, Chris Savage. The Women: Feminism, Dance and Gaby Agis. *DTJ,* 1988.

Nursing RSA. *Juta,* Cape Town, March 1989.

Phelan, Peggy. Feminist Theory, Post- structuralism and Performance. *DTJ* Spring, 1988.

Sugar 'n Spice. *Journal of the NUSAS SRC Women's Group*. Rhodes University, October 1989.

Williams, Drid. What are people doing when they dance? *Momentum*, Vol.1, no.2, Summer, June 1976.