

AN ATTEMPT TO DESCRIBE AND UNDERSTAND MOMENTS OF  
EXPERIENTIAL MEANING WITHIN THE DANCE THERAPY PROCESS FOR  
A PATIENT WITH DEMENTIA

Submitted by

Heather Hill

B.A., Victoria University of Wellington  
Grad. Dip. Movement and Dance,  
Melbourne College of Advanced Education

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education

Graduate School of Education  
Faculty of Social Sciences

La Trobe University  
Bundoora, Victoria, 3083  
Australia

January, 1995

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I should like to thank Dr. Warren Lett for his advice during the study and particularly for his clarity of thought which helped me many times find my way through this rich and complex material.

I wish to acknowledge the Research and Ethics Committees of Heatherton Hospital who have encouraged my research and shown their trust in its value. I thank Karen Webster, senior physiotherapist, for her practical support and Warren Thiesz for videotaping the dance therapy sessions.

Words are inadequate to express my gratitude and thanks to Ian Cullen, music therapist, for all the time and energy he has given throughout the study. It has been an inspiration to work with such a master in his art.

I very much appreciated the warm response of E's daughter to the session videos and her perception of the value of the experience for E. Finally I must thank E who, in undertaking this journey in dance with me, gave of herself, and generously so.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
<b>CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2 : METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 PHENOMENOLOGY	4
2.2 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY	5
2.2.1 THE CONSTITUTION OF THE RESEARCH SITUATION	6
2.2.2 THE CONSTITUTION OF THE DATA	9
2.2.3 THE CONSTITUTION OF THE METHOD	11
2.2.3.1 Process of reflection during the sessions	12
2.2.3.2 Process of reflection on completion of the sessions	13
2.2.4 ISSUES OF VALIDITY	20
2.2.4.1 Validity in post- positivist research	20
2.2.4.2 Tools of validity in this study	23
<b>CHAPTER 3 : METHOD</b>	<b>24</b>
3.1 RESEARCH QUESTION	24
3.2 METHOD	24
3.2.1 PARTICIPANT	24
3.2.2 PROCESS	24
3.2.3 DATA COLLECTION	25
3.2.4 DATA ANALYSIS	27
3.2.4.1 During the programme (all sessions)	27
3.2.4.2 Post-programme (session 1 only)	28

<b>CHAPTER 4 : DISCUSSION OF THE MATERIAL WHICH HAS EMERGED FROM THIS STUDY</b>	<b>32</b>
4.1 SUMMARY OF MEANING UNITS OF THE NAIVE DESCRIPTION	35
4.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE FOCI	38
4.2.1 QUALITY OF MOVEMENT (FACTORS OF WEIGHT, SPACE, TIME)	38
4.2.2 ENERGY FLOW	40
4.2.3 AFFECT	42
4.2.4 INTERACTION	43
4.2.5 MUSIC	45
4.3 CAMEOS OF THE DANCE INTERACTION (SESSION 1)	49
4.4 THE MUSIC THERAPIST'S IMPRESSIONS	52
4.5 SUMMARY OF THE OTHER DANCE SESSIONS IN THIS STUDY (2, 3, 4)	53
4.6 ANALYSIS OF THE TRANSCRIPTS FROM THE VIDEO VIEWING SESSIONS	57
4.7 EXPERIENCE OF THE RESEARCHER/THERAPIST AS PARTICIPANT	84
4.8 VIEWING OF THE VIDEO WITH PATIENT AND DAUGHTER	87
4.9 DEVIL'S ADVOCATE PROCEDURE	89
 <b>CHAPTER 5 : HERMENEUTIC ANALYSIS</b>	 <b>97</b>
5.1 THE NATURE OF DEMENTIA	98
5.2 DEFINITIONS OF DANCE THERAPY	100
5.3 EFFORT-SHAPE ANALYSIS	101
5.3.1 KEY CONCEPTS OF EFFORT-SHAPE WHICH RELATE TO E'S EXPERIENCE	104
5.3.1.1 Weight	105
5.3.1.2 Space	106
5.3.1.3 Flow (of energy)	106

5.4	THE EXPERIENCE OF DANCE	111
5.5	EMBODIMENT, THE LIVED BODY	115
5.6	THE SELF	119
 <b>CHAPTER 6 : CONCLUDING STATEMENT ON E'S EXPERIENCE BASED ON THE MATERIAL OF THE STUDY AND HERMENEUTIC ANALYSIS</b>		 <b>125</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 7 : SUMMARY OF THE THESIS AND CONCLUSIONS</b>		 <b>128</b>
7.1	ROLE OF PHENOMENOLOGY	129
7.2	ROLE OF HERMENEUTICS	130
7.3	LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	132
7.4	IMPLICATIONS FOR DANCE THERAPY WITH DEMENTIA PATIENTS	135
7.5	IMPLICATIONS FOR DANCE THERAPY AND MUSIC THERAPY PRACTICE	136
7.6	WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNT IN THIS STUDY	136

<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>139</b>
-------------------	------------

**APPENDICES**

APPENDIX 1 NAIVE DESCRIPTION	<b>142</b>
---------------------------------	------------

APPENDIX 2 DESCRIPTION OF THE FOCI	<b>151</b>
---------------------------------------	------------

APPENDIX 3 TRANSCRIPTS OF VIDEO VIEWING SESSIONS	<b>165</b>
---	------------

APPENDIX 4 WORKING NOTES FROM THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE PROCEDURE	<b>198</b>
--	------------

APPENDIX 5 SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL: VIDEOTAPE OF THE THREE SIGNIFICANT MOMENTS OF DANCE SESSION 1	
--	--

## SUMMARY OF THE THESIS

This minor thesis reports an attempt to describe and understand moments of experiential meaning within the dance therapy process for a patient with dementia. It also documents an attempt to develop a methodology which could adequately grasp the complexities of such an experience.

A phenomenological approach with its emphasis on allowing the phenomenon to reveal itself through multiple perspectives seemed the most appropriate for this study. However, while phenomenology influenced the format of the dance therapy sessions as well as the constitution and analysis of the data, ultimately a hermeneutic analysis was employed for further explication of the material.

The study consisted of four individual dance therapy sessions with an 85 year old patient with moderate dementia. The researcher/therapist worked improvisationally and a music therapist provided improvised music. After the sessions, all of which were videotaped, the patient was videotaped viewing the dance session video, in order to obtain her verbal or non-verbal responses to the material.

It was decided to focus on the "significant moments", selected intuitively as moments which seemed high points of the session. A naive description was made, on which an adaptation of Giorgi's four-phase method of analysis was applied. Certain foci, such as energy

flow, were identified and individually described. In time, it became clear that the written descriptions alone were insufficient and that reflection would need to cover all the material from multiple sources and perspectives. This was done, and the data were later further explicated by reference to writings on dance therapy, dance aesthetics and the philosophical concept of the embodied self, and Sacks's neurological writings on the awakened self.

The conclusions of the research were that the patient was not only transformed within the dance session and able to re-create aspects of her old self, but also underwent, through the experience as a whole (the dance and the reflection upon it, facilitated by the video viewing), a change in awareness, through which she reintegrated the past with the present and, in her words, came "out of the cupboard...into the brightness".

## STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

HEATHER HILL

January 10, 1993