CHAPTER III

METHODS AND METHODOLOGIES

The question of the nature and meaning of dances and dance events, their form and function as Franziska Boas (1944) phrased it, has preoccupied American and European dance anthropologists since they established the founding theories and methodologies for dance anthropology (see for instance Boas, 1944; Kealiinohomoku, 1969/1970; Kurath, 1960; Lange, 1975; Royce, 1977; Snyder, 1992). And it was through a cluster of their trademark ethnographic methods that I have searched for responses to the question of how and why the *Luna* dance event took place.

This chapter begins with a consideration of my choice of research question, design and methods. This study is then situated within a post-positivist framework, and questions about language are addressed which arose from the bilingual nature of the Montréal dance milieu.

The following section describes the parameters of the project in terms of choice of case, timeline, sites, and genres of participants included. Next, the evolution of four core questions that structured interviews, focus groups (and to some degree field observations) is discussed. And then certain limitations of this study are exposed, as well as the ethical considerations and procedures that were built into the research design along with an explanation of how they were carried out.

In the next section, a rationale and account of the various methods employed is elaborated, including how I behaved during fieldwork, entered and left the field, apprehended, recorded and wrote-up the data. Finally I

explain how I managed the coding and interpretation processes. It is only then that I review these methods in terms of several validity criteria in support of the credibility and trustworthiness that were specific to this qualitative research project.

3.1   Research question and design

> The underlying tension in the debates [about contemporary art] that participants find difficult to acknowledge is the necessary survival of the category and institution of 'art' for its own critiques. Why, after all, be 'an artist'? Why not just be done with the whole business? This is a question of genuine anthropological interest. (Marcus and Myers, 1995, p. 9)

> For quite some time now, in North America as in Europe, a controversy has been raging around the subject of contemporary art. It concerns its legitimacy, its intelligibility or simply the question 'why do it' within a society almost entirely determined by economics and information.[i] (Arbour, 1990, from book jacket)

This project arose through the kind of vital questioning about the survival of art as a category of human enterprise that is voiced above by Marcus and Myers, and Arbour. These concerns are currently shared by many of my colleagues in the contemporary dance world. A master's thesis, completed a decade earlier, had led me to an interest in examining artistic dance practices within their cultural contexts and so to the field of dance anthropology. It was there that I discovered the anthropologists' notion of "cultural events." I soon realized that this kind of inquiry for contemporary

dance would require an interdisciplinary "reconfiguring [of] art and anthropology" (Marcus and Myers, 1995, book title). In other words, it would mean reframing a dance performance by way of the dance event concept.

This point of origin led me to an initial research question: "How do Montréal *nouvelle danse* events make meaning for their dancing and non-dancing participants as they are conceived, developed, presented, evaluated and documented?" I soon realized that I would have to begin by establishing boundaries, and so by locating a beginning and ending. This would entail a description of its time and space components, activities and participants. To begin, I organized my research design with the fundamental journalistic elements of who, what, where, when and why (Anfara Jr., Brown and Manione, 2002; Kealiinohomoku, 1976). At the same time, Snyder's hierarchy came into question, and the notion that there were various macro and micro levels to be considered. The question of "who?" was answered by the stories told by *Luna* participants about their backgrounds, identities and roles in the event; the "what?" of *Luna* was a detailed account of various phases and levels of activities gleaned from fieldnotes and artifacts bearing witness to what participants said and did; the notion of "where?" emerged from the data in the forms of the geography, physical locations and special configurations of *Luna*; and asking "when?" led to a discussion of multiple time frames, minute time management and timings at various levels of the event. These initial descriptions and interpretations created a detailed portrait of the dance event, a prerequisite for the task of determining "why" *Luna* took place, in other words what meanings it held for its participants.

Underlying this choice of research question was an urgent desire to understand why Montréal contemporary dancers create and perform for audiences under the kind of adverse physical, social and economic conditions, discussed briefly in Chapter I. And I greatly needed to refresh and

deepen and renew my personal commitment to working in the Montréal dance world through in-depth study.

Perreault (1988a) mused about passion as a motivation for what proved to be a perilous career choice for dancers in his study (1988b). But in drawing the parameters of this dissertation, I decided to look beyond the dancers' lives alone and to consider all "participant groups" and in fact the entire enterprise of dance-making and dance presentation, what insiders tend to call a "choreographic project." This case study encompassed both the "innermost doings" at the center of the event and the informal "peripheral activities" (Rönstrom, 1989). As explained earlier, I finally limited the quest for meaning to two of its possible senses from participants' viewpoints, what I called life meanings and choreographic meanings.

3.2   Ethnographic methods

The concept of dance ethnography employed in this study, briefly defined in the introductory chapter, implies both engaging in extensive fieldwork and composing a written document. It requires a detailed approach to gathering, transcribing, coding, interpreting and writing up data collected in the field which account for cultural contexts, processes that are elaborated in this chapter. It can be distinguished from archival historical research or dance criticism and aesthetics by its copious incorporation of indigenous points of view, evidence gathered from extensive face-to-face encounters with protagonists, as well as observation, note-taking and analysis of what participants said and did over an extended period.

Why did I settle on ethnography as the appropriate and effective methodology? Although in qualitative research form usually follows function (Flick, 1998. p. 5), before my introduction to dance anthropology I wasn't even conscious of the kinds of questions that I have posed in this study. It

had seldom occurred to me to wonder about the socio-cultural meanings of my dancing before my fateful reading of Kealiinohomoku's classic essay (1969/1970). And so in the case of this study of the *Luna* event, question and methodology were crystallized at one and the same moment. While examining my own world view in preparing for this study, I became aware that it was through daily interactions with others in my dance world that I had formulated my beliefs and ways of being in this community. In other words, I came to understand that a pragmatist ethos underlay my thinking, as was true for symbolic interactionists. Embarking on doctoral research was a later-in-life chance I seized in order to concentrate deeply and extensively on the nature of the artistic practice that had long been my life's work. I was also drawn to ethnography because of my desire to experience fieldwork over a long period of time in dance studios and theatres, and to take the time to engage in conversations with the protagonists of a local *nouvelle danse* event.

There were also compelling practical reasons for this choice of methods. Those I have employed here demanded skills and abilities I had already honed throughout the years: conversational interviews, movement observation, and the organization of large quantities of information. The office where I work includes an international dance resource center containing copious documentation on Montréal contemporary dance. And finally, the fields I needed to enter for the *Luna* project were populated with acquaintances, and so relatively easy for me to access, although as will be discussed later, being an insider presented another set of difficulties.

3.3   A post-positivist methodology

In their chapter in *Researching Dance*, Green and Stinson (1999) discussed the concepts of post-positivist research methodology as they applied to dance. It was this text that finally enabled me to imagine drawing

together the various theoretical strands offered by Kealiihonomoku, Snyder, Ronström, Becker, and others.

Based on a framework proposed by Lather (1991), who in turn had applied post-positivist concepts to feminist studies, Green and Stinson (1999) presented a fluid classification of four methodologies according to their purposes: prediction, understanding, emancipation and deconstruction (pp. 92-93). The first category (prediction) was considered synonymous with the dictates of positivism, the scientific approach in the human sciences that presumes the existence of a value-free objective truth, and proposes a hypothesis to be tested, proven and generalized to all other cases. The last three categories of purpose (understanding, emancipation and deconstruction) together composed what Lather termed post-positivist inquiry. As with the *Luna* project, this latter form of research is based on the belief that reality is socially constructed and so subjective. In this post-positivist model for research, the aim is generally to "interpret or understand a particular research context," and one in which the researcher "seeks multiple perspectives and meanings" (Green and Stinson, 1999, p. 94). The research design of this study is post-positivist in this sense, seeking an understanding of a Montréal contemporary dance event within its cultural context, and demonstrating how it manifests various meanings and perspectives for participants.

As for the motive of emancipation, the emphasis on descriptive interpretation in this study doesn't to my mind preclude its potential to have an impact on its participants' consciousness. As did Green (1996), I believe that an awareness of the dynamics of dance events can "equip [its proponents] them with the wherewithal to activate change "(p. 76). For instance, it is through examination of the purposes served by the *Luna* event for its proponents I am certainly hoping to offer up convincing evidence of the social and cultural value of contemporary dance performance to its public and private funding agents, and of course, to the dancers themselves.

As for the deconstructivist agenda, in the perspective that Green and Stinson (1999) have defined above, another intentional sub-plot of this ethnography is to destabilize some of the cherished beliefs of both the dance world itself and society-at-large about contemporary dance events. To these ends, for instance, are a close examination of how a choreographic project was financed, the nature of those dancers' work, how this dance event functioned to make meaning for audiences, and especially how this kind of artistic dance is evaluated and critiqued by its power brokers, the expressive specialists (critics, juries, historians, programming directors). In other words, this study aims to reveal how the dance event functioned to the benefit or the detriment of its various participants.

3.4 Questions of language

Language was a complex issue in this case study because situated in a community that characteristically shifted, often unconsciously, between Canadian English and Québécois. Nearly all *Luna* participants appearing in this study were functionally bilingual, speaking (and writing) both French and English, with varying degrees of fluency. Some of them displayed a propensity for the local patois "Franglais" that intermingles both languages.[1] Interviews were undertaken in whichever one that was native to the person being interviewed, with the exception of Lagacé who declared that he felt it more "natural" for us to be speaking together in English. The focus groups shifted between the two languages, and so I posed questions in both. And after much deliberation about how to organize the two languages within the ethnography in order to foster fluidity for readers, I decided along with my

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[1] My own language skills as an Anglophone American (or as Montréalers say, with English as my mother tongue), fairly fluent in writing and speaking French, allowed me to undertake the translation of all texts in the dissertation from French-language speakers into English.

thesis directors to leave the body of the thesis entirely in English, and to place the original French texts in the endnotes of each chapter.

I hired research assistants to help in the transcription of the interview and focus groups recordings. I asked them to include intonation and expressive sounds (like laughter) when possible. They not only helped me with the burden of this labor-intensive task, but maximized the accuracy of the French portions. These research assistants were dancing and non-dancing university students and graduates with strong language skills: Ray Brown, Karine Denault, Ben Hatcher, Christine LaBon, Nathalie Melançon, Julie Papin, Aden Seaton, and Fleur Tweedle. The German language dance reviews were translated by a native German speaker Julia Bendlin, who was an intern at *Tangente* at the time.

3.5 Parameters of the research design

The methodologies of established ethnographic practice guided the research design process. This section discusses case choice, timeline, settings, types of participants, and core questions that structured interviews, limitations and ethical considerations of the *Luna* study.

3.5.1 Choosing the *Luna* case

At the origin of this study I set out to include several dance events, hoping to be able to identify a prototypical Montréal dance event. But I eventually reconciled with the choice to limit the research project to a single case study as a practical matter, in part because of the massive quantity of potential data available for the *Luna* event. But it also soon became evident that narrowing the study to one event would be the most efficient way of addressing in-depth the complexities of my research question.

Another motive for the choice of *Luna* was its representation of a group of large-scale and highly valued Montréal contemporary dance companies[2], and I reasoned that a company of this size and proportion would offer a particularly vast and dense data pool about the making and presenting of contemporary dance events, and also about the widespread international touring network in which it toured. Based on past *O Vertigo* company projects, I knew that *Luna* would involve an extensive sampling of the various kinds of participants who people this contemporary dance world (critics, students, dancers, technical director, artistic collaborators, funding and touring agents, programmers, and so on). Furthermore, I knew that it would offer a substantial quantity of artifacts (posters, press materials, schedules, photos, CD-ROM, film, etc.).

This choice of case was also influenced, as Flick (1998) posited, by matters of convenience (p. 69). For instance, there was the mature, patient personality and also willingness of Ginette Laurin to "let me in" and so to tolerate my pervasive presence in her environment with graciousness. She and I had nurtured a warm, collegial relationship over the years that seemed to foster trust and respect from the outset. Laurin warned me at our first interview that her creative work with dancers might sometimes become a private matter, requiring me to leave the studio. (I reassured her that this would cause no problems.) But in practice, not only did Laurin accept my presence everywhere that I followed her and her company members, but she even told me on several occasions that I had been missed when absent! And yet another practical element in my choice was the fact that the time constraints of the *Luna* project corresponded to those of my doctoral program and research calendar.

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[2]This group includes choreographers like Marie Chouinard, Édouard Lock and Jean-Pierre Perreault.

3.5.2 Timeline of the research project

In order to determine the nature and meaning of the *Luna* event, I
looked beyond the performance event itself on a particular evening to
examine the larger time span of its preparatory phase and probable, imagined
aftermath. The fieldwork took place over 17 months, with about 250 hours
spent in the field in all, including the pilot project (see field log in Appendix
C). The entire process of data collection occurred over an even wider period
of time, nearly three years, which began with four exploratory interviews in
July 1998. I brought the data collection to a formal close the day I received
answers to my interview questions from a dance presenter in Germany, by
way of email correspondence, on May 5, 2002.

After the exploratory interviews, in which a flexible framework of four
core questions was tested for clarity and pertinence to the research question
and participants, I made initial contacts with the *O Vertigo* company
and completed the first of two interviews with choreographer Ginette Laurin.
I then drafted a written agreement between the dance company and myself.
We undertook an initial negotiation, consequently revised and signed by
Laurin and her administrator (text of contract in Appendix A). It was only
then, in August 2000, that fieldwork on *Luna* began in earnest, in the *O
Vertigo* studios, with observations of administrative planning for the project,
without the dancers present. The dancers later returned to rehearse for
summer tours to New York City and Jacob's Pillow with previous
choreographic work.

I also seized the opportunity in the summer of 2000 to undertake a 5-
day pilot study during *O Vertigo*'s week-long summer residency at *Jacob's
Pillow* in the United States, and before creative work had begun for *Luna*. It

was in the relaxed, rural setting of "The Pillow" that I developed an approach to carrying out audience focus groups, had my first informal conversations with Laurin and was able to observe a public interview between Laurin and "resident dance scholar" Szporer, a Montréal dance writer who was also interviewed individually for this study. This preliminary work was followed by five months of fieldwork, including observation and interviews during the intensive creative process period for *Luna* in fall 2000 (during which I came in three times a week for 2-3 hours) and for the initial European performances in February 2001. I later followed the *Luna* project through several other stages of development: a filming session and final rehearsals before the fall 2001 tour, their August 2002 pedagogical workshop in which they taught movement from *Luna*, and a second Montréal performance. Although no longer in the field, I kept track of *Luna* touring, collecting additional press articles and touring schedules, until its last performance in Prague in November 2003.

As an administrative entity, the *Luna* dance event officially ended with its last scheduled performance in Prague. But the effects of this event most certainly continued in the short and/or long term memory of some of its participants (I still come across people speaking about *Luna* at this writing several years later). And like all other Canadian non-profit arts organizations that receive government funding, *O Vertigo* was obliged to write final administrative reports that would have an effect on future company funding. Through past examples, it also seemed likely that some dance researchers might discuss *Luna* in their writing at a future date. But the only traces of "dance event aftermath" that were included in this study were 41 collected newspaper articles (21 are discussed in section 8.7), written by journalists and critics during the first two cycles of touring. There were also hints of how spectators might continue to think and talk about the *Luna* performance, recorded in fragments of conversation I overheard and recorded in field notes

one night as they left the theatre after the reprise presentation of *Luna* in Montréal.

3.5.3 Types of sites and spaces

The *Luna* dance event was multi-sited (Amit, 2000), with a "home field" in Montréal at the *O Vertigo* studios and the *Monument-National* where they presented their local season of performances. But the event was multi-sited in the sense that the choreography was re-mounted in a multitude of theatres in many cities and countries. Although I was only able to accompany them to their Chicoutimi presentation in the Lac St-Jean region of Québec, my own travels as a dance presenter and scholar gave me the chance to interview several of the dance presenters who sponsored performances of *Luna* in New York City, Zurich, Lucerne and Düsseldorf.

My research took me mainly to participants' workplaces and *Luna*'s performance spaces, but also occasionally to some of the places where they lived and socialized. For instance, certain interviews took place in participants' homes, their favorite cafés and even on a city bus (Appendix D). I entered the offices not only of *O Vertigo*, but of a dance funding agent and a New York dance presenter as well. At the *O Vertigo* workplace I stationed myself alternately in the rehearsal studios, kitchen, entrance hall, office spaces, and even the dressing rooms. At the theaters where Luna was performed (included in this study) I found observation posts in backstage wings, lobbies and audience cafés, audience seating areas, and artists' dressing and green rooms. And the CINARS performing arts marketplace took me into a downtown ballroom in Montréal's Queen Elizabeth Hotel.

3.5.4 Genres of participants

Within the *Luna* dance event framework, I have included as participants those who were "caught up" in some way, even if as peripheral on-lookers. By seeking out the stories and points of view of as many genres of participants as time and resources allowed, I felt that the most dense and complex understanding might be articulated, if never complete and comprehensive. All agreed with no hesitation to the inclusion of their real names in the final write-up.

At the core of the *Luna* event were those who mounted, performed and attended the *Luna* performance: the performing artists, audience, critics, and event personnel, as well as the staff and technical crew of the theatre building. But within the framework of the extended dance event (which included preparation and aftermath), other genres of participants were also seen as part of the wider network of cooperation, in Becker's sense (1982), those who were needed to produce the choreographic project but also those who were peripheral on-lookers.

More specifically, the vocational artists interviewed included eight *O Vertigo* dancers (the dance event's "dancing participants") including an apprentice and a replacement dancer, and also of course the choreographer and rehearsal director. The non-dancing artistic collaborators who were interviewed included the costume and light/image designer, and some of *O Vertigo* staff members (the general and the technical director, and a board member). Among the other non-dancing participants interviewed were also four dance presenters from different cities who had produced *Luna*, one *dance animateur*, four dance specialist writers, three researchers and a funding agent. As well, 22 audience members and 10 dance students from the company's summer workshop attended focus groups for this study (see Appendix D and Tables 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.4.1 and 5.4.2).

Also appearing in this study were *Luna* participants who were not interviewed, but appeared only in fieldnotes. For example, audiences were

observed as they arrived at, watched and exited performances, informal showings and marketplace showcases. I seized opportunities to engage in informal spontaneous conversations, for instance with two company dancers, the initial composer and the sound designer. I also conversed informally with a group of international presenters attending the *Luna* showcase at CINARS, six members of the *O Vertigo* administrative staff, and a second dance funding agent. At various points, this study also incorporated technical crews and box office personnel at the theaters in Montréal and Chicoutimi where *Luna* was performed, "front of house" staff, and even workers in the offices next door to *O Vertigo*'s studios. And as noted in the previous section, twenty-two dance writers were included in the study by way of the texts they had written about the *Luna* performance.

3.5.5   The four core questions

> "I'm not sure I understand the question […]" Jerry Antonyk,
> audience member (FG1)

As spectator Antonyk indicates in this offhand remark, interviewing participants was more like an improvised conversation than a question-and-answer session, a dialogue in which meaning was continually negotiated. Four "families of questions" anchored the interviews and focus group discussions in light of their pertinence to my research. But the way in which they were articulated and functioned changed with each conversation. These core questions concerned participants' backgrounds, motivations, values and meaning-making processes in view of their participation in the *Luna* event.

Focus group audience members, but not those interviewed individually[3], were requested to answer questions on survey sheets about basic social characteristics (Appendix E). There were no precisely worded questionnaires to guide either the conversations, only notes about the nature of the four questions and their mutations as the study moved forward. As each focus group and interview progressed, I altered the wording of the questions and invented new strategies in the face of respondents' confusion, hesitancy or in response to their level of understanding. For instance, terms like "life meanings" and "choreographic interpretation" needed clarification at several junctures.

The first question that was posed to all participants and remained relatively stable throughout was a variation on the request for them to "tell the story of their first contact with the dance world" and/or how they initially became interested in professional dance" (for the professionals). A corollary sub-question asked of spectators was "what or who brought you to dance performances, and to *Luna* in particular?" I presumed that since attending contemporary dance performances was not a practice engaged in by all Montréalers from the time of birth, nor a systematic part of every child's education, there was a story to be told about a person and or an incident that instigated their first experience.

A second question was addressed only to *Luna*'s professional arts participants (artists, personnel, presenters and expressive specialists). I asked them how they entered the field of work, to tell about their training, and how they perceived their role in the *Luna* event. This line of questioning evoked stories about a complex series of life events that led to the adoption of dance world professions, and sometimes contained the seeds of answers to the third question about the meaning of their practice in the dance world.

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3 In retrospect it would have been useful to use the survey sheets with all participants and not only focus group members. But fortunately most of the survey questions were answered during the interviews with only a few follow-up calls to complete the tables.

The third question was about life meanings, and took on different forms for various kinds of participants. Dance professionals, students, and event personnel were generally asked about how their work in the dance world had brought meaning to their lives, and also to articulate the particular kind of meaning. For those who were more experienced spectators, the question was reformulated to ask why it was that they continued to attend, and what it meant to them in the course of their lives to go to dance performances. As for those who had just seen their first contemporary dance presentation with *Luna*, I inquired whether they now felt inclined to attend another dance performance in the future and why, or why not.

The fourth question concerned the meaning of the *Luna* performance, in terms of both the performance event and the dance work itself, for those who had attended. This question endured many mutations, finally becoming a cluster of ever-shifting questions and sub-questions. Two distinct themes were eventually conceived which focused first on the genres and levels of meaning of *Luna* which were experienced or formulated, and second on the strategies for meaning-making employed during the performance. This last question proved the most problematic. For instance, some of the spectators thought that by asking them about 'meaning' I was implying that they tell me about a narrative storyline for *Luna* (not my intention). And so because the *Luna* choreography was poetic and impressionistic in its structure and content, focus group members continued to occasionally express confusion about the question. I consequently began asking simply, alternately in French and in English, what they had experienced during the performance – something like "what happened for you as you watched the performance." I also tried framing this question in terms of "the kinds of relationships we have with these strange and abstract movements," "some kind of sense you make for yourself," and "levels or aspects of the dance" being watched. This category of questioning, when posed to the dancers, was a matter of asking

how they motivated and found meaning for the *Luna* movements during creative sessions and performances.

These questions also formed one of the bases for coding and organizing the findings and contributed to the structure of Chapters V, VII and VIII. Although they remained open-ended when asked, they clearly guided the flow and chronology of ideas in the discussions and interviews.

3.5.6   Limitations of this study

There was so much more I had intended to accomplish: a second case study of younger artists (for which I completed the fieldwork and interviews), additional interviews with yet more genres of participant, additional fieldwork such as traveling to Europe with the first company tour. But time and money restraints, missed opportunities, and the unpredictable nature of human interactions set limits to the scope of this study. There also came a point of saturation in the data when additional data or fieldwork seemed no longer to yield new insights. I am thinking here, in particular, of data in the form of 31 interviews, four focus groups and 37 press articles. As I reviewed the transcripts one day I realized that the themes and concepts arising from new data were becoming redundant. And so, while it is true that another set of observations and conversations may have yielded a different or more comprehensive narrative, I believed that a sufficiently wide array of information had been amassed for the purposes of this study.

There were certain pieces of information I was unable to obtain, and a few rare occasions for observation which were closed to me. The most crucial data that proved unobtainable was the detailed operating budget of *O Vertigo,* written up by the executive director. Even though there were other channels through which I might have persisted in finding out this public

information, it was made clear to me that Lagacé didn't want this information to be published in a dissertation. He did however offer me a summary of the project budget for the *Luna* project itself (in Appendix M) and a few crucial facts and figures like the amount of the total operating budget. I wasn't invited to the "delicate" board of directors' meeting, an interview between Laurin and some film producers was announced to me as private, and I didn't enter in on a meeting between Lagacé and Canada Council dance agent Léger after the door was closed. As agreed to in the original consent form (Appendix A), by verbal agreement and because of ethical standards of the field of anthropology, I took care not be where participants didn't want me to be.

There were occasions when I might have followed the company on tour to Europe to New York City, or to their technical residency at the Montréal *Maison de la Culture Mercier*. I did make an attempt to travel with them to Europe, but some of the touring dates were cancelled, which would have prolonged my stay to an untenable two-week stretch with no performances in the middle. In the end it was the demands of my professional life and the limits of my financial means that made these field trips impossible. It is important to point out that I undertook this doctoral work at a point when consecrating my time exclusively to the research project would have caused a survival crisis for the dance presentation space for which I was artistic director.

I would have liked to include, in view of enriching and widening the data pool, further in-depth interviews with yet more central and peripheral participants (three other *Luna* dancers, the sound designer, box office personnel, security guard, family members of artists, private corporate sponsors, etc.). The list of potential participant interviews (like the two company dancers who cancelled our meetings for lack of time) was still long, and growing. Dancer, Donald Weikart declined being interviewed because, as he put it in an informal conversation, he was already sufficiently

analytical. There was still no official end in sight for the touring of *Luna* which was still in negotiation, and I continued to collecting the previews and reviews. But there came a point when time constraints set down by the university program obliged me to move on to the coding and interpretation phase. And so I passed over the chance to follow the later "legs" of the *Luna* tour and to gather views of *Luna* from yet more audiences, presenters and their staffs in Hungary, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Italy and the Czech Republic. Even as *O Vertigo* was on the road, data for the Luna study was in the later phases of being shaped into the final document.

In the end, this was a single case study undertaken within the limited period of one choreographic project. The original plan involved a second contrasting case study, as mentioned above, one with young artists and an urban dance aesthetic. This data was never analyzed and the plan to include them was abandoned because of academic deadlines looming.

Finally, the far-reaching social implications of this dance event for Montréal society-at-large are suggested but never fleshed out in the course of the *Luna* study. Dance event professionals are seen as doing useful work, and dance events as meaningful occasions for all participants. And within the narrative that portrays the protagonists and the goings-on there are various kinds of discussion about social issues, values and views. But the scope of this project did not extend, at this time, towards an extensive analysis of how this event was perceived by event outsiders, nor of the way in which *Luna* was emblematic of its social environment.

3.5.7   Ethical considerations

I undertook fieldwork in an overt manner fully disclosing my role and the aims and repercussion of the study at all first encounters with participants. These actions are actually required by the code of ethics of

organizations like the American Anthropological Association who have posted on their website statements such as "Anthropologists must do everything in their power to protect the physical, social, and psychological welfare and to honor the dignity and privacy of those studied" (2006).

Consent forms, written agreements and interview authorization forms based on practices already established by the *Université du Québec* were adapted to my study, presented to and signed by all participants before undertaking interviews and focus groups (Appendix A). The interview forms included a short description of the research project and the possibilities of its future distribution. I also asked permission from participants either individually or as a group, whichever was most practical at the time, before undertaking observations and fieldnote writing, taking photos or video clips.

At the request of choreographer Laurin, I agreed never to insist on being present at meetings or rehearsals she deemed private (although a couple of unintentional mistakes were made in the field, with apologies). I applied this model of behavior for all situations I encountered in view of creating trusting relationships, even when it meant that certain events and information wouldn't be accessible. It was necessary to take into account that because I was an insider, most participants included in this study were dance world colleagues with whom I would continue to interact even after leaving the field. In another vein, Laurin added a clause to the consent form that I found most intriguing. It read that she would not review any of our interviews or my writing about her work (in Appendix A). As Laurin explained her request, because of her commitment to the Automatist credo she believed strongly that over-analysis might endanger her intuitive processes. I felt at once a sense of disappointment that the central protagonist in the *Luna* event would never read my story about her work and so verify its pertinence, but realized that I was also experiencing a feeling of freedom from her scrutiny.

I resolved not to include quotes or information in the final write-up that were deemed objectionable by their speakers. In order to assure this, I mailed paper copies of their interview transcriptions to all of the 39 who were interviewed, giving them the chance to inspect and change them if they so desired. Among the eight interviews that were in fact returned to me, much to my delight, six had inscribed on their transcripts further reflections (e.g. Demers in Appendix N) rather than eliminating material.

In this study I attempted to "democratize the narrative" by giving as much weight to a multitude of participants' accounts as to my own, even though it remained in the end my story of the dance event. And so, as often as was judicious, I incorporated participants' precise words and manner of speaking into the text of the study. Among these citations are excerpts from interviews, focus groups, and conversation overheard during fieldwork.

3.6   Fieldwork

I entered the field on April 7, 2000 by way of a phone call to set up a first meeting with choreographer Laurin. My immediate goal was to establish her willingness to have me undertake the research project with her company. It was crucial to begin quickly, as the planning phase for *Luna* was already underway. I entered with a preliminary set of questions, theoretical ideas and methods, but without a precise analysis grid at the onset. This section tells the story of the fieldwork (see detailed log in Appendix C) in which I developed an effective way of being in the field, discovered the type of participant observation that the *Luna* study required, forged a trusting relationship with event participants, and went about collecting various kinds of data.

3.6.1   "Ways of being" in the field and approach to participant observation

Before entering the field and at the suggestion of my thesis director Dr. Beaudry, I created a map of my own pre-conceived ideas about the Montréal *nouvelle danse* milieu. This exercise of self-reflexivity helped to locate my insider presumptions, allowing me to take into account and eventually helped me to move beyond what I had long taken for granted (Giurchescu, 1999; Koutsouba, 1999). But even if organizing dance performances was my vocation, the inner workings of a large-scale dance company were still a something of a mystery for me.

The role of the non-intrusive, quietly observing fieldworker was a novel experience for me and required a marked transformation of my characteristic behaviors. I soon acquired a particular "way of being in the field" by assuming the demeanor of an introspective observer and seeking out a place to situate myself physically that was "out of the way" of the goings-on (a place which I sometimes had to shift suddenly with little warning). I continued working to make my presence as unimposing as possible, and took special care not to react to (and so to influence) the artistic and administrative choices being made. In our second and last interview, Laurin reassured me that I had indeed found a quality of presence that was sufficiently discreet:

> […] we sometimes didn't even realize that you were there. And then "Whoops! Dena is here!" (Laurin and Davida laugh together.) We got used to your presence. It became part of the process. (They laugh together again.) You were also quite discrete. We didn't censure ourselves. […] You became part of the process I think because you didn't react at all, and that's good. You didn't become a spectator. It could be bad to have someone react either positively or negatively, because it gives us cues right away. I was able to forget that there was someone in the studio. [ii] (I-GL2)

Conscious and intuitive decisions about how to observe and in what way I might participate were tempered by the views and methods described by Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995) and Walsh (1998). In retrospect it seems to me that my role became what Junker (in Walsh, 1998) called "observer as participant" in which I fostered observation with limited participation (pp. 220-3). For instance, on several occasions the artists and staff drew me actively into the creative process or included me in their socializing by asking for advice, opinions or casually conversing. But I attempted for the most part to remain a quiet observer who only occasionally asked questions. *O Vertigo* dancers took to perceiving me as a company archivist or scribe (perhaps because they saw me as always watching them and writing). I made jottings and headnotes almost continuously while observing.

My vantage point as an observer vacillated between that of an insider and an outsider. I am already native to this Montréal contemporary dance world in my multiple dance world roles. It is as a dance presenter that I had previously built rapport with most of the artistic professionals in this study. And so on several occasions *O Vertigo* dancers, and even Laurin herself one time, approached me during fieldwork to talk about issues surrounding the presentation of their work. At moments like this my dance presenter and ethnographer roles became blurred. This familiarity of an insider incurred some of the problems recounted by Giurchescu (1999), and particularly her warning about the danger of taking noteworthy details for granted, and the politics of being a native researcher who is hopelessly entangled inside a mesh of long-term professional relationships which she wouldn't be able to put behind her after leaving the field (pp. 45-46).

But it was in my new role as university doctoral student that I finally learned how to gain the emotional and intellectual distance necessary to reflect, interpret and analyze the goings on. I was best able to do this when

in the least familiar or peripheral positions: e.g. observation from the backstage wings during a performance, sitting far back in a studio corner during creative process. While in the field, I consciously censored my "insider impulses" to do things that I am used to doing, such as massaging a dancer's tense shoulders or offering my own interpretations during audience focus groups. And there were moments when I felt as if a participant in the dance event, by virtue of being its scribe and recorder. This would happen when someone turned to me suddenly to ask (often playfully) something like "Dena, did you get that?" or "You didn't really write that down Dena, did you?!"   It wasn't until over a year after I left the field that I was able to see myself as "separate" from the data stacked on my office floor, and so to review it more objectively in a contemplative frame of mind.

3.6.2   Entering the field, establishing rapport and leaving the field

I entered the field in the *O Vertigo* studios and offices with a first meeting with choreographer Laurin on March 3, 2000. Administrator Follian asked me to provide a schedule of my proposed visits to be reviewed and approved. Although I sought a careful balance between openness and discretion, in the early phase I sometimes found myself walking into situations in which my presence was awkward, made clear by a startled or disapproving glance by those in the room. It was Follian who continued to act as official gatekeeper. As time went on and my presence became familiar through frequent, regular visits, it seemed clear that people were becoming accustomed to my frequent presence and took less and less notice of my appearances and disappearances. Those who proved in the long run to be the most crucial key informants in the long run were *O Vertigo* secretary Faucher and company dancers Rodrigue and Demers.

The most difficult of all rapports to develop, as I quickly discovered during the pilot project at Jacob's Pillow, was with the audience itself during the public performance evenings in view of holding focus groups on the spot, because there was so little time to approach them before the performance and so to convince them to join me at the end of the evening. As it turned out, some spectators did fulfill their promise to me to attend the focus group, but others quickly disappeared after the performance, obliging me to pull in new members just as the audience was exiting the theatre. It was not an easy task.

With some negotiation I gained access to the wings, dressing rooms and other backstage areas of theaters, but more easily than I expected to because of the technical directors' cooperation. I was also allowed to sit in on staff and production meetings at *O Vertigo*. After becoming familiar with my project and its non-judgmental and non-critical objectives, most participants seemed even pleased to have me observing them and even eager to tell me their stories.

My last "official" day of fieldwork at the dance company studios was technically on March 7, 2002 when I came for a second and last interview with choreographer Laurin. I had really left the field in my mind after the Chicoutimi tour on November 3 and 4, 2001, but was also unable to resist doing additional fieldwork on October 12, 2002 during the reprise Montréal performance of *Luna*. And yes, I did feel the loss acutely, just as the methods guides had predicted. I had become deeply attached to the *O Vertigo* family and the meditative observation, writing, and transcribing processes. Fieldwork with the *Luna* dance event had proved an obsessive passion and structural element of my life for over two years.

3.6.3   Types of data and methods for data gathering

During the course of my fieldwork, the data I gathered took many forms. As already discussed, I made fieldnotes, recorded and transcribed in-depth interviews and focus group conversations, took photographic and videographic images, collected various kinds of documents from the dance company, and examined other researchers' studies and writings on *O Vertigo* and Ginette Laurin.

3.6.3.4   Fieldnotes

I jotted notes with quick intensity, writing copiously and continuously by hand with pen and paper (see example in Appendix N) throughout every visit to the field. After some trial and error during the pilot project, I reserved the use of a tape recorder only for formally scheduled interviews and focus groups in order to avoid ending up with a quantity of audiotape that I thought would be too massive for me to transcribe and interpret with the time and resources at hand.

The fieldnote write-up (example in Appendix N) on computer was usually done on the morning just after the fieldwork session, and the notes made in the field were augmented by still vivid headnotes (mental memories of field observations). Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995) explained the process this way, "The ethnographer may not only make mental notes or 'headnotes' to include certain events in full fieldnotes, but he may also write down, in the form of jotting or scratch notes, abbreviated words and phrases to use later to construct full fieldnotes" (pp. 18-19). My fieldnotes tended towards complete sentences and full quotes, with occasionally fragmentary jottings.

I also kept a fieldnote log summary (Appendix C) of the date, time and main activity for each day's field session. It was eventually divided into seven chronological episodes: (a) first contact; (b) administrative planning; (c) summer rehearsals; (d) Jacob's Pillow; (e) creative process, CINARS showcase, Mercier residency, first Montréal performances; (f) summer

workshop; (g) Chicoutimi tour. Included in fieldnotes were five types of observations written up in separate paragraphs for future coding requirements: (a) direct observations about the nature of the research settings and their inhabitants; (b) naturally occurring conversations and activities; (c) impromptu, unexpected chats with participants; (d) my own field notebook (personal reflections); and (e) analytical commentary.

My choices of what to record were strongly informed by the research question about the nature and meaning of the event. The note-taking process was as open-ended and intuitive as it was rational, much in the spirit of what Jorgensen (1980) termed "a logic of discovery" (p. 8) [4].

One day during the pilot project, the intensity of my continual writing provoked *O Vertigo* dancer Demers to ask me what I could possibly be writing about all the time, what could be of interest as I watched them going about their ordinary activities as dancers. In response to her question I decided to offer a copy of my session-by-session fieldnote "write-ups" to the dancers in the kitchen of the *O Vertigo* studios, as an early form of member check. On the front of this copy of the fieldnote book I invited readers to offer their comments on blank sheets I inserted in between each page. I came across dancers Riede and Demers one day laughing and chatting as they read the fieldnote book, while dancer Weikart told me that he had deliberately avoided reading it because already too self-conscious about what he was doing. Riede and Demers told me that some of the other dancers had also taken to reading them and they eventually wrote responses into the book (see Riede's comments in Appendix N). Demers wrote about the way in which reading the fieldnotes had made her self-conscious of the effects of her behavior on others:

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[4]Jorgensen (1989) advocates a research procedure which aims to build theories grounded in concrete human experiences. human realities...[and so] requires a flexible, open-ended process (1989).

I haven't yet written anything but I have always followed the development of the fieldnotes. It's at once impressive and almost frightening that someone casts an anthropological eye on us. With each reading, I continue to ask myself why it is that this or that detail is so important and how it can enlighten an aspect of the thesis. On the other hand, reviewing the events of our lives even as they are unfolding gives me the awareness of two levels of reality at once, causing me to reflect on my actions. Sometimes I hadn't imagined the impact that a gesture or something spoken could have on those around me and how that might be interpreted by someone who was observing them. (to be continued…) (Fieldnote comment written by Mélanie Demers, November 24, 2001)

3.6.4.2   Focus groups

After attempting unsuccessfully to convince theater directors at Jacobs' Pillow to allow me to insert a questionnaire in audience programs during the pilot study[5], I opted instead for a less ambitious and more qualitative method of gathering information about audiences. This entailed setting up small post-performance focus groups aimed at bringing together six to ten participants for a guided discussion immediately after each performance. I was looking for enough diversity (in age, dance experience, etc.) among focus group participants to create a wide span of points of view and demographics, and a group size that was small enough to allow individual participation in the conversations.

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[5] The difficulties I encountered while attempting to do an audience survey during the pilot project included: (a) resistance and finally refusal of the public relations director to allow insertion of audience surveys into the program; (b) the impossibility of finding research assistants at the facility; and (c) the audience's tendency to leave quickly at the end of the performance for the drive home to their summer cottages.

I soon realized that creating audience focus groups meant in practice finding a way to approach strangers as they waited in the lobby to enter the theater space. At each of the three performances in which I did fieldwork and organized the groups, I obtained a promise of participation from about twice as many people as showed up. But I managed to obtain my optimum target of six to 10 people of various ages and dance-going experiences by pulling in a few more people just as the audience was leaving the theater. All who participated in the focus groups agreed to be audio-recorded, fill out survey forms (Appendix E) named and quoted in future research dissemination.

Four focus groups were organized with 22 participants in all: (a) on August 16, 2001 with ten dance workshop students; (b) on September 22 and 23, 2001, with six and seven audience participants respectively, who were attending *Luna* at the Monument-National; and (c) on November 3, 2001 with nine audience participants attending the *Luna* performance at the *Théâtre de Saguenay*. It proved challenging to convince spectators to commit more time at the theatre than they had originally scheduled into their evening. And gaining the cooperation of the performance managers in finding a private, quiet space for the groups seemed easy at first, but in actuality became problematic as previous agreements I made with them were neglected or broke down. But in the end, the advantage of this method, as promised by research methodology theorists, proved to be the lively character of the group conversations in which interaction among people created a dynamic exchange and generation of ideas. In their comments following the focus groups, those who attended remarked that the conversation had been a welcome chance to further socialize with other spectators and so to exchange their reactions to the performances.

At the beginning of the sessions I asked focus group members if they would be willing to fill out short survey sheets, and that this was optional (see Appendix E). Everyone complied. In these questionnaires I asked them to write their name and to record their gender, age, vocation/work, current

place of residence and whether urban, suburban or rural, approximate income, level of education and specialization, and how they would describe their ethnic/cultural identity. The last question proved difficult to pose in such a way that it would not offend anyone's cultural sensibility in these culture-sensitive times. The final question included two concepts: that of ethnicity and of the more ambiguous idea of "belonging to a cultural group." In formulating this phrase I was thinking of Royce's still resonant examination (1982) of ethnic identity, by which she means how and why people come to adhere to groups with shared styles, values and/or histories.

From these questionnaires I was able to compile and cross-reference data. Along with additional information gleaned through the focus group discussions, I constructed grids to summarize group members' characteristics (Tables 5.1.1 and 5.1.2). These compilations of characteristics contributed information that assisted me in the interpretation of members' dance views.

3.6.4.3   In-depth interviews and casual conversations

Thirty-one semi-structured in-depth interviews (Appendix D) were tape-recorded with a wide range of participants. I searched for a balance between distanced and disinterested interview techniques and, as an insider to the dance world I was studying, came to favor the more interactive style I call "a conversation between colleagues" rather than a strict question-and-answer format with no discussion.

Several interviews were not pre-planned, but rather spontaneous occurrences that took place in the heat of the action as unforeseen opportunities arose (e.g. with producers and audience members during the CINARS showcase event in the *O Vertigo* studios). These were usually of short duration, from 10 to 20 minutes, because of the time limits imposed by the situation. But the majority of the interviews were pre-arranged, and

lasted from 30 to 90 minutes. I gave each interviewee as much time as they needed and desired to fully disclose their story. There were also numerous casual conversations with participants, short exchanges that I tried to record in my fieldnotes as often as possible as jottings or headnotes, for instance an accidental moment that I found myself standing beside Laurin on the metro.

And one day when re-reading the interview coding I came upon a remark that sharpened my perception of the interviewing process. To my question about the meaning of art making in his life, *Luna*'s visual designer Morgenthelar replied "I think [it is] because we don't want to be lonely." And then as an afterthought he uttered the fateful remark: "That's just another thing I just made up (he laughs, Dena laughs). I make up a lot of things when we talk!" (I-AM). I suddenly became conscious that each interview had been a kind of free-form story-telling session in which incidents were recounted spontaneously, on the spur of the moment. Positivist scientific precision and repeatability were not in question in this methodology. It became suddenly clear how true it is that this kind of research could only propose one set of stories and answers at any given moment.

3.6.4.4 Photos, videoclips, CD ROM and other documents

I periodically took photos and made 15-second video clips with a digital camera, and collected various kinds of documents and *Luna* artifacts. Photos were taken in the *O Vertigo* studios and offices and at their booth during CINARS, but not at performance occasions because of privacy issues and laws. The dance company also gave me a copy of the professionally made videotape of the *Luna* choreography, the official promotional photos and the press kit on paper and in the form of a CD ROM (Appendix R). There were also various kinds of documents collected in the field, sometimes in their original form and other times in photocopy: letters from students,

choreographic notes, various lists and schedules, cue sheets, reviews and previews, grant applications and budgets, dancers' notes (detailed list in Appendix B).

3.6.4.5   Secondary textual sources

As discussed in Chapter II section 2.7, a wealth of writing and research was available and which portrayed choreographer Laurin within the socio-historical period in which she worked. These published materials took the form of: (a) monographies about Laurin, (b) histories that included Laurin and/or wrote about historical contexts for her work, (c) critical writing, interviews, newspaper reviews of *Luna*, and (d) sociological studies about audience attitudes and identities in *Luna*'s dance world. Some of the authors and writers were integrated directly into the study as dance event participants in the role of expressive specialists, a notion developed further in Chapter V section 5.5.3. Others are referred to throughout the thesis as arts researchers whose findings have been integrated into the theoretical basis and in support of my own findings in this study.

3.7   Data write-up, coding and interpretation

Interview and focus group recordings, field notes and texts from books and newspapers were systematically typed up in the form of a computer document with a future coding process in mind. In other words, I began thinking systematically from the onset in terms of organizing units of information into separate paragraphs that would later be tagged with code themes. As I typed up the field notes, for instance, I thought in terms of separating three kinds of writing into different sections: (a) a journal of personal experiences and observation, (b) analytic commentary and (c) field observations.

During the first fieldwork period in the summer of 2000 with *O Vertigo*, I began the process of data interpretation by organizing a filing system for data logs and field notebooks. As fieldwork progressed, my own interpretive commentary became more and more predominant in handwritten field notes and particularly in their computer write-up. This led in time to the emergence and identification of themes, ideas and patterns that were later applied in the coding process. Analytic kinds of reflections, in the sense of dividing things into their constituent elements in order to examine them, eventually predominated in my manner of observing and taking field notes.

The process of coding moved back-and-forth from computer operations to paper-and-pencil notations and mappings. The first stage was the most time-consuming and demanding, as I tagged each unit of information (paragraphs in this case) with one or several thematic code names. In the course of doing this, the node tree of themes and sub-themes began to take shape. After all data was coded, I made a printout of each code theme's contents on paper, which consolidated every entry throughout the data. Then I undertook close readings of this content, making notes in the margins of the paper to further reduce the quantity of data. These hand-written notes were then used as a basis to create mappings of ideas, themes and their relationships that formed the basis for the final write-up on computer again.

I chose the NUDIST software for qualitative analysis because of its compatibility with my MacIntosh computer, even though data analysis in this system is limited to organization in the form of a hierarchical "tree of themes" with main theme (parent) and sub-theme (child) nodes. This software also allowed for the making notes about the content of each node and its relationship to the others. NUDIST also permitted the creation of "free nodes" that didn't need to be positioned within the tree immediately but could be transferred there as necessary. The free-floating nodes gave me

crucial freedom to imagine themes that did not connect neatly to the whole scheme at first. Some were never integrated into the tree at all. The latter mostly became useful as the final document was being written.

I created three distinct coding schema for each of the three data types, each with its own index: (a) one for the interviews, (b) another for the field notes, (c) and a third one for the focus groups (Appendix P). The choice of the main themes for the entire mass of data about the dance event (but not the research process), and eventual organization of Chapters II-VIII, followed Kealiinohomoku's structure: who, what, where, when and the two forms of why. The data also yielded information about the research process that was later developed into sections and integrated into the content of this chapter.

I began the coding process with the audience focus group data, because although only 22 people were recorded in the conversations, it was the smallest mass of data to handle in view of a first coding experience. Three sub-sections were formed concerning the focus groups themselves, the first two included descriptive elements of the dance event and it's activities. In the third sub-section, the four core questions were used as a template to organize the audience focus group nodes: (a) how they had made their first contact with dance, (b) why they continued to attend, (c) what meaning dance-going had brought to their lives and (d) the ways in which they had apprehended and interpreted the *Luna* performance. Certain themes arose unexpectedly as I progressed during the coding, about the lack of dance performances in smaller cities for instance (one which remained in the free node section).

As for the interviews, they were initially organized into 11 participant types (either individuals like the choreographer or groups as with the dancer), with second level subcategories concerning their role in the event, background in dance, how they were drawn into the dance work, meanings of the event in their lives, and meanings they ascribed to *Luna*. Twelve free

nodes emerged from the content of the interviews (e.g. Québec arts politics, dance company culture, and the métier of dance).

In face of the complexity of field note contents, I began by establishing three main "parent" first level themes: (a) data about the research process; (b) the who/what/where of the event; and (c) the why or meaning of the event. The notion of "what" finally referred both to "what kinds of activities happened" as the event progressed, but also to the choreographic micro level or "what were the dance movements." The choreographic description itself was difficult to place in the logic of the final text, because several possibilities were evident. I eventually included it in Chapter IV in section 4.5 as the outcome of the creative process, but preceding the section on the moment of the performance. The subcategories of "child" themes mentioned briefly above arose directly from a close reading and notating of the data. Some of these nodes became evident while thinking through the research question and methods in an earlier period of the study (e.g. there would be two genres of meaning, there would be certain subcategories of participants included). And for the most part, the free nodes named earlier arose mainly out of analytic reflections recorded in field notes, and also while observing and conversing with participants (about the economics of dance and the dancers' bodies for instance).

It was when each code category was finally printed out, pulling together all units of information about a single theme, that it was possible to see patterns and/or the range of viewpoints about each one. And in some cases, this happened only when the interviews, focus groups and field notes yielded information about the same phenomenon (perceptions about dancers' bodies or the interpretation of *Luna*'s themes for example).

In the end, I am certain that without the capacities of this software, I would have been unable to handle the sheer volume of data. The use of NUDIST not only enabled me to manage the mass of data but also to make subtle and detailed connections and relationships between the themes I chose

that would have been far more difficult, imprecise and time-consuming if attempted by hand.

Along with this coding process of the data from interviews, focus groups and field notes, the artifacts and documents I collected in the field served to both corroborate and to illustrate themes and ideas that had emerged about the *Luna* event (see detailed list in data summary, Appendix B). By way of example, ideas about the time and timing of the dance event that were recorded during fieldwork were further supported by a collection of company schedules and choreographic cue sheets (Appendix K). Another example is Laurin's two-page project proposal (along with the press release and program for *Luna*) that served as primary source material to show how her written ideas had been taken up in the writing of dance critics and even the spectators' views as expressed in focus groups.

This process demonstrates how the use of a computer software program has been complemented by a human ethnographic mind, and the way in which the researcher's intuition and reasoning intervened within the "mechanical processes" of computer based analysis. The writing style of the final document is a mix of rigorously academic text that has been interspersed with the everyday language quotations excerpted from interviews and field notes that are more emotional, poetic and informal in their tone. The result is a heterogeneous, multi-tonal story, in the registers of the many different voices of *Luna* participants, including my own.

3.8   Credibility and trustworthiness

How have I endeavored to create the conditions favorable to the conception of a story of the *Luna* event, one that was to be believable within an academic community? This ethnographic study has relied on several

kinds of validity criteria to help establish trustworthiness, a tenuous enterprise at best in the case of qualitative, interpretive research.

It was the critical assessment of qualitative research methods discussed by Anfara, Brown and Mangione (2002), brought to my attention by co-thesis director Dr. Fortin, that served as a principal source material for this section. In this text the authors reviewed contemporary debates about validity criteria for qualitative researchers and proposed a particular paradigm for "assessing […] methodological rigor and analytical defensibility" (p.28). In their proposal, they advocated for analytic openness by way of thorough public disclosure of the research process (p. 29). They placed particular emphasis on the detail and transparency with which procedures were undertaken, also important to me in the course of the *Luna* study, such as making known the details of how data was collected and interpreted and the precise way in which the researcher examined their own biases.

The criteria integrated into the research design of the *Luna* project and discussed below are: (a) awareness and revelation of researcher bias, (b) restricted and open forms of triangulation to create as complete a story as possible, and (c) prolonged fieldwork producing thick description (a Geertzian concept discussed further below) (Geertz, 1973, pp. 5-10) and (d) strategies for peer debriefing and respondent validation. In this chapter's conclusion, the integrity of certain elements and their relationship are further offered as proof of validity, and which Eisenhart and Howe (in Anfara, Brown and Mongione, 2002, p. 30) and Walsh (1998, p. 221) called "the fit or interaction between research questions, data collection procedures and analytic techniques."

3.8.1   Awareness and revelation of researcher's bias

Awareness of my own biases was ever the more difficult to locate because doing anthropology at home, and so after charting my own assumptions in the pre-fieldwork phase I kept them in view throughout the first phase of the study until they became internalized. This process of self-observation continued to develop, and I took care to continue recording new discoveries in field notes. My own understanding of personal motivations and frames of mind, along with the thought and circumstances that guided my choices and actions, were eventually written into Chapter I, the conclusion and at various points within the final text.

In terms of accounting for myself by opening my mind to my readers, as Anfara, Brown and Mangione (2002) have put it, I also inscribed into the final document thoughts and strategies about the way in which I searched for an effective balance between dance insider and field observer throughout the doing and the writing of the ethnography. I included these kinds of self-reflexive phenomena in the coding process, e.g. the free node "ethnographer's presence" among the interview codes, and the coding themes named "interactions with participants" and "personal journal" (Appendix P). I even revealed to readers some of the awkward situations I found myself in and the dynamics of my own previous and current relationships with participants.

My engagement with self-reflexivity, in Seale's sense (1998) of reflecting on one's own actions and values during research, has been a continual motif. Self-reflexivity took several forms in this study, appearing throughout field notes and the final document, intertwining my voice as narrator with those of participants. I inscribed myself into the text as a narrator when recounting my version of the event ("I"). At other times I appear as a doctoral candidate or as a dance event participant in my real-life role as dance programmer ("we"). But in order to avoid making authoritative claims for all dancers, I have carefully limited the use of an omnipresent voice

("one", "all of us"). The *Luna* study is one story of one dance event among many others that might have been and may yet be told.

3.8.2 Open and restricted triangulation

Triangulation methods in the *Luna* study included gathering data of several types, and also from a multitude of participants in several different environments and cities (Appendices B, C, and D). And so in this case they involved both of the two genres that were distinguished by Van der Maren: restricted and open triangulation (2001) [6].

In terms of the restricted variety, different types of data were collected. These "pieces of evidence" about the dance event, as Van der Maren likes to call them, were amassed through the various forms of data collection discussed above in section 3.6.3. And so the dance event, and sometimes even the very same phenomena, were described and interpreted through evidence from two or more data type sources. For example, the choreographer's aesthetic aims and preferences were discerned from the viewpoints of three different kinds of data: (a) by way of her own declarations in interviews; (b) from field notes in which I recorded my observations of her giving notes to dancers in the studio; and (c) from the text of her project proposal.

The methods here also demonstrate open triangulation, which Van der Maren (2001) explained as that which "builds the most complete possible story" because the researcher gathers data in different situations and from different informants. As I followed the development of *Luna* and conversed with its participants, the study took me to a multitude of sites and cities. In the account of the performance itself, I observed the activities quite literally from two different angles: (a) a backstage wing and (b) seated in among the

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[6] This information on Van der Maren's notion of restricted and open genres is based on class notes and from a personal conversation with him after his class on October 11, 2001.

audience members. Dance event participants told the story of *Luna* from different perspectives, shaped by their unique backgrounds and roles. From this diverse collection of insider voices and their observed interactions I was able to build a story of *Luna* which, if never complete, offered a dense and complex account of the dance event from a wide array of perspectives.

In the end, the factual aspects of who, what, when and why of the dance event were the subject of consensus throughout. But differing kinds of data about the why (life meanings and performance interpretations) of the dance event yielded a varied range of subjective responses, what I have called "sites of consensus" that were charted in Figures 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4. There also appeared several dissenting voices or negative cases, among dancers, spectators and dance critics, who questioned the viability of *Luna*'s value and meaning.

3.8.3   Prolonged fieldwork and thick description

Also in support of the credibility and trustworthiness of this ethnography of *Luna* I offer the way in which I went about developing and writing the story through long-term fieldwork and description put into social context. These validity criteria are also part of traditional ethnographic methods, and were part of the research design for *Luna* at the onset.

Fieldwork for *Luna* involved relatively prolonged engagement and persistent observation, two of the validity criteria proposed by Creswell and Miller (in Anfara, Brown and Mangione, 2002, p. 29). I carried out fieldwork on a regular basis over a span of more than two years, following the dance event to various sites and places (Appendices B, C and D). During the creative process period I set up a fieldwork schedule of visits lasting from one to four hours on three afternoons a week and spent entire days in the field with the *O Vertigo.* And during some of my business and academic trips

abroad, I sought out the chance to interview dance presenters of *Luna* from
other cities.

Partly as a result of these long-term experiences in the field, I was
able to develop a final document in which events and interactions were
"thickly described," in Geertz' sense of seeking the meaning of behaviors (his
example was of someone winking) within the specific cultural contexts from
which they take their meaning (1973, pp. 6-10). The dance movement from
Luna would certainly be perceived as a strange and even suspicious way of
behaving if seen occurring outside of the context of a theatrical performance.
Chapter IV is devoted to describing what happened during the *Luna* event,
and this kind of contextualized descriptive writing became the principal
literary device of *Luna*'s ethnographic narrative in Part 2. Interspersed with
my observations and insider knowledge are citations from participant
interviews (dancers, technicians, audience members, etc.) about their own
experiences and understandings of various phenomena during the
performance. And Part 3 was in fact devoted, in part, to a classification and
examination of the personal and social meanings participants ascribed to
their involvement in the dance world.

3.8.4   Strategies for peer debriefing and respondent validation

This research design included formal procedures, but I also seized
informal occasions, to solicit reactions from participants and academic peers
about the *Luna* research project at various stages of its progress. At the
centerpiece of my efforts at respondent validation was the exposition of a
photocopy of my field note write-up book that I left in the kitchen of the *O
Vertigo* studios. This idea suggested to me by dancer Demers and provided a
chance for the *O Vertigo* dancers and staff to not only read my field reflections
about them, but instigated many informal conversations with them about the

research project and the kinds of things I was examining. Along with the thesis, a copy of the field notebook became one of my gifts to the company archives on leaving the field.

In view of respondent validation, as mentioned earlier, I sent participants a copy of their transcribed interview. Several offered further written reflections on the original conversation (example in Appendix O). Eight copies were returned to me, with few passages crossed out. Annotations sent back to me from the early exploratory interviews with Rose and Demers in 1998 were especially insightful, with a gap of three years since the interviews had taken place. Some of their ideas about dance had shifted in the interim, a reminder of the mutability and ever-changing nature of human thought. The only person interviewed who objected at first to having the text of her interview exposed in this study was dance anthropologist Kealiinohomoku! At first reading of the transcript she feared having been inarticulate and unclear that day, but when we further discussed the ideas she has proposed in the course of that interview and which I explained bore resonance for the *Luna* project, she finally relented and allowed me to quote and paraphrase her words. And I furthermore sent to choreographer Laurin the final copy of the sections I had written specifically about her to check for accuracy and authenticity, a request that she graciously accommodated. The opportunity also presented itself to have some of the other participants the read sections about themselves in the final write-up (Szporer, Brody and Boucher). In consequence, they added a few touches and corrected several facts and spellings, but also let me know that what I had written was an accurate and satisfying portrayal of their thoughts and perceptions.

I also spoke frequently with my thesis directors and other expert dance researchers about my study throughout the entire process. It was from these informal sessions that many ideas were clarified and transformed (see acknowledgements). But two of these peer exchanges, with ethnochoreologist Chartrand and dance anthropologist Kealiinohomoku, led

to recorded interview sessions and so to data that was coded and interpreted for the final text. Kealiinohomoku also read the text of my exam project (an early version of the first three chapters), sending me her written comments. I also began talking about my study during discussion periods at meetings of artists, arts presenters and dance researchers that I attend regularly, which provoked further comments and questions and additional perspectives about the future pertinence of this kind of study for those groups.

3.9   Conclusion

Why was ethnography the most efficient way to investigate how and why the *Luna* event was carried out? How did the research question orient the research design, methodology and methods? Reviewing these relationships pulls components of this chapter into a symbiotic relationship.

My doctoral quest began when an urgent necessity arose to relocate the meaning of my own professional practice and so to renew my commitment. From long experience as a Montréal contemporary dance insider I already knew that there was no general agreement about why we dance the way we do, and that embedded in our contemporary art ethos was an inherent affinity for multiple interpretations and evaluations of artistic phenomena. With the lack of a common consensus, it seemed to me necessary to gather empirical, firsthand answers among practitioners. Parallel to these discoveries I began to realize that it was qualitative research methods, and ethnography in particular, that were likely to support this kind of quest, by way of fieldwork and face-to-face encounters.

As I proceeded to develop the research design, tensions were raging in the field of anthropology that I had to reconcile. My discovery of the dance event framework and Kealiihonomoku's axiom that all dances are ethnic (and so cultural artifacts) provided me with time-honored methodological bases in which to ground the study, as discussed in Chapter II. But at the

same time the recent poststructuralist turn had also pulled the field of anthropology off into debates about the viability (and validity) of doing fieldwork, questions of self-reflexivity and considerations of ethnography as a literary form.

I finally situated myself as a post-positivist researcher, and realized that this methodology and contemporary dance practice shared a deep-rooted belief in subjectivity. The final research design contained both elements of the classic fieldwork of dance anthropologists as well as integrating certain elements of the new thrust towards cultural and critical studies.

And so I laid out time-and-space parameters for the study, went out to do fieldwork, code and interpret the data much in the traditional way, as had many others before me. But this time the object of study was contemporary artistic dance events, one that had been relatively absent in the field of dance anthropology prior to this study. And my attitude as a researcher was also tempered by the current-day ethos of cultural studies researchers. I placed myself visibly inside the ethnographic field of a single dance event, one that I would narrate along with a multitude of participants' voices. Once the data was meticulously coded and interpreted, the final write-up included the caution that this was only one subjective story of many that might be told.

This research design, these methods and methodology produced a dense and complex story of *Luna* that has indeed answered in many ways, and on many levels, the question of what it meant for participants to engage in the dance event and how they assigned meaning to the choreography. It has also produced a wider dance event framework than before, one that I believe is well suited to the needs of artistic dance ethnographers.

The original French texts

[i] "Depuis plusieurs années, en Amérique du Nord comme en Europe, il arrive que des polémiques éclatent sur l'art contemporain, sa légitimité, son intelligibilité ou tout simplement, sur la question 'pourquoi en faire dans une société quasi entièrement déterminée par l'économisme et l'information'." Rosemarie Arbour

[ii] " […] parfois on ne savait pas que tu étais là, et puis 'Oups! Dena est là!' (Rires partagés). […] On s'est habitué à ta présence. Ça faisait partie du processus. (Rires partagés.) Tu étais bien discrète aussi. On ne se censurait pas. […] Tu faisais partie du processus, parce que je pense que tu ne réagissais pas non plus, et c'est bien. Tu ne devenais pas spectateur. Ça peut être mauvais que quelqu'un réagisse bien ou mal, parce que ça nous donne tout de suite des indices […] J'arrivais à faire abstraction qu'il y avait quelqu'un dans le studio." Ginette Laurin